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# “a Lonely Wandering Refugee”: Displaced Whites In The Trans-Mississippi West During The American Civil War, 1861-1868

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**“A LONELY WANDERING REFUGEE”: DISPLACED WHITES IN THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861-1868**

by

**DAVID P. HOPKINS, JR.**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2015

MAJOR: HISTORY

Approved By:

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Advisor

Date

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## **DEDICATION**

For Sydney, Sylvie, and Jackson. Without your collective love and support, none of this would have been possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A project of this magnitude cannot come without the support of a number of friends, family, and colleagues. First, I would like to thank my advisor at Wayne State University, Dr. Kidada Williams, who came to me with the idea for this project. This idea came at a time when I struggled to find something worth researching not to mention something where there was enough primary source material to make it worthwhile. Kidada's guiding hand is present throughout – not just in the tremendous attention to detail in both the writing and content, but her probing questions that always pushed this project in the right direction. She not only pushed me to be a better writer through her many revisions along the way, but she encouraged me to bring these people back to life by telling their story. It is because of her guidance that the stories of these displaced people are brought to life in the historical record.

Other professors at Wayne State offered their insight, making the project that much better along the way. My thanks to Dr. Marc Kruman and Dr. Liette Gidlow for asking important questions about my sources as well as offering suggestions on the project's organization and content. Dr. Denver Brunsman, now at George Washington University, always offered encouragement and advice (and the occasional beer at Circa!) both before and during the writing of this dissertation. My thanks to them and the other professors at Wayne and at Michigan State University who, through their courses, helped to shape my historical thinking, analysis of sources, and fostered my love for the study of history. In addition, I would like to thank the numerous academics, specifically Dr. Leann Whites, for offering their input at various conferences and talks during the development of various chapters along the way.

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the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. as well as trips to the Special Collections at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and the Arkansas State Archives in Little Rock. Many thanks to the archivists and research assistants at these institutions who made the adventure of research that much more enjoyable.

Then, there are those in the trenches – my fellow grad students. Beth Fowler, Elizabeth Ryan, Andrew Hnatow, Tim Moran, John Moore, Susan Villerot, Frank Petersmark, David Collins, Tassie Makranczy, Maria Wendeln, Ann Marie Wambeke, and Barry Johnson – who provided nothing but constant encouragement when the chips were down or I felt like I was at a dead end with my writing or research. It was with their love and support through the sharing of similar challenges that helped me to complete the dissertation. Going through the academic trenches with these people is something that I will never forget and something that will help me foster enthusiasm for other projects in the future. A special thanks to Dr. Philip Muehlenbeck, my roommate and fellow historian during our days in East Lansing, who also kept me motivated when I was not sure if I wanted to go to graduate school and pursue a Ph.D. in history. Seeing him work so hard to accomplish his goal of having his dissertation published was a major motivating factor to continue.

Behind it all, is support from the homefront. I would like to thank my parents, Debbie and David Hopkins, Sr., who always supported my love for all things knowledge, be it history or astronomy. My mother and father-in-law, Sue and Jack Brown, who have given me all the love and support they give their own children. Without a doubt, this project would not have been possible without them! Lastly, my wife Sydney, who I love more than words can express here. Her love and support (ok, maybe the occasional push!) can be found in every word of this dissertation. She did not always understand my way of thinking about things, or why her husband would devote

so much work and time to people who lived in Arkansas and Missouri a century and a half ago, but she is a master motivator, and THAT was what kept me going at the various stages of the writing process.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Farewell, mother, home and friends! We may never meet again—  
Soon 'mid strangers I must roam: Oh! the parting gives me pain—  
Tho' I wander far away, Lonely o'er life's stormy sea,  
Who will shed one gentle tear For a Wandering Refugee?  
Who will shed a gentle tear For a Wandering Refugee*

*Farewell, sunny Southern home. Home I always loved so true—  
Oft will tear-drops dim mine eyes, When my mem'ry flies to you  
But the happy scenes of yore, I, alas! will never see—  
I'll be roaming far away, A lonely Wandering Refugee!  
I'll be roaming far away, A lonely Wandering Refugee<sup>1</sup>*

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed numerous refugee movements, some a result of internal persecution and tyrannical governments, others because of world wars or genocide. Each decade witnessed at least one major movement of people from the area in which they were born in search of safety elsewhere – within or without their national borders. From the Armenian Genocide in the aftermath of the Great War to the murder of over six million Jews in the Holocaust, the world had to take action to help the large number of refugees created from these circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Following the Holocaust, the international community began the process of helping displaced people on a larger, more organized scale. For example, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees not only defined them as a group but also provided international

<sup>1</sup> Will S. Hays, *The Wandering Refugee* (Louisville: Louis Tripp, 1865 [?]).

<sup>2</sup> On the Armenian Genocide, see Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004); Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to the Anatolia to the Caucasus* (New York: Bergahn Books, 1995). With regard to scholarly works on the Holocaust, there are too many to mention here. A good starting point on displaced persons would include Avinoam J. Patt, *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008); Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Jacob Biber, *Risen from the Ashes: A Story of the Jewish Displaced Persons in the Aftermath of World War II: Being A Sequel to the Survivors* (San Bernadino, CA: The Borgo Press, 1990).

protection for refugees.<sup>3</sup> It very much took place in the context of the Cold War where there were good refugees and bad refugees, used as pawns as the two superpowers battled for supremacy across the globe.<sup>4</sup> The Cold War saw people displaced by wars in Central America and Vietnam, and oppressive regimes like Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.<sup>5</sup> With the thawing of relations between the East and West, came power vacuums in which ethnic violence, increased poverty, and environmental disaster took hold and created new acts of genocide, now labeled ethnic cleansing. Here, the world saw the murder of the Kurds of Northern Iraq, the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the Balkans, and mass murder in Rwanda.<sup>6</sup> Additional atrocities occurred resulting in the creation of the ‘Lost Boys’ of Sudan and other parts of eastern Africa came about as a result of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005).<sup>7</sup> In 2014, there are the unknown number of Yazidis sent on the

<sup>3</sup> Article 1. A. 2 defines a refugee as “any person who: owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Moorhead, *Human Cargo: A Journey among Refugees* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 37-41. Here, Moorhead describes *good refugees* as people who had fled Communist regimes and sought help in the West. *Bad refugees* are described as individuals, not necessarily fleeing persecution, but in search of work or a better life through asylum in Europe or the United States. United Nations High Commission for Refugees, *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, (Geneva: UNHCR Communication and Public Information Service, n. d.), 14.

<sup>5</sup> For more on people displaced by the wars in Central American during the 1970s and 1980s, see Maria Cristina Garcia, *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Rossana Perez, ed., *Flight to Freedom: The Story of Central American Refugees in California* (Houston: University of Houston Arte Publico Press, 2007). For more on people displaced by the wars in Indochina, see Larry Clinton Thompson, *Refugee Workers in the Indochina Exodus, 1975-1982* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010); Sucheng Chan and Audrey U. Kim, *Not Just Victims: Conversations with Cambodian Leaders in the United States* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> For more on the Kurds, see Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 2002), 24-63; David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004). For more on the disintegration of Yugoslavia, see Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-2011*, updated edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2012); David Rhode, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe’s Worst Massacre Since World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997); Thomas Cushman and Stjepan G. Meštrović, eds., *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia* (New York: New York University Press, 1996). For more on the Rwandan Genocide, see Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador, 1999); Gérard Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Mark Bixler, *The Lost Boys of Sudan: An American Story of the Refugee Experience* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013); Benjamin Ajak, Benson Deng, Alephonsion Deng, and Judy A. Bernstein, *They Poured Fire On Us From the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys From Sudan* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005).

run by the Islamic State (IS or ISIS) in northwestern Syria and parts of southeastern Turkey continuing the need for international assistance for refugees.<sup>8</sup> Modern refugee movements have been so terrible that they have even added new language, *buufis*, for example, when describing people affected by displacement.<sup>9</sup> These modern displacements are violent and no amount of aid and relief efforts by the global community seem able to solve these crises.

While these modern examples are much more violent and intense than past displacements, refugees and their stories have long graced the pages of world history. The word *refugee* was born in the wake of the Protestant Reformation in France in reference to the flood of Huguenot Protestants fleeing religious persecution during the sixteenth century following the French king Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. French refugees migrated to different empires during the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in search of religious toleration.<sup>10</sup> It was not, however, until 1864 that the first Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Wounded in Armies in the Field met in Switzerland. It was a reaction to not only the Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century and the Crimean War in the 1850s, but also the American Civil War beginning in 1861. A combination of twelve kingdoms and empires signed the Geneva Convention, which provided for the treatment of soldiers and civilians in war, and was enforced by the International Committee of the Red Cross. This agreement would be in place until

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<sup>8</sup> Estimates are anywhere from 70,000 to 500,000 Yazidi refugees under threat from IS. BBC News, "Who, What, Why: Who Are the Yazidis?" accessed November 25, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-magazine-monitor-28686607>.

<sup>9</sup> The Somali word *buufis* has been used to describe a person's dream of resettlement, often while they are living in a refugee camp. Such a dream can be so intense that when it is not achieved, it can have a severe impact on the individual. Anthropologists have argued that these experiences and expectations are impacted by transnational factors while in refugee camps. See Cindy Horst, *Transnational Nomads: How Somalis Cope With Refugee Camps in the Dadaab Camps of Kenya* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 161-200.

<sup>10</sup> See Owen Stanwood, "Between Eden and Empire: Huguenot Refugees and the Promise of the New World," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 118, No. 5 (December, 2013): 1319-1344. Issued by the Catholic King Henry IV in 1598, the Edict of Nantes granted some religious freedom to Calvinist Protestants in France.

1906 when the Second Geneva Convention superseded it.<sup>11</sup> Soldiers and civilians in the path of the Civil War would not benefit from the first agreement made in Geneva.

### **Civil War Displacement**

The war set into motion one of the greatest displacement crises ever witnessed by nineteenth century Americans. Throughout the Confederacy and the Border States, men, women, children, and occasionally entire families moved across the landscape in search of kin, safe haven, and/or relief from anyone who could provide it. “Some of its cities lay in rubble,” reminds historian David Blight, “large stretches of the southern countryside were depopulated and defoliated, and thousands of people were refugees from any sense of home.”<sup>12</sup> As indicated above in the 1865 song “The Wandering Refugee,” the conflict caused Southerners – both black and white - to wander the landscape in search of help wherever they could find it, longing for the life they lived before armies, guerrilla fighters, hunger, or other wartime factors forced them from their homes and communities.

Displaced whites garnered the attention of the Union and Confederate Armies, debates in both Congresses, the aid of various benevolent organizations/aid societies, and, after the war, the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands. Many accounts from officials who encountered displaced whites, like the following account from Bureau official Thomas Abel, detailed the challenge posed by people who wanted to help these ‘wandering refugees’ in the Trans-Mississippi West: “From statements of Genl. Hunt Courdy - Chaplain Springer Supt., and my own observation I am convinced that the condition of the Refugees in that vicinity is lamentable in the extreme many are without food, Raiment, or Home. Rations are issued to about thirteen

<sup>11</sup> This would happen again in 1929 and 1949, rounding out the Four Geneva Conventions.

<sup>12</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 33.

hundred and the number is daily increasing.”<sup>13</sup> Written in early 1866, it was clear that, with so many displaced whites still in need of help, the solution to this problem would not be an easy one. With the recently concluded sesquicentennial, it is surprising that historians have written so little about the plight of these displaced people both during and after the war.

I chose displaced whites as the subject for this work because historians have ignored them west of the Mississippi River. As I will point out in the historiographical section below, much of the focus on displaced whites in the East. Historian Mary Elizabeth Massey’s focuses on refugees in this area in her 1964 work, which to this day is the only book-length study on refugees. Much of this focus is because of the availability of reliable primary sources from the large numbers of refugees in the East as well as Civil War historians’ overall fascination with the Eastern Theater and how the war affected people there. For displaced people in Missouri and Arkansas, they too left behind a great deal of records about their displacement. They were not easy to find, but they are there. In addition, the Freedmen’s Bureau, local governments, as well as the Federal government left behind a great many opinions of these displaced people – how and why they were displaced, their wartime condition, and what the various governmental agencies might do to help them.

This study does not focus on the many displaced African Americans during and after the war. Often the term *refugee*, as the many aid organizations and governmental entities used it, meant *white*. Whether they were people escaping slavery or already free, many African Americans – displaced or not – are often lumped in under the heading contraband or escaped slaves by their contemporaries and historians have treated them accordingly. Additionally, the biggest problem

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<sup>13</sup> Report from Thomas Abel, January 20, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, National Archives, Washington D. C.

is, quite simply, the lack of any primary sources from freedom seekers and displaced free African Americans. So few freedpeople left any kind of record of their wartime experiences to put together any kind of reliable narrative on displaced African Americans. While there is room for more scholarship on displaced African Americans both during and after the war, scholars have recently visited the topic.

This study illuminates the experiences of displaced Southern whites and shows that they played an important role in how both armies and civilian organizations operated and they were a factor in the early development of Reconstruction through the operations of the Freedmen's Bureau. I hope to enhance historians' understanding of these people in both their plight as well as their treatment by different government agencies and civilian organizations both during and after the war. Advancing historians' knowledge of the displacement crisis triggered by the war, the expansion of federal power with regard to the handling of this crisis, and civilians' experiences with these forces is the goal of the work presented here. Following the war, there is something to be learned from the Bureau's establishment of schools, hospitals, and the allocation of abandoned lands and how these actions were tied to the rehabilitation of these people. As evidenced by a number of primary sources – personal letters and diaries, army records, congressional records, newspapers, pamphlets from various relief societies, and Freedmen's Bureau records – displaced people occupy a great deal of concern and effort in the operations of these agencies and organizations. From daily wartime military matters through the early years of Reconstruction, accounts of these people are present in the historical record of the Civil War. It is through their experiences that I hope to develop a deeper understanding of their plight and offer a fresh take on this group and their relationship with the state and larger citizenry in the context of the war and Reconstruction.

## Definitions and Distinctions

In this study, I choose to use the terms *displaced* or *uprooted* as opposed to the more commonly used term *refugee*. While many of the primary sources used in this study use the word *refugee* in their descriptions and accounts of displaced people – this includes the armies, the Freedmen’s Bureau, and both the United States and Confederate governments – I try to use *displaced* where possible when describing those people. The reason for this falls in line with historian Drew Gilpin Faust and her discussion of the terms *refugee* and *displaced*. In her analysis, Faust notes:

The term *refugee* soon came to be used most often for wealthy individuals who had chosen to abandon their customary place of residence, frequently with an eye to keeping property, especially slave property, out of Union hands. . . . There were, especially in the later stages of the war, families and even whole communities forced from home by military action, as, for example, when Sherman compelled all citizens to leave Atlanta in the fall of 1864, but these individuals are more properly considered displaced persons, not refugees, at least in terms of the particular Civil War usage, with its frequent pejorative connotations of privilege and self-interest. The power of these connotations is evident, for example, in Mary Lee’s aversion to the label. She had not chosen her course of action; she had not abandoned her home; she was not running away, expecting others to take responsibility for her. She had been sent against her will, and this, she believed, gave her a morally superior status to those who could rightfully be called refugees.<sup>14</sup>

Other historians, however, do not offer Faust’s differentiation in their description of displaced people – this goes for both older and newer studies. Massey used the word *refugee* a bit more liberally in her study of refugees. While she recognizes that so many different groups were forced to flee as a result of the war – Native Americans, African Americans, whites, and supporters of the Confederacy or Union. Instead, she wanted to “confine [herself] to the Confederate sympathizers who spent the war years trying to stay within the contracting Confederacy.”<sup>15</sup> She also notes her

<sup>14</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 40-41.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), xii.

reliance on the wealthier segment of the South as they typically left records of their refugee experiences behind. While Massey's work came out in 1964, other works have come out in the last decade that still use refugee in its more generic sense.<sup>16</sup> While this study analyzes a cross-section of people displaced by the war, I hope to focus more on people who were not of the wealthiest means and had few choices available to them when the time came to flee.

I define displaced people as non-combatants who fled the war or consequences of the war. A person in this context fled out of a general fear of approaching armies or irregular fighters, the shortage or absence of food or medical care, the physical destruction of personal property, the fear of forced conscription by the Confederate army or irregular band, or the inability to procure the necessities of life. With these distinctions, I will focus on these people and not other groups who, at the surface, appear to be closely related to the region's displaced whites. These groups included contrabands of war, migrants, and camp followers. In terms of race, this study will focus on the plight of the region's displaced whites. This will be the focus because the primary sources indicate that when the armies, benevolent societies, or Freedmen's Bureau agents discuss uprooted citizens; these organizations attempt to classify them as *white*.<sup>17</sup> For example, an 1864 report from the Western Sanitary Commission was entitled *Report on White Union Refugees in the South* detailed "322 men, 679 women, and 1163 children, in all, 2164 *white* refugees were sheltered and provided for, and many of them sent on their way to friends, or places of employment in the free states."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 140-151; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> See Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 29; Clarissa W. Confer, *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 116-143; and William E. Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," *Civil War History* Vol. 36, No. 1 (March, 1990): 24. For more on Native American Refugees, see Leroy Fisher, "Confederate Refugees from Indian Territory," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* Vol. 57 (1979-1980): 451-462.

<sup>18</sup> The Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission on the White Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on the Coming to Our Military Posts*, St. Louis: R. P. Studley, 1864, 6. [Italics added]

This report, and others like it, explicitly mention displaced whites separating them from freedmen and women, contraband, and slaves. The report goes further to separate black from white detailing “the colored refugees sometimes called ‘contrabands.’”<sup>19</sup>

The records of the armies, relief organizations, and the Freedmen’s Bureau make similar distinctions in their discussions of displaced people. The Bureau, whose records can be quite meticulous at times, was usually very clear when it was talking about displaced whites and very careful to differentiate between freedpeople and whites. For example, the Brigadier General Assistant Commissioner for Missouri and Arkansas asked of his subordinates: “I respectfully request that you direct all officers serving with you having in charge matters in reference to the Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to at once report to me the condition of their work in detail, so that I may be advised of the number of White Refugees and Freedpeople who are now being subsisted in whole, or in part by the Government, their condition, and all information in their possession that will assist me in the discharge of my duties.”<sup>20</sup> As a result, this study will look closely at the treatment of these Southern whites by the armies, benevolent aid societies, and the Bureau.

Distinctions made in the field by the Union army and the Freedmen’s Bureau were often directives from Washington on how to handle the problem of so many displaced whites in need of help. For example, debates in Congress touched on this point as well. In one debate between Massachusetts Republican Thomas Dawes Eliot and Kentucky Unionist Green Smith, they discussed this very issue of race as it related to the Bureau. “I suppose refugees to be those who are not freedmen,” begins Eliot, “that is to say those who had not been in slavery. Colored refugees

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> J. W. Sprague to Major General Greenville, June 16, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, National Archives, Washington D. C.

may be freedmen or they may not, but refugees may be white and when the terms ‘refugees’ and ‘freedmen’ are used; I suppose the difference would be that the refugees were white.”<sup>21</sup> Government and army officials in Washington City and regional agencies and civilian relief providers took a great deal of care to differentiate between displaced whites and African Americans as freedmen, contraband, etc., therefore this study will focus on displaced Southern whites and their treatment by those who tried to help.

### **Displaced People Described**

With an analysis on how these people were treated, the next question is who were they? Displaced Southern whites came from different parts of nineteenth century American society, demonstrating how one’s economic class did not necessarily preclude them from having to flee their homes and communities. Many displaced whites were poor or of very little means. Massey details this, but points out those wealthy Southern families became displaced as well, because they had more to lose in the presence of the Union army.<sup>22</sup> For example, the nationally published *Harper’s Weekly* noted Missouri’s situation with regard to displacement in December 1861: “Truly enough, for at this hour thousands of refugees are fleeing from Missouri that they may find bread, and afterward a home in our happy Free State. Scantly clad, half famished, and pinched with cold, then enter our border towns and beg, for they have no money, that they may live. Nor are the ignorant poor – it is the better class in the Slave States who are faithful to the Union. Whole families and whole neighborhoods have come, and the roads leading to St. Louis and the city itself are filled with them.”<sup>23</sup> Whether one was rich or poor, owned slaves, was young or old, male or

<sup>21</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 1866, 516.

<sup>22</sup> See Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 28-47; Stephen V. Ash, “Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 57, No. 1 (Feb., 1991): 50.

<sup>23</sup> *Harper’s Weekly*, December 28, 1861.

female made no difference in one's displacement. The war reached people of all walks of life in a number of ways, forcing some to flee their communities.

For so long historians thought that displaced people were mostly women, children, and the elderly – people who did not have the necessary resources to escape the many horrors of war. For example, Massey notes, “an overwhelming majority of the refugees were women, children, and aged, infirm men who had to stay behind when the younger men marched off to war.”<sup>24</sup> Based on the research presented here, this still rings true, but it was not as clear as one would think in determining who these displaced people were. A majority of the wartime displaced were women, often widows of soldiers, and children. Detailed accounting of the number and condition of displaced people did were not consistent until the final few years of the war. According to the Western Sanitary Commission's 1864 report noted how St. Louis came to be made up of “almost entirely of helpless women and children, widows, orphans and half orphans, often sick or debilitated by disease, poorly clad and bare-footed with few bundles of bedding, on arriving here, having no friends to go to. . . .”<sup>25</sup> There were also post-war accounts written by displaced women that highlighted the female experience in the region.<sup>26</sup> These accounts often focus on the reconstruction of the household after the war as well as how gender roles changed with the wartime displacement experience. While there is not enough evidence to refute this pattern of the make-up

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<sup>24</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 29.

<sup>25</sup> The Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission on the White Refugees*, 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Female refugee accounts written after the war includes Sarah Dorsey, *Lucia Dare* (New York: M. Doolady, 1867); United Confederate Veterans of Arkansas, *Confederate Women of Arkansas in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Little Rock: J. Kellogg, 1907). Secondary sources that focus on displaced women includes Joan E. Cashin, “Into the Trackless Wilderness: The Refugee Experience in the Civil War,” in Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr. and Kym S. Rice, eds., *A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War, and the Confederate Legacy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 29-53; Marilyn M. Culpepper, *Trials and Triumphs: Women of the American Civil War* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 131-166; Stephen V. Ash, *A Year in the South: 1865* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004). Here, Ash details the experience of Cornelia McDonald (who also occupies space in Massey's work), a Confederate sympathizer/widow who becomes a wartime refugee in Virginia.

of these displaced people in the region, one has to take into account that women might be more inclined to write about their experience to take advantage of a greater amount of sympathy afforded to them, in order to secure aid in a timely manner.

The experiences, backgrounds, and duration of displacement varied amongst men, women, and children in Missouri and Arkansas. For some, displacement was only temporary, for others, they had somewhere else to go, and for many, they were simply left to wander the countryside for months or more. During their displacement, people were sometimes very ill, injured, lost, or suffered the effects of starvation, dehydration, or exposure to the elements. According to the Western Sanitary Commission's 1864 report, uprooted people who made their way to St. Louis were in rough shape, "consisting almost entirely of helpless women and children, widows, orphans and half orphans, often sick or debilitated by disease, poorly clad and bare-footed with few bundles of bedding, on arriving here, having no friends to go to..."<sup>27</sup> Sources also indicate that a majority of displaced people were women, often widows, and children, sometimes orphans, though men certainly were displaced as well.

White men, like women, were compelled to leave their homes with the outbreak of war. Many, however, are often neglected in the few studies that detail displaced people. Utilizing historian Carl H. Moneyhon's figures as an example, eight counties in northwestern Arkansas experienced a 52-percent loss and Jefferson County "had a decline in male population from 1,424 to 456," Sebastian County declined "from 1,209 to 138," and Phillips County "had a drop in population from 1,008 to 489."<sup>28</sup> Certainly, based on these numbers, the war displaced a number of men in the region. Why then, are men so often ignored or overlooked when it comes to studies

<sup>27</sup> The Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission on the White Refugees*, 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 119.

of displaced people? Perhaps, given nineteenth century ideals about masculinity, men might be less inclined to write about their experiences out of fear of being called a coward for not taking better care of their family or performing their duties by becoming a soldier in one army or the other. The fact that the war drove many men from their communities had an impact on the many women who remained behind, hoping for their eventual return. Many white women, like Missourian Partheny Horn of Linn, Missouri, were tasked with locating “their husbands who like all southern men had been compelled to leave Mo.”<sup>29</sup> Many men left home to fight the war, but not all men left home of their own free will. Some were coerced with threats on the lives of their homes and family, even their own lives, while others were conscripted. This does not mean, however, that men were not displaced by the war just the same as women and children. It simply indicates that they were less likely to write about their experience. With this, we see how the backgrounds and experiences of these people are mixed and, to be sure, no experience was the same. As the armies continued to clash throughout the region, the number of displaced people continued to grow.<sup>30</sup>

While the number of men who could be recorded as being displaced is difficult to determine and have long since been undercounted, women made up a large number of uprooted

<sup>29</sup> Partheny Horn Memoir, ca. February 14, 1919, Private Collection [Missouri Digital Heritage], 52.

<sup>30</sup> There are no exact numbers concerning displaced people during the Civil War. Poor record keeping, lost or missing records, and the number of uprooted citizens who slipped through the cracks all contributed to this fact. While exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, historian Carl H. Moneyhon nicely utilizes Arkansas auditor accounts from the war years. Moneyhon notes, “[s]tatewide, the number of persons liable to pay a poll tax decreased between 1860 and 1865 from 47,317 to 27,246, a 42-percent drop.” See Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 119. The first year of the Civil War saw few displaced people - especially in the East - compared to the numbers during the last two years of the war. The fringes of the Confederacy, places like Missouri and Arkansas, saw more displaced people as Confederate and Union sympathizers sought to move themselves and their families to be more geographically in line with their loyalties. Unionists in northern Arkansas and southern Missouri might head further north while Confederate sympathizers and slave owners were likely to flee to more firmly controlled areas of the Confederacy. Missouri and Arkansas experienced more displaced residents in 1861 because of guerrilla warfare. See Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 4-5.

residents. Historians have made note of the impact of the war on women and how they endured their displacement. “Women were frequently encouraged to become refugees,” notes historian Clea Lutz Bunch, “but those who abandoned their homes found that property left behind was frequently confiscated, looted, or destroyed.”<sup>31</sup> There are many instances in the primary sources indicating this pattern. General Thomas Abel, for example, working in the capacity of the Freedmen’s Bureau, described his encounter with a group of displaced people: “the former [displaced whites] are exclusively women and children, a majority of whom are said to be the widows and children of soldiers who died or were killed in the Union Army.”<sup>32</sup> A good number of third person accounts of displaced people involved women, in addition, there were a number of first person accounts by women, often written after the war.<sup>33</sup> These accounts often focused on the reconstruction of the household after the war as well as how gender roles changed with the experience of displacement.

Understanding displaced people’s treatment by both government and civilian organizations requires a more detailed analysis of the people who dealt with them more directly. Within the Union army, it was the chaplains. To be sure, soldiers and their commanders encountered people who fled their communities, but army chaplains played an important role in dealing with any and all matters pertaining to displaced whites. In much of the army’s and the Bureau’s written correspondence concerning displaced people, matters were often referred to the chaplain of a given district to handle and report to a commanding officer. Chaplains also detailed the size and scope

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<sup>31</sup> Clea Lutz Bunch, “Confederate Women of Arkansas Face ‘the Fiends in Human Shape,’” *Military History of the West* Vol. 27, (Autumn, 1997): 185.

<sup>32</sup> Report from Thomas Abel, January 20, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, National Archives, Washington D. C.

<sup>33</sup> See Sarah Dorsey, *Lucia Dare* (New York: M. Doolady, 1867); United Confederate Veterans of Arkansas, *Confederate Women of Arkansas in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Little Rock: J. Kellogg, 1907).

of the situation as well as the amount of supplies needed/received for these people. Chaplains' writings offer a great deal of insight into the workings of the Bureau with regard to displaced whites, as they often recorded the number of people who needed the agency's help, what they needed, and how they would get it. While chaplains assisted displaced people within the context of the Bureau, displaced people received assistance both during and after the war from both local and national aid societies.

Benevolent aid and local relief organizations played a critical role in assisting both the Union army and the Freedmen's Bureau in assisting both displaced blacks and whites. Examples of these organizations include the Western Sanitary Commission (WSC), the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission, the United States Sanitary Commission, the American Union Commission (AUC), the Ladies' Refugee Aid Society and Ladies' Union Aid Society, both located in St. Louis, and the Ohio Refugee Relief Commission – to name a few. There are many works that analyze the importance of these organizations, but few discuss these organizations' direct role in aiding displaced whites in the West. For example, historian Herman Belz has detailed the role of the AUC and its push for the Bureau's inclusion of displaced people in its mission.<sup>34</sup> According to Belz, the AUC "was the principal organization for aiding loyal displaced whites. In addition to Belz's work on these organizations, historian William E. Parrish has detailed the importance of the WSC in the western theatre of the war. As Parrish notes, "...the Western Sanitary Commission played a central role in helping to alleviate suffering by troops and refugees in the Mississippi Valley and the Trans-Mississippi Theatre during the Civil War..."<sup>35</sup> In addition to Belz and Parrish, additional works discuss the American Freedmen's Union Commission and its work in

<sup>34</sup> Herman Belz, "The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865 and the Principle of No Discrimination According to Color," *Civil War History* 21 (1975): 197-217.

<sup>35</sup> William E. Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," *Civil War History* Vol. 36, No. 1 (March, 1990): 17.

setting up schools as well as its larger mission.<sup>36</sup> While little research exists on these relief organizations, there is enough in the primary sources that inform us about their operation.

### **Geographic Scope: Arkansas and Missouri**

Newer scholarship on the war and Reconstruction tends to be more inclusive of the West. An increasing number of works that detail the military, social, and cultural aspects of the war in this region have helped to expand our knowledge of how people experienced the war. This includes both broad overviews of the war as well as more detailed local and regional studies. Some historians have been critical of this focus, most notably Gary Gallagher who has been critical of scholars who include guerrilla warfare and the West in discussions of the war and Reconstruction. At the same time, however, he acknowledges in a 2014 interview with the Civil War Trust that the Trans-Mississippi West “still isn’t getting much attention.”<sup>37</sup> The West is important in the study of the war. To paraphrase historian Megan Kate Nelson, speaking at the Filson Historical Society’s 2014 conference, “The Hard Hand of War: Irregulars and Civilians in the Civil War,” historians discuss the West all of the time in their discussions about the antebellum period. Historians analyze the Missouri Crisis, the Mexican-American War, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, John Brown and Bleeding Kansas, and the construction of a transcontinental railroad in their discussions about the coming of the war. Many historians, however, fail to include the West in any kind of discussion about the war and what it means. If scholars are going to discuss the West at great length in discussions about the coming of the war, should they not talk about how the war affected the people

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Ira V. Brown, “Lyman Abbott and Freedmen’s Aid, 1865-1869,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 15, No. 1 (Feb., 1949): 22-38; Larry Wesley Pearce, “The American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1866-1868,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn, 1971): 242-259.

<sup>37</sup> Clayton Butler, “Understanding Our Past: An Interview with Gary Gallagher,” Civil War Trust, <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/civil-war-history-and-scholarship/gary-gallagher-interview.html>, accessed November 26, 2014.

who lived there? It is with this sentiment that this study focuses on Arkansas and Missouri and the effects of war on the people who lived there.<sup>38</sup>

The geographic scope for this study includes the Trans-Mississippi West with a focus on Missouri and Arkansas as well as the surrounding border regions of northern Louisiana, eastern Nebraska, and western Tennessee. In many ways, Missouri and Arkansas are linked within the Civil War story. One seceded and one did not, but both were slave states. As the Confederacy courted Missouri to join in the fight against what it called northern aggression, Arkansas served as President Jefferson Davis's champion in this process. For example, a popular song on the lips of many Arkansans was "Missouri! Or A Voice from the South," written by Harry McCarthy, also known as the Arkansas Comedian. One of its verses called:

Missouri! Missouri! where is thy proud fame!  
Free Land of the West, they once cherished name?  
Trode in the dust by a tyrant's command,  
Proclaiming there's martial law in the land.  
Men of Missouri! strike without fear!  
McCulloch, Jackson, and brave men are near;  
Swear by your honor that your chains shall be riven,  
And add your bright Star to our Flag of Eleven.<sup>39</sup>

Certainly, Arkansans and the rest of the South thought that Missouri was important enough to add to the Confederate ranks and, at least early in the war, these two states saw their fates tied together.

The primary purpose for this geographic focus is, firstly, to have a study set within reasonable limits of research. The secondary purpose is that displaced whites were a particular problem in this region for a number of people and a number of reasons. The unique situation in the Western Theatre made this so. This point is best illustrated by Union Major-General Dodge's

<sup>38</sup> See also Adam Arenson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds., *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 1-14.

<sup>39</sup> Harry McCarthy, "Missouri! or a Voice from the South," (New Orleans: A.E. Blackmar and Bro., 1861). McCarthy also wrote other popular Civil War era tunes like "Bonnie Blue Flag" and "the Volunteer."

general order issued within the Department of Missouri in December 1864: “For the purpose of better providing for the wants and of improving the condition *of the large number of refugees in this department*, and to organize in the different districts a uniform system for their care, a refugee bureau is hereby established.”<sup>40</sup> There are similar accounts from both armies, benevolent aid societies, local and national newspapers, Congress, the Freedmen’s Bureau, and the wartime governors of both Missouri and Arkansas. As a result, a study of this region is needed if we are to understand how the war affected the people who lived there and how they put their lives back together with the help of the United States government and private aid organizations.

There were a large number of displaced people in the region and how this happened are what differentiates the wartime experience in the west from the east. The first, and most important, reason concerns the political status of both Missouri and Arkansas. Missouri was a Border State, one of several slaveholding states that remained in the Union. Arkansas, on the other hand, joined the Southern cause, despite the fact that the loyalty of its citizens to the Confederacy was never as firm as citizens who voted for secession in South Carolina, Georgia, or other parts of the Deep South. Because of the unique political status of these two states, both the Union and Confederacy contested it from the start of the war and, as a result, there was a great deal of military action in the region, hoping to sway the local populations to one side or the other. The second reason, closely affiliated with the first, involves individual wartime loyalties throughout the region. Civilians’ loyalties to the Confederacy or Union mattered in the states whose populations were so divided by the war. Depending on which army approached, or the actions of guerrillas in the region, one might be inclined to flee based on their loyalties or, because displaced people came from a variety of backgrounds politically and socially and, with this, loyalties could be malleable as a means of

<sup>40</sup> U. S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Vols. (Washington Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XLI, 944. [italics added]

survival. “Soldiers on the march,” notes historian Michael Fellman, “frequently commented on the desolation left behind where civilians had fled in panic.”<sup>41</sup> The third reason contributing to the problem concerns guerilla activity that served to unsettle civilians in this region. Roaming irregular bands could sometimes be the deciding factor sending a family, or remnants of a family, on the run. Guerilla activity, perhaps combined with Johnny Rebs in the area deprived “the widow of her last chicken, burn[ed] her barn, waste[d] her corn, [stole] her money, and [drove] away her slaves.”<sup>42</sup> Lastly, the large number of displaced people can be attributed to the sustained presence of the Union army and the fact that the army’s presence was rather firm early on in the war. The army remained here for much of the war and the increased number of non-combatants who came within their lines created a burden on the army for the remainder of the war. C. T. Christensen, a Union Lieutenant Colonel and Assistant Adjutant-General complained in March 1865 that “[t]he retention of refugees at the South will be a serious embarrassment to the military service as well as a heavy burden upon the Army appropriations. The cost of transportation to points where they can obtain employment or be otherwise provided for will be less than the value of the rations that must of necessity be issued to them if they are retained.”<sup>43</sup>

This relatively sustained presence of the Union army allowed for some rather unconventional military decisions from the start of the war. The earliest involved Union General John C. Frémont’s order of August 30, 1861, which proclaimed slaves within the Department of the Missouri free. There is also the lesser-known General Order No. 11 issued by General Thomas Ewing on August 25, 1863, which removed all but a handful of citizens from four Missouri

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<sup>41</sup> Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 76.

<sup>42</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 107-108.

<sup>43</sup> C. T. Christensen to J. W. Sprague, March 15, 1865, U. S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Vols. (Washington Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1, 1180.

counties – regardless of their loyalties – as a reaction to the increased guerrilla activity in the region and a recent raid in Lawrence, Kansas. Because of this order, “[t]he homes of 20,000 people were looted and burned, and their crops were confiscated or destroyed.”<sup>44</sup> Unconventional military actions such as these helped to create displaced people, as did military clashes at Pea Ridge, Wilson’s Creek, or various skirmishes in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. These factors or combinations of these factors uprooted civilians throughout the region.

### **Periodization**

The proposed period of study for this study is 1861-1868, encompassing the beginning of the war through the early years of Reconstruction. Displaced people were a problem from the very start of the war in the West, especially in places like Missouri and Arkansas where there was a high degree of guerilla activity. Displacement was also triggered by the early campaigns of Nathaniel Lyon and John C. Frémont in Missouri and the early Union successes in Arkansas at Pea Ridge and Little Rock. Furthermore, Federal control of the southern third of the Mississippi River by 1863 – as well as the capture of New Orleans - contributed to the crisis in the West. The pressures created by the presence of the Union army on both the local populations as well as the Confederate army played a key role in the initial displacement of these peoples. This in turn increased the number of displaced whites in the region early on in the war. By contrast, with a series of Confederate victories in the East during the first two years of the war, there was not a significant displacement problem there until mid-1863, accelerating in the year preceding the Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House in April 1865.

By March of 1865, the Federal government set up the Freedmen’s Bureau, in part, to aid these displaced whites. This study will focus on the Bureau’s strategies, engagement, and general

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<sup>44</sup> Charles R. Mink, “General Orders, No. 11: The Forced Evacuation of Civilians During the Civil War,” *Military Affairs* Vol. 34, No. 4 (Dec., 1970): 132.

handling of displaced people until 1868. This year serves as the effective end of the Bureau's operations in the states, with the exception of work performed by education superintendents and claims officers, therefore, dealings with displaced people declined incrementally in the period between Appomattox and the end of the Bureau's operations.<sup>45</sup> There are examples of this happening even earlier in some areas. By mid-1866, there are circulars - directions to Bureau officials - that "the issue of rations to Refugees and Freedmen will cease except in certain cases specified in the circular, as there have been no Government stores at this place and consequently no issue of the same."<sup>46</sup> As a result, displaced whites were forced to look for help elsewhere – charities, local governments, or friendly neighbors.

The situation in the West concerning uprooted whites and their treatment during and after the war is an area of Civil War scholarship that is ripe for further research and analysis. Displaced whites sent on the run from the very beginning because of roaming guerilla bands, the presence of both armies, and citizens' divided loyalties came from a variety of backgrounds and experienced life quite differently because of their wartime displacement. Researching and analyzing displaced people from Arkansas, Missouri, and the surrounding border regions of these states can help historians better understand the plight of historically underrepresented civilians. Focusing on the period that covers the start of the war through the end of the Bureau's state operations in 1868, this study reveals the different ways that displaced people factored into the efforts of different organizations both dealing with and addressing the needs of these people during this period.

It is my hope that this study will fulfill the call by historian David S. Reynolds indicating that, "[t]here needs to be more books about the outliers of Civil War history – individuals who

<sup>45</sup> Effective July 25, 1868, an act of Congress (15 Stat. 193) ended the work of the Freedmen's Bureau in the states.

<sup>46</sup> J.C. Predimore to W.J. Dawes, September 25, 1866, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872, Microfilm M1901, Roll 18, National Archives, Washington D. C.

affected politics and events even though they weren't political or military leaders."<sup>47</sup> Telling the story of displaced whites in the Trans-Mississippi West are a step towards fulfilling this void. The West, in general, is far from the centers of power in the nineteenth century United States, which, in many ways, caused it to be overlooked by so many historians. Displaced whites in the region could not have been any further from national or even local centers of power and, as a result, fit the description of *outlier* in this context.

### **Historiographical Context**

A study of displaced whites in Missouri and Arkansas is important for several reasons. First, it will help scholars better understand these people and how the war changed their lives. Second, such a study details the different ways federal and state agencies and benevolent aid societies/associations responded to the crises caused by the war. Finally, this study illuminates the experiences of displaced whites and their thoughts on displacement as well as efforts to help them, or lack thereof. *A Lonely Wandering Refugee* investigates Freedmen's Bureau records, Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, sources from a number of regional benevolent aid societies, regional newspapers, a number of personal papers, as well as state and local governmental records examining each of these issues and help historians to better understand how the civilian population experienced the war and how Americans responded to the crisis that erupted in this understudied region of the war.

A limited amount of material in the historiography focuses on displaced whites, their plight, and their treatment by the armies, government officials, and the many civilian organizations. Although numerous historians acknowledge and provide some insight on the existence of the crisis, only one monograph, a few chapter-length studies, and an article-length study comprises

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<sup>47</sup> David S. Reynolds, "Reading the Sesquicentennial: New Directions in the Popular History of the Civil War," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* Vol. 2, No. 3 (September, 2012): 433.

the literature devoted exclusively to uprooted whites and their experiences. The monograph, Massey's *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* focuses on Confederate sympathizers who were forced from their communities.<sup>48</sup> Massey gives a great amount of detail with regard to displacement, how they lived their lives in that capacity, and their treatment by local populations. It is an excellent starting point for this study given the amount of material that she provides in the book. This work, however, is not without its limitations. Massey's book focuses on people who tended to be more upper class because, as she notes "[t]he poorer, uneducated people composed the majority of those displaced, but less is known about this group because few left records of their experiences."<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, her work centers on the problem of displacement in the East including Georgia, North and South Carolina, and especially Virginia.

While Massey offers the only book length study on displaced whites, other historians have offered shorter or tangential accounts of their wartime experiences and interactions. Historian Joan E. Cashin's chapter-length study, "Into the Trackless Wilderness: The Refugee Experience in the Civil War," examines Southern white women and the reconstruction of households following the war.<sup>50</sup> This work does not move very far beyond the domestic impact of displacement. While this is still an important study of displaced people, Cashin's work does not address the larger problem with regard to these people or their treatment by the many different groups that encountered them in the West.

In addition to the many uprooted whites and African Americans, the war also displaced large numbers of Native Americans and, in many instances, the Union army labeled them as

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<sup>48</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> Joan E. Cashin, "Into the Trackless Wilderness: The Refugee Experience in the Civil War," in *A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War, and the Confederate Legacy*, Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr. and Kym S. Rice, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 29-53.

refugees. This is another area that is ripe for more research and analysis. In the other chapter-length study on displaced people, historian Clarissa W. Confer analyzes the plight of members of the Cherokee Nation as refugees, mostly on the fringes of Arkansas and into Indiana Territory (Oklahoma).<sup>51</sup> Confer does a very good job differentiating between displaced Confederates and Unionists as well as detailing aid received from the federal government for these people. This work is a valuable addition to the scholarship, but only paints part of the picture in the Civil War West.

Other works focus on small segments of the civilian population and how they were impacted by the war. Historian John F. Bradbury, Jr. offers an article-length study of the interactions between displaced people and the Union army in the Ozarks of Arkansas.<sup>52</sup> Bradbury's work does a fine job of putting these people and their interactions with the Union army at the center of Arkansas Civil War history, but it has its limitations given that it is only an article-length study ending in 1865. These works provide an excellent starting point in addressing the problem, but they fail to detail the problem in the West, at least beyond Arkansas and they do not move beyond the end of the war in their periodization.

Recently, historians have developed more unique ways to view the war and its impact on civilian populations. Historian Yael Sternhell's 2012 work, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South*, very nicely details the Confederacy's rise and fall by looking at the paths connecting the battlefield and the homefront.<sup>53</sup> While her focus are people escaping the maelstrom of war, very few pages discuss displaced people in the West, though there is a brief mention of displaced people in Mississippi. In addition, some of the first-hand accounts are widely

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<sup>51</sup> Clarissa W. Confer, *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 116-143.

<sup>52</sup> John F. Bradbury, Jr., "Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy": Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998): 233-254.

<sup>53</sup> Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012). See pages 140-151 in particular for her discussion of refugees.

available, including the accounts of Cornelia McDonald, Arthur Fremantle, and Kate Stone – widely available published primary sources. Indeed, this work is a welcome addition to the scholarship of how civilians experienced the war, but it is also an example of why the research presented in *A Lonely Wandering Refugee* is needed. Historians must dig deeper to bring the plight of displaced Southern whites to a wider audience.<sup>54</sup>

In the broader historiography of the Civil War Era, there is a problem in how historians position displaced people within larger discussions of the local/regional military operations. If uprooted people are discussed at all, they are often discussed as a nuisance to the Union army or as a source of intelligence for enemy positions or there are some casual mentions within the context of the Freedmen’s Bureau as the agency tried to establish itself during the final months of the war. More recent works, like the work of historians Earl J. Hess, Stephanie McCurry, and Andrew F. Smith offer more coverage of displaced whites in the context of the war, but more needs to be said about their experiences beyond the scope of military operations and the operations of the Bureau. To Hess’s credit, he does discuss the use of contraband as laborers and as troops by Union General Benjamin Butler. Hess details the plight of both displaced blacks and whites in the context of the Union army in the West, but he offers more reactions to these people from army officials rather than any detailed analysis of these people’s role in the operations of the army. For example, as Hess describes, “Sherman’s men needed supplies, but they also needed to lose the black and white refugees who had tagged along since the Federals left Columbia.”<sup>55</sup> The recent work of Andrew

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<sup>54</sup> See Cornelia McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War; A Diary with Reminiscences of the War, from March 1862* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992). Other historians have utilized this book in their discussions of refugees, most notably Stephen V. Ash in *A Year in the South: 1865* and Bruce Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie*. See also Arthur Fremantle and Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *Three Months in the Southern States: April-June 1863* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); *Kate Stone, Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 274.

Smith briefly discusses displaced people, but it is in the context of food shortages in the South and its contribution to the Confederacy's defeat. For example, Smith notes, "military operations in northern Virginia during the first two years of the war sent a deluge of people into Richmond – many of them penniless, jobless, and occasionally homeless."<sup>56</sup> Stephanie McCurry's *Confederate Reckoning* focuses on slaves and white women's exclusion from the Confederate political community. Her work offers a few brief mentions of displaced people in this context, usually referencing people applying for aid/relief following the war.<sup>57</sup> In terms of the recent scholarship, as detailed above, historians have moved the discussion of displaced whites from the margins of Civil War history, but work remains to be done in examining displaced people from the start of the war through Reconstruction. In addition to these more recent works, there are a number of older and newer state-level studies that discuss the impact of the war on local communities in Arkansas and Missouri.<sup>58</sup> These studies are valuable in that they help to set the stage for the military situation and civilians' responses to this, but they offer very little insight into the plight of people displaced by the war in these same regions.

The Bureau performed a very important task with regard to displaced people as laid out in its original form in March 1865. The original bill stated with regard to these people that, "the Secretary of War may direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 52.

<sup>57</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 207-209.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Bobby L. Lovett, "African Americans, Civil War, and Aftermath in Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 54, No. 3 (Autumn, 1995): 304-358; Nate Coulter, "The Impact of the Civil War upon Pulaski County, Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring, 1982): 67-82; Wendy Richter, "The Impact of the Civil War on Hot Springs, Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer, 1984): 125-142.

and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct.”<sup>59</sup> With the revisionist scholarship regarding Reconstruction, works of the Freedmen’s Bureau have garnered much reconsideration. Very few of these works, however, focus on the Bureau’s dealings with displaced Southern whites and, understandably, focus on the needs of freedmen and women. Scholarship on the Bureau, while not as voluminous as that on President Abraham Lincoln, Civil War battles, or the changes wrought by the war, has expanded since the mid-twentieth century. Part of this comes from Eric Foner’s monumental 1988 work, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. In a reaction to Foner’s work, a number of historians responded with a number of studies about different aspects of Reconstruction, studies on the Bureau included. Before Foner, only a few works existed that offered any kind of insight on the operations of the Bureau.

Prior to Foner’s work, the most prominent scholarship on the Bureau was George R. Bentley’s *A History of the Freedmen’s Bureau* published in 1955. To be sure, other works by William S. McFeely, Joel Williamson, and Leon Litwack looked at the Bureau and its role in race relations.<sup>60</sup> And while understanding the world made for freedpeople by the war is important, these works do not tell the whole story about the Bureau’s operations in the South. Bentley’s work was the standard for our understanding of the agency, its history, and its actual operation throughout the South. Bentley’s major argument is that the Bureau simply tried to do too much for African Americans in that it acted as an extension of the Radical Republicans. A few years before Bentley published his study of the Bureau, LaWanda and John Cox put forth an article length analysis of

<sup>59</sup> *Freedmen’s Bureau Bill*, March 3, 1865, Sec 2.

<sup>60</sup> See William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O.O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina After Reconstruction, 1861-1877*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975); Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

the Bureau's head, Oliver Otis Howard, refuting many of the long-standing claims that the agency had been mishandled and inefficient.<sup>61</sup> Following Bentley and the work of the Coxes, many article-length studies about the Bureau exist, but they often limit their focus to a single state or a region of a state in the former Confederacy. Many of these studies were Ph. D. dissertations, which often gave a blow-by-blow account of the day-to-day operations of the Bureau or used newer evidence to clarify some misconceptions about the Bureau.<sup>62</sup>

Bentley's interpretation of the Bureau was the widely accepted account of the Bureau and its operations until more recently when Paul A. Cimbala rejected Bentley's argument in *The Freedmen's Bureau: Reconstructing the American South after the Civil War* in 2005. Here, Cimbala generally agrees with LaWanda and John Cox, by arguing that, for the most part, the Bureau functioned as a useful ally to freedpeople and was not as mismanaged as previous historians had suggested. Cimbala zooms out from Howard, providing a view of the entire agency in his study. Other works on the Bureau focused on issues such as gender - Mary Farmer-Kaiser's *Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau*, labor - the Freedmen and Southern Society Project's *Wartime Genesis of Free Labor* - in the upper and lower South, or land - the Freedmen and Southern Society Project's *Land and Labor*, biological issues - Jim Downs's *Sick from Freedom*, reuniting freedpeople's families - Ira S. Berlin's *Families and Freedom* and Heather A. Williams's *Help Me to Find My People*. There were also a variety of studies that detailed the creation of

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<sup>61</sup> LaWanda and John H. Cox, "General O. O. Howard and the 'Misrepresented Bureau,'" *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Nov., 1953): 427-456.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Martin Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); Paul A. Cimbala, *The Freedmen's Bureau: Reconstructing the American South After the Civil War* (Huntington, NY: Krieger Publishing Co., 2005); Ira C. Colby, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas and its Impact on the Emerging Social Welfare System and Black-White Relations, 1865-1885" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1984); Clifton L. Ganus, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Mississippi" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Tulane University, 1953); Paul David Phillips, "A History of the Freedmen's Bureau in Tennessee" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1964); William L. Richter, *Overreached on All Sides: The Freedmen's Bureau Administrators in Texas, 1865-1868* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1991); Howard A. White, *The Freedmen's Bureau in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970).

hospitals, schools, and financial institutions affiliated with the Bureau in some way.<sup>63</sup> Very few of these narrow Bureau studies, however, devote attention to displaced people and the studies that offer some discussion of displaced whites, do so in the most modest of terms. This project seeks to shed some light on the plight of these people and offer a fresh take on this group of people and their relationship to the state and the larger citizenry.

This study relies on the voluminous records of the Freedmen's Bureau. These records include a vast amount of communications between Bureau officials in the region as well as communications between the Bureau and Washington D.C. While these primary sources provide a wealth of information about Bureau relief efforts, schools, and hospitals, Bureau records can be – at times - difficult to read and sometimes difficult to follow stories as they present themselves. Historian Mary Farmer-Kaiser has noted this difficulty when she wrote: “Although the records of the Freedmen's Bureau concerning relief are incomplete and generally frustrating for researchers, they nonetheless show that the distribution of food, clothing, and medicine remained an important task throughout the agency's short lifetime. Its relief activities met a critical need despite the many obstacles it encountered. There was no post experience to guide bureau officials in the distribution of relief on such a grand scale, in such a momentous time, and under such difficult conditions.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Paul A. Cimbala, “Making Good Yankees: The Freedmen's Bureau and Education in Reconstruction Georgia, 1865-1870,” *The Atlanta Historical Journal* Vol. 29 (Fall, 1985): 5-18; Luther P. Jackson, “The Educational Efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau and Freedmen's Aid Societies in South Carolina, 1862-1872,” *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jan., 1923): 1-40; Bobby L. Lovett, “Some 1871 Accounts for the Little Rock, Arkansas Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company” *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 66, No. 4 (Winter, 1981-1982): 326-328; Barbara P. Josiah, “Providing for the Future: The World of African American Depositors of Washington, DC's Freedmen's Savings Bank, 1865-1874” *The Journal of African American History* Vol. 89, No. 1, (Winter, 2004): 1-16; Randy Finley, “In War's Wake: Health Care and Arkansas Freedmen, 1863-1868” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 51, No. 2 (Summer, 1992): 135-163; Gaines M. Foster, “The Limitations of Federal Healthcare for Freedmen, 1862-1868” *Journal of Southern History* 48 (August, 1982): 349-372; Reggie L. Pearson “‘There Are Many Sick, Feeble, and Suffering Freedmen’: The Freedmen's Bureau's Health-Care Activities during Reconstruction in North Carolina, 1865-1868” *North Carolina Historical Review* 79 (2002): 141-181.

<sup>64</sup> Mary Farmer-Kaiser, “‘With a Weight of Circumstances like Millstones about Their Necks’: Freedwomen, Federal Relief, and the Benevolent Guardianship of the Freedmen's Bureau,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 115, No. 3 (2007): 147.

Despite these difficulties faced by, not only myself but other historians of the Bureau, this study presents a picture of the agency and how it helped displaced whites through relief, schools, and hospitals through 1868.

With an understandable focus on the Union and Confederate military campaigns and the larger operations of the Freedmen's Bureau, few historians address the circumstances that led different organizations to take action in order to provide relief to uprooted people. Nor has there been any kind of focus on the circumstances that forced people from their communities, their identities, how state governments, the armies, or the Bureau treated them. The Bureau's treatment of displaced people is further complicated by the famine that gripped the South during the early part of 1867. The minimal attention given to displaced people in the historical scholarship warrants a study such as the one presented here. With the research and analysis of displaced people and their treatment by the aforementioned organizations in the pages that follow, historians can better understand their plight in the West and the ways in which their treatment helped to shape early Reconstruction policy toward these people. This study is a step in that direction.

## CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS

*“If the Union must be dissolved, slavery is precisely the question upon which it out to break. For the present, however, this contest is laid asleep.”<sup>1</sup>*

- John Quincy Adams on the Missouri Compromise (March 3, 1820)

The history of settlement, the geography, and politics of the Trans-Mississippi West influenced Arkansas’s decision to secede and Missouri’s decision to remain in the Union as well as the emergence of the displacement crises in each state during the Civil War. To understand its creation, one must first understand the history, geography, and politics of the region, as each factor influenced many individuals’ wartime decisions to flee their homes and communities. The region became a battleground for the slavery question that brought about civil war in 1861 and this can be seen in the decades leading up to the outbreak of war. Antebellum events linked with the westward expansion of slavery influenced the politics in each state, especially during the 1850s.

The influence of national events during the antebellum period played a role in each state’s decision to secede, as would settlement patterns and geography. Though Missouri was a slave state since its admittance to the Union, its location prevented it from producing the kind of plantation agriculture and large slave holdings seen throughout much of the Deep South and its politics in by 1860 reflected this fact. Arkansas had a climate favorable to plantation agriculture allowing cotton to be grown in areas along the Mississippi through the center of the state. The Ozark Mountains in the northwestern corner of the state did not grow cotton; this combined with pro-Union sympathies led to strong anti-secessionist sentiment amongst its local populations by 1860. With Lincoln’s election in 1860, each state thought of secession as a last possible resort and exercised as much

<sup>1</sup> “John Quincy Adams’s Reservations about the Missouri Compromise (1820),” quoted in Gary J. Kornblith, *Slavery and Sectional Strife in the Early American Republic, 1776-1821* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 154.

caution could be allowed. The Confederate firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861 exhausted that caution, causing each state to seriously consider secession in its aftermath. Missouri ultimately refused secession, causing an internal political firestorm that resulted in two wartime state governments. Arkansas did its best to avoid leaving the Union, but the firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's subsequent call for troops proved to be the last straw; with the state's slaveholding cotton planters leading the way, they brought Arkansas in line with the Deep South. The seeds for these events are found with the United States purchase of French Louisiana in 1803.

### **The Louisiana Territory**

The Louisiana Territory, a French possession since the late seventeenth century when Robert de La Salle explored the region, served as an expansion for the lucrative French fur trade with various Native American tribes. The French colony, however, failed to attract large numbers of settlers and, as a result, never saw the rise of plantation agriculture like France's Caribbean possessions. Despite this failure, it did not prevent the French introduction of slavery in the Mississippi River Valley. Prior to the introduction of African slaves, the French dealt in Native American slaves provided by indigenous tribes, then they imported nearly six thousand African slaves to the region between 1719 and 1731. African slaves served as forced migrants in a failed effort to sustain the colony. During the early eighteenth century, Frenchman Philippe François Renault is credited with bringing the first African slaves to the Mississippi Valley from Haiti to work in the lead mines in present-day Missouri.<sup>2</sup> Nearly a third of the African slaves died shortly after their arrival and the remainder either ran away and formed a variety of maroon settlements in the region or were difficult to control, leaving a 2:1 black majority in the region. In addition, these African slaves fought on both sides of the Natchez uprising against the French (1729-1730)

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<sup>2</sup> Claiborne A. Skinner, *Regional Perspectives on Early America: Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 117-118.

and concocted a variety of plots to overthrow the French. It is important to note that Franco-Spanish slavery differed from American slavery in that manumission as well as a slave's ability to purchase his or her freedom was much easier and laws banning interracial unions were quite lax. Because of this, a larger number of free blacks were present in New Orleans by the early nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The French lost Louisiana, at least temporarily, because of their defeat to the British in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), when they ceded the territory to Spain in addition to ceding Canada to Great Britain with the Treaty of Paris (1763) that ended the war. Spain controlled Louisiana until 1800, when the Spanish returned it to France via secret treaty, though the Spanish continued to administer the port of New Orleans to keep up appearances that they were still in the control of the territory.<sup>4</sup> During this period of Spanish control, there were a series of tensions between the United States and Spain over American rights to the Mississippi River until the Americans secured rights to the port of New Orleans through the Pinckney Treaty (1795). With the convulsions of the French Revolution (1789-1815), future French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, then First Consul, hoped to recapture the North American empire lost by the French because of the Seven Years' War as well as counter British control of Canada to keep a balance of powers between the European powers on the North American continent. Whatever plans that the French had for this vast territory along the Mississippi Valley, these plans came crashing down with the Haitian Revolution.

With the explosion of the French Revolution in 1789, its effects rippled across the Atlantic to the French Caribbean island of Saint Domingue (Haiti) beginning in 1791. Haitian slaves rose

<sup>3</sup> For more on the settlement of Missouri, see Walter A. Schroeder, *Opening the Ozarks: A Historical Geography of Missouri's Ste. Genevieve District, 1760-1830* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> The Treaty of San Ildefonso returned the territory to France in exchange for promises of the Italian throne to the brother-in-law of the Spanish king.

up against their French masters in an attempt to form a republic built upon the promises of the French Revolution. Napoleon attempted to quell the rebellion when in 1802, because of the lull in hostilities with Great Britain, he sent thirty thousand troops to the Caribbean island. This attempt to overtake the slaves failed with many of these troops killed off or dead from yellow fever and, without the lucrative sugar plantations of Haiti, and the certain renewal of hostilities with Great Britain, any dream of a North American empire ended. Napoleon feared New Orleans would be lost to British forces, thus rendering the rest of the territory useless, upon the renewal of hostilities and decided that it would be best to sell all of the Louisiana Territory. Following a series of abuses regarding treaty privileges by the Americans, the Spanish closed New Orleans to American traffic in the fall of 1802. When Napoleon's ministers approached President Thomas Jefferson regarding the purchase of French Louisiana, the Americans were more than willing to listen to his offer.<sup>5</sup>

President Jefferson initially hoped to purchase the port of New Orleans and Florida (East and West Florida, controlled by the Spanish) and, in April of 1803, he instructed his French minister to do as such. Jefferson instructed the American Minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, to offer of \$6 million dollars for the purchase of New Orleans and Florida from the French. The French were unwilling to sell such a small part of the territory; so instead, they offered all of Louisiana to the Americans for \$15 million. With the help of fellow Virginian James Monroe, who Jefferson sent to Paris to help with the negotiations, Livingston went over the president's head and purchased all of Louisiana – approximately nine hundred thousand square miles of land stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to British Canada - for France's asking price of \$15 million. This was well beyond anything Jefferson could have hoped. Before the deal became official, the treaty had to go before the Senate for ratification. In the meantime, Jefferson began second-guessing the

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<sup>5</sup> Norman K. Risjord, *Jefferson's America, 1760-1815* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 349-353.

constitutionality of the purchase, wondering to himself if he would first have to have some kind of amendment to place him on strong constitutional ground. Eventually, Monroe and Livingston convinced the president to send the treaty to the Senate for ratification – without the amendment. The United States Senate ratified the treaty in October 1803 by a margin of 24-7 making the Louisiana Purchase part of the young nation. This was a big step for the new nation. The Louisiana Purchase became, what historian Gordon S. Wood has termed, “the most popular and momentous event of Jefferson’s presidency.”<sup>6</sup> Wood goes further, laying out the significance of the Purchase in that “not only did it end the long struggle for control of the Mississippi’s outlet to the sea, but it also, as Jefferson exulted, freed America from Europe’s colonial entanglements and prepared the way for the eventual dominance of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>7</sup> With his doubling the size of the nation, Jefferson had a vision of a nation of yeoman farmers moving westward, creating the American ideal - Jefferson’s dream.

Nearly doubling the size of the United States, the Louisiana Purchase paved the way for Thomas Jefferson’s dream of a nation of yeoman farmers and what he termed as an *empire for liberty*. For Jefferson, the acquisition of this territory would produce what historian Walter Johnson called “a harvest of self-sufficient, noncommercial white households headed by the yeoman patriarchs whom he associated with republican virtue, a flowering of white equality and political independence.”<sup>8</sup> With the continued and later intensified presence of slavery in the West, Jefferson’s dream turned into what Johnson has termed Jefferson’s nightmare. Though Sage of Monticello was aware of the fact that slavery was very dangerous for the developing nation, it did

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 369.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2013), 3.

not stop him from reflecting positively on American civilization. For example, Jefferson detailed the advance of American civilization in an 1824 letter to William Ludlow:

Let a philosophic observer commence a journey from the savages of the Rocky Mountains, eastwardly towards our sea-coast. These he would observe in the earliest stage of association living under no law but that of nature, subscribing and covering themselves with the flesh and skins of wild beasts. He would next find those on our frontiers in the pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting. Then succeed our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization, and so in his progress he would meet the gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his, as yet, most improved state in our seaport towns. This, in fact, is equivalent to a survey, in time, of the progress of man from the infancy of creation to the present day.<sup>9</sup>

Jefferson, some two decades later, did not view his addition of so much land to the infant republic as a nightmare. He was still very sure that his dream of the progress of the white yeoman republican was coming true, despite his many misgivings on slavery. Shortly after Jefferson's purchase of the Louisiana Territory, a small number of frontier-minded Americans embarked in an attempt to make his dream (and theirs) a reality in the Mississippi Valley. Another war with Great Britain proved to be the spark for this westward movement.

### **The Settlement of Missouri, Crisis, and Statehood**

The War of 1812 served as the catalyst for Missouri settlement in a variety of ways. The construction of a series of protective forts in what became Missouri preceded large-scale American settlement here. With the start of the war, these forts served to guard the western frontier and delayed settlement of the region for a few more years. In 1812, just before war began, Congress carved the state of Louisiana from the territory acquired as a part of the Louisiana Purchase. After Louisiana's entrance into the Union, the remainder of the Purchase lands became known as Missouri Territory. With the Treaty of Ghent in late 1814 came the end of the war and, as a result,

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Jefferson to William Ludlow, September 6, 1824, quoted in Merrill D. Peterson, *The Political Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Annapolis Junction, MD: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc.), 211.

the United States was no longer a neo-colonial possession of the British, allowing it to shift its focus from the east to the west. American settlers streamed in from the east with the hopes of taking advantage of opportunities presented by the west. From 1815 onward, white settlers came to Missouri Territory from all points east: New England, Philadelphia, the Midwest, and Virginia.

Many of these new Missouri settlers took the newly built National Road in search of western opportunity; others rode down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers from a variety of points out east. Settlers from the western parts of Kentucky and Tennessee made their way to the Ozark region in the southwestern part of the state. Settlers also came from closer, neighboring states like Illinois. For many of these settlers, their push to build homesteads in the countryside did not come without problems. The first Missourians had to deal with both squatters and land speculators who often served as an impediment to clear land titles. Nonetheless, the first American settlers in Missouri Territory settled along the Mississippi River valley, centered in the growing city of St. Louis. Located at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, St. Louis quickly grew into a major urban center and served as a major western port. From St. Louis, settlers sold goods and supplies and traded down the Mississippi. The area around St. Louis proved to be very fertile land for farmers as it was located in the flood plain of the two rivers. Settlement in St. Louis also offered some protection for these early Missouri settlers against various Native American tribes in the region.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Grant R. Miller, "The Early Settlers of Southwest Missouri," *Local History Website of the SMSU Department of History*, Accessed 10/30/2013, <http://cliio.missouristate.edu/FTMiller/LocalHistory/Essays/earlysettlers.htm>; Walter A. Schroeder, *Opening the Ozarks: A Historical Geography of Missouri's Ste. Genevieve District, 1760-1830* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 149-185.

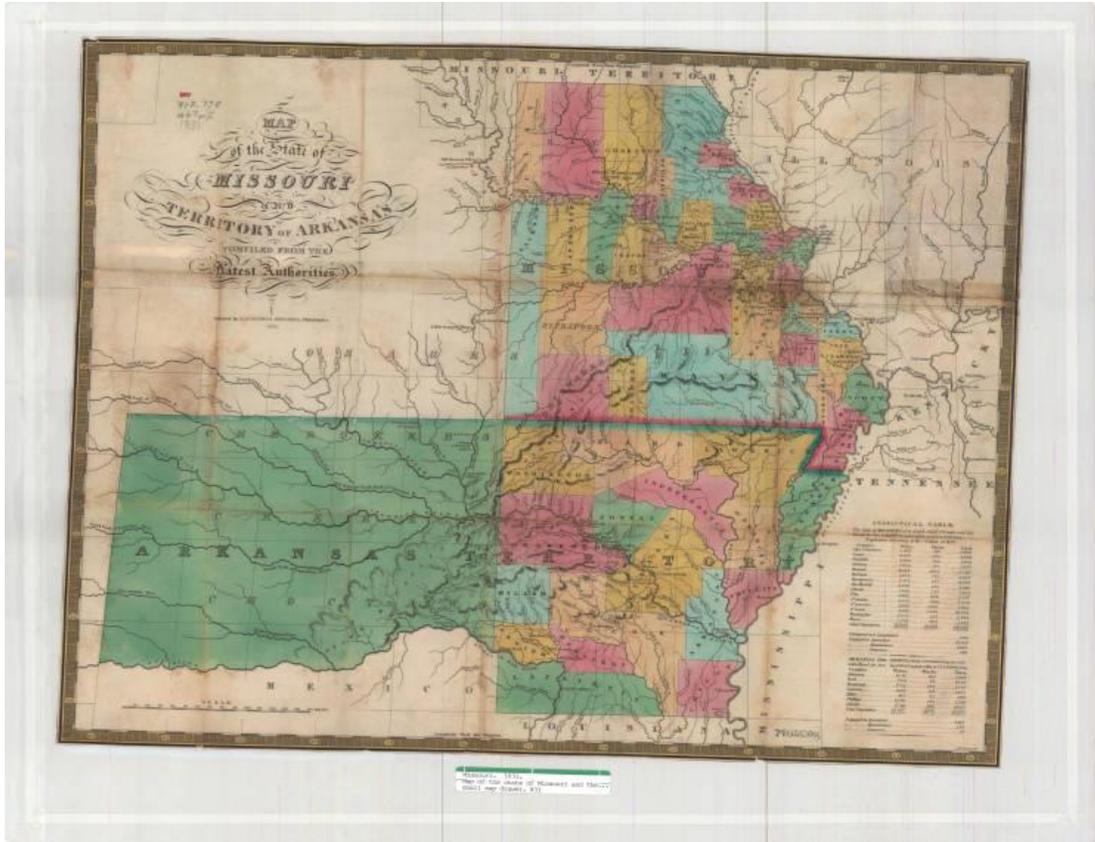


Fig. 1.1: Map of Missouri and Territorial Arkansas, 1831. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri. Source: <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~216126~5502328:Missouri-And-Territory-Of-Arkansas>

The primary Native American nations in Missouri Territory included the Missouria, the territory's namesake, as well as the Osage, Delaware, Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Cherokee. Other nations, like the Fox and Sauk, ventured into the state from time to time, usually for hunting and trading with the other nations. Once the United States purchased their lands as a part of the Louisiana Purchase, many of the Native American nations signed treaties with the American government. For example, the Osage signed a treaty with the United States in 1808 where they gave up all land claims for what today constitutes much of southern Missouri in exchange for \$1200 in cash as well as merchandise totally about \$1500 dollars. In another example, the Osage signed another treaty with the Americans in 1825 where they gave up the rest of their lands in Missouri and Arkansas as well as part of their land in Kansas for a total of \$7000 dollars in annual

payments over seven years. For the Osage, these treaties left their nation near starvation and in great poverty only a decade later. Missouri Territory also saw the creation of various Native American reservations for Native Americans that the United States government moved from other states. The Kickapoo, who had lived in Missouri since the mid-eighteenth century, were relocated to a reservation in southwest Missouri in exchange for ceding all of their lands in Illinois and Indiana in 1819. From 1819-1824, a number of Kickapoo made their way to southwestern Missouri. By 1832, the American government had again moved the Kickapoo to a reservation in Kansas, near Fort Leavenworth. These moves came about because of the incursion of white settlers, especially after the War of 1812.<sup>11</sup>

Once the United States government pushed these Native Americans bands further to the west, white settlers moved into the lands vacated by these bands. For example, in the southern part of what became the state of Missouri, lead mining quickly developed as a valuable economic activity attracting a great number of settlers to that part of the state. Americans looked west to the Mississippi Valley for economic opportunities. Historian Adam Rothman notes how the American government provided opportunities to potential settlers, “The national government encouraged economic development in its new acquisitions through nation-building measures that included the survey and sale of public lands, the improvement of transportation infrastructure, and the imposition of a tariff on foreign sugar trade.”<sup>12</sup> The combination of trading, farming, and mining quickly brought settlers to Missouri during the latter part of the 1810s and, by 1819, the state was prepared to make the move from territory to state. By 1816, Missouri created a territorial government and, by 1817, Missouri citizens began petitioning Washington for statehood.

<sup>11</sup> Greg Snider, “Indians in Missouri,” *Local History Website of the SMSU Department of History*, Accessed 10/30/2013, <http://clio.missouristate.edu/FTMiller/LocalHistory/Essays/moindians.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 219.

Missouri's population at the time of statehood included an increasing number of African American slaves, which made Missouri's entrance into the Union a stormy one.

Missouri slaves labored in a variety of areas in the state's economy. Missouri, as many Northern politicians would argue during the Missouri Crisis (1819-1821), was too far north to grow *significant* amounts of cotton. While some Missourians grew cotton, particularly in the southern part of the state, the growing season was far too short to allow the state to become a major cotton producer like states in the Deep South. As a result, it negated the need for the large-scale plantations worked by twenty or more slaves that were more prominent in the Deep South, which is why so many Missourians both black and white, toiled on smaller farms. Even if Missouri was too far north to grow cotton, as some Northerners claimed, this did not mean that slaves could not be used to grow hemp, tobacco, or foodstuffs. Slaves in Missouri often worked as field hands on the small farms located along the Mississippi River. At the time of statehood, nearly three quarters of its white population worked in farming and, those who had slaves, used them on these smaller farms.<sup>13</sup> With each successive decade beginning with the state's entrance into the Union until the firing on Fort Sumter, Missouri's slave population increased, with most of these slaves spread out along the banks of the Mississippi as well as throughout the state's central counties. Though few large-scale plantations existed in this part of the state, this area of the state became known as *Little Dixie* (see Fig. 1.2). Just south of Little Dixie, St. Louis also had slaves labor within its city limits.

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<sup>13</sup> Lorenzo Thomas Greene, Gary Kremer, Antonio Holland, *Missouri's Black Heritage*, Revised Edition (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 20.

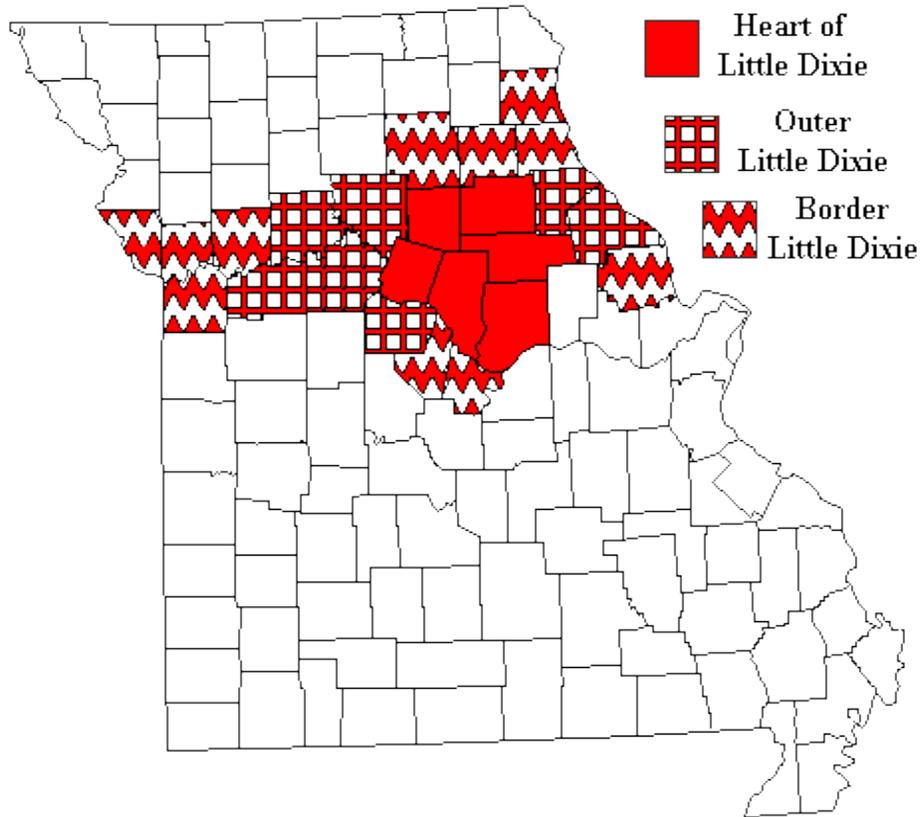


Fig. 1.2: Map of Missouri's Little Dixie. <http://www.missouridivision-scv.org/litdixie.gif>

During Missouri's territorial stage, St. Louis grew as an industrial center, processing and shipping many of the state's raw materials, including hemp and tobacco, down the Mississippi for consumption. Along the St. Louis riverfront, slaves also worked as draymen and stevedores.<sup>14</sup> "Rope and bagging manufactures established ropewalks and factories all along the Missouri River to process hemp for products used in the southern cotton trade."<sup>15</sup> St. Louis served as a terminus for the state's raw materials made possible because of slave labor. By the time Missouri applied for statehood, the ratio of white settlers to slaves was approximately 5:1, with settlement in both rural and urban areas. As a result, the state was prepared to move from the territorial stage to

<sup>14</sup> Adam Arenson, *Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 83-86.

<sup>15</sup> Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 99-100.

statehood. Before Missouri statehood could be made possible, however, questions about slavery in the territories had to be addressed on a national level. This triggered the Missouri Crisis of 1819-1821.

The roots of the Missouri Crisis lie in the immediate aftermath of the American Revolution. The first attempt to legislate with regard to slavery came with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Passed by the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation, the Northwest Ordinance banned slavery in the territories that would later become the Midwest. While it expressly prohibited slavery with Article VI of the Ordinance, it did have a fugitive slave clause that served as the model for the one that eventually appeared in the Constitution. “Legally speaking,” notes historian David Waldstreicher, “the ban on slavery in the Northwest implied its protection in the Southwest. If a ‘compromise of 1787’ occurred, it formed the first of the great line-drawing territorial compromises over slavery, while simultaneously making the Constitution itself possible. If the Congress helped the convention resolve its fragmentation over the representation question, it suggests that the first compromise of 1787 did more than initiate the process that continued with the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850.”<sup>16</sup> This compromise set the bar for negotiations over slavery in the territories going forward. By 1819, Missouri’s admission again stirred these debates over slavery in the territories and how these states would be admitted into the Union, continuing the sectional bargaining over slavery. Situated in what would become the geographic center of the United States, Missouri’s application for admission into the Union in 1819 made it the center of the slavery debate that had gradually intensified since the founding of the republic.

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<sup>16</sup> David Waldstreicher, *Slavery’s Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2009), 88.

Slavery, though not mentioned by name in the Constitution, was the ever-present hurdle for Congress in antebellum discussions of statehood. Provisions in the founding document including the 3/5 clause (Article I, Section II), a fugitive slave clause (Article IV, Section II), and a non-importation clause (Article I, Section IX) mark the beginning of a series of sectional compromises concerning slavery. For the most part, these compromises in the United States constitution achieved their intended goal of sectional harmony at a national level and allowed the framers to create a federal Union. In the succeeding decades, however, the United States expanded territorially to the West and slavery took on a much more important role in the developing and expanding nation. “Territorial issues,” observes Waldstreicher, “including the disposal of western lands won or secured during the war [Revolutionary War], set states in competition but also created the promise, or potential, of a federal future in which key issues would be resolved by consensus or compromise.”<sup>17</sup> This competition was economic and political. So, with Missouri’s desire to enter the Union as a slave state in 1819, came a national debate over the peculiar institution and its future in the territories.

The 1819 Missouri Crisis threatened the national balance between slave states and free states. At the time of Missouri’s application for admission into the Union, eleven free states and eleven slave states composed the Union. Congress sought to maintain that balance between free and slave states, preserving sectional harmony and addressing easterners’ contrasting visions for the West. Some Americans wanted the area kept free of slavery so that white men could move west and recreate the wealth they saw in the already settled Northeast. For these Americans, that was what made the North superior is that it offered wage earners a form of independence that slave labor did not. Keeping wealthy slaveholders and their slave out of the West was the best way to

<sup>17</sup> David Waldstreicher, *Slavery’s Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2009), 66.

achieve this result. This group of whites who believed that free labor was preferable to slave labor - both economically and socially. Other Americans wanted the region to be open to slavery so they could recreate the wealth in the southeastern part of the country. For them, moving west was the only way to fight soil exhaustion and capitalize on the new cotton and sugar boom.<sup>18</sup> Missouri's move for statehood threatened that harmony. Historian David M. Potter observes that Missouri's admission raised "the question of slavery for the whole area of the Louisiana Purchase and present[ed] the imminent possibility that slave states would outnumber free states in the Union."<sup>19</sup> For the first time since the framing of the Constitution, slavery threatened the future of the United States along sectional lines. If Congress allowed Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state, it would throw off the sectional balance. This caused many Americans, including an aged Jefferson, to worry. For Jefferson, "this momentous question, like a **fire bell in the night**, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. [I]t is hushed indeed for the moment. [B]ut this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence."<sup>20</sup> Jefferson's dream was indeed becoming a nightmare. National debates over slavery in the context of the Missouri Crisis clouded Jefferson's vision for the future of the United States. Missouri's proposed entrance into the Union caused a number of politicians to scramble to find a viable political solution to the crisis, causing a disruption in the Era of Good Feelings.

New York senator James Tallmadge spearheaded the first attempt to resolve the Missouri Crisis. On the day that Missouri's enabling act was introduced to the House of Representatives on February 13, 1819, Tallmadge proposed that Missouri be admitted, but without the importation of

<sup>18</sup> See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> See Don Ferenbacher, *The South and Three Sectional Crises* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 53.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820, in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1892-1899), Vol. XII, 158.

future slaves as well as the promise that the children of slaves be set free at the age of twenty-five. In short, he proposed a gradual emancipation amendment as a condition of Missouri statehood. Tallmadge triggered a very passionate debate over the future of slavery in the United States earning Tallmadge and his supporters the label of “restrictionists.” The senator from New York and his Northern colleagues battled over the institution’s future with their Southern counterparts. The debates over the amendment became so heated that some congressional representatives threatened civil war. Tallmadge defended his amendment to Missouri statehood, “Its present threatening aspect, and the violence of its supporters, so far from inducing me to yield to its progress, prompts me to resist its march. Now is the time. It must now be met, and the extension of the evil must now be prevented, or the occasion is irrevocably lost, and the evil can never be contracted.”<sup>21</sup> In addition to the measure in Missouri, Tallmadge enlisted the help of his fellow New York Congressman, John Taylor, to ban slavery from the territory that lie to the south of Missouri, Arkansas Territory. The House of Representatives passed Tallmadge’s measure. The U.S. Senate refused any kind of restriction on slavery and did not hold a vote resulting in Congressional deadlock. With either side willing to budge, the bill died on March 3, 1819. While the Tallmadge Amendment demonstrates how slavery had the potential to ruin Jefferson’s vision for the expanding nation, it also demonstrates the political nature of the Missouri Crisis.<sup>22</sup>

The Tallmadge Amendment and the Missouri Crisis in general, caused a much-heated debate in Congress for a variety of reasons. Why the heated debate? First, such a debate came about because of the rise of political parties and newspapers during the early republic period. As a result, politics no longer took place behind closed doors. Second, slavery had grown more

<sup>21</sup> “Debate over the Tallmadge Amendment in the House of Representatives (1819),” in Gary J. Kornblith, *Slavery and Sectional Strife in the Early American Republic, 1776-1821* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 144.

<sup>22</sup> See William R. Johnson, “Prelude to the Missouri Compromise: A New York Congressman’s Effort to Exclude Slavery from Arkansas Territory,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 1 (Spring, 1965): 47-66.

entrenched in the Southern states since the ratification of the Constitution, because of westward expansion, easier cotton processing with the cotton gin, and the discovery of easier to produce cotton. Representatives from slave-holding states refused to give any ground to their Northern neighbors. Third, the Missouri Crisis was a manifestation of Northern resentment towards the additional Southern representation some attributed to the three-fifths clause in the Constitution. Many Northerners had grown tired of the South's bloated numbers in the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as the long line of Virginians who had ascended to the presidency because of the three-fifths clause. President James Monroe also had to be cautious with regard to the Compromise. "The hysteria shown by Southern congressmen during the initial Tallmadge Amendment debate alerted Monroe and his political associates that they were vulnerable to attack from the South because of their broadly national stance; they could hardly allow themselves to appear flexible in defense of slavery."<sup>23</sup> The Compromise and the Tallmadge Amendment was a touchy subject for all involved and, as a result, a number of opinions emerged regarding the Compromise.

Opinions about the crisis came from both sides of the debate. Antislavery groups reached out to their representatives to rid the nation of the scourge of slavery. "Resolved, That the members of the late congress who opposed the admission of slaves into the proposed state of Missouri," announced a October 29, 1819, antislavery meeting at the Trenton, New Jersey, state house, "have the sincere and respectful thanks of this meeting for their manly and unanswerable opposition to a measure fraught with so much mischief and disgrace to our country."<sup>24</sup> On the other side, the veteran South Carolina Congressman Charles Pinckney, argued the proslavery position on

<sup>23</sup> Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>24</sup> "Resolutions of a Public Meeting in Trenton, New Jersey (1819)," in Gary J. Kornblith, *Slavery and Sectional Strife in the Early American Republic, 1776-1821* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 145.

Missouri's statehood in a debate with New York Senator Rufus King: "However we may all wish to see Missouri admitted, as she ought, on equal terms with the other States, this is a very unimportant object to her, compared with keeping the Constitution inviolate – with keeping the hands of Congress from touching the question of slavery. On the subject of the Constitution, no compromise ought ever be made."<sup>25</sup> While King argued that the various compromises regarding slavery only applied to the original thirteen states and that Congress should abolish slavery beyond the original states, Pinckney argued that this was not the case. The Constitution applied to the original and any future states carved from the territories, even going so far as to argue that slavery was not evil, but beneficial to the United States. To find a national solution to this sectional problem, Congress sought a compromise that would appeal to both the proslavery and antislavery interests in the United States. Such a compromise came under the leadership of Henry Clay in the form of the Missouri Compromise.<sup>26</sup>

Debates over the Missouri Crisis, as noted above, caused a great deal of national political consternation. Because of this, the Congressional debates were deadlocked over what to do with Missouri. The Compromise, brokered by Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky, finally broke the deadlock over the state's admission. Clay proposed that Missouri enter the Union as a slave state as it requested. To maintain sectional balance between slave and free, Maine would be broken off from Massachusetts and it would enter the Union as a free state. To address the slavery issue in the remaining Louisiana Purchase Territory, a line would extend along Missouri's southern border

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<sup>25</sup> "Remarks by Representative Charles Pinckney of South Carolina on the Missouri Crisis (1820)," in Gary J. Kornblith, *Slavery and Sectional Strife in the Early American Republic, 1776-1821* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 149.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the Tallmadge Amendment and the Missouri Crisis, see Gary J. Kornblith, *Slavery and Sectional Strife in the Early American Republic, 1776-1821* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 54-61; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 147-160; Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

along the 36° 30'N line. North of this line, any and all territory would be free of slavery while south of this line was open for business as far as slavery was concerned. This would prevent another crisis when Congress carved other states from the Purchase territory. At the time, many Americans, both North and South, considered the Missouri Compromise a success – each side gave a little to gain a little and averted a national crisis. In hindsight, however, the Compromise only served to postpone the crisis, as other compromises were needed and all failed to avert civil war. The next step for Missouri was drafting a state constitution.<sup>27</sup>

Missouri's admission to the Union was not finished until the state constitution was completed. Following the congressional debates over the Compromise, Missouri delegates drafted a state constitution "that called for a law prohibiting free blacks from entering the state."<sup>28</sup> They took this step as part of a long history of white Americans' hostility toward free blacks who they saw as social, economic, and threats to the institution of slavery. Northern Congressmen argued that this violated the Privileges and Immunities clause in Article IV, Section 2, of the Constitution. As a result, a majority in the House did not approve Missouri's constitution with this law present in the document, threatening to undo the hard-fought compromise. Clay worked behind the scenes to ensure that the compromise did not fall through the cracks on this issue and, in February 1821, Missouri agreed not to violate the Privileges and Immunities clause in its state constitution. On August 10, 1821, Missouri entered the Union as the twenty-fourth state. As the Missouri Crisis

<sup>27</sup> See Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 39-51; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 222-231; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 51-62; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 8; Glover Moore, *The Missouri Controversy, 1819-1821* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953); Ronald C. Woolsey, "The West Becomes a Problem: The Missouri Controversy and Slavery Expansion as a Southern Dilemma," *The Missouri Historical Review* 77 (July, 1983): 409-432; Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 70-72.

<sup>28</sup> David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Henry Clay: The Essential American* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2010), 150.

ended, the shift from Jefferson's dream into a nightmare began. This is perhaps best summarized by Wood when he wrote that Jefferson "always sensed that his 'empire of liberty' had a cancer at its core that was eating away at the message of liberty and equality and threatening the very existence of the nation and its democratic self-government; but he had mistakenly come to believe that the cancer was Northern bigotry and money-making promoted by Federalist priests and merchants."<sup>29</sup> With the Missouri crisis it was evident that the cancer was the institution of slavery and competing ideas about its role in the nation and influence on American life. While Missouri's path to statehood was wrought with sectional debates over the slavery question, Arkansas's path to statehood was less dramatic.

### **The Settlement of Arkansas and its Path to Statehood**

Arkansas's path to statehood was very closely linked with the destiny of its northern neighbor. By the time Jefferson purchased Louisiana from the French in 1803, there were a number of peoples in what became Arkansas Territory. A holdover from French control of the region, there were a small number of Frenchmen, scattered along the banks of Arkansas's various rivers and streams, where they fished, hunted, and trapped in the vast Arkansas wilderness. At the frontier town of Arkansas Post, located on the Mississippi River at the mouth of the Mississippi and the Arkansas Rivers, "there were about thirty dwelling houses, built in the French style . . . besides several stores, a mill, and a hotel."<sup>30</sup> The number of French holdovers in Arkansas had dwindled since France transferred the territory to the United States, dropping to about 200 people by the time Arkansas became a territory in 1819, down from about 400 inhabitants in 1803.<sup>31</sup> French

<sup>29</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 737-738.

<sup>30</sup> Marie Cash, "Arkansas in Territorial Days," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep., 1943): 224.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*; Kathleen DuVal, "Debating Identity, Sovereignty, and Civilization: The Arkansas Valley after the Louisiana Purchase," *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 2006): 47.

inhabitants also traded, from time to time, with the various Native American groups located in Arkansas.

When Arkansas became a part of the United States in 1803, because of the Louisiana Purchase, very few Native Americans resided there. With local Native American populations as high as 15,000 to 20,000 during the seventeenth century, disease because of contact with Europeans greatly reduced the numbers of Native Americans here.<sup>32</sup> The Western Cherokee were the primary group in the territory along with a number of Caddo located in the Red River area in the southwestern part of the territory, Osage located in the northwest part of the territory, and Quapaw who occupied the mouth of the Arkansas River. These different peoples had different goals when it came to their dealings with the Americans. For example, the Osage were under the impression that the trading relationships that existed under French and Spanish rule in the region would continue with the Americans. The Osage were mistaken and, when the Americans attempted to “civilize” them by making them adhere to European cultural customs living and landholding. American officials viewed the Osage as the least civilized of the Native groups in Arkansas. Osages did their best to resist these efforts during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Because of frequent battles with other Native groups and the pressure applied by the Americans, the Osage ceded land to the United States with the 1808 Osage Treaty that included an exchange for goods and protection, and moved west. Feeling the pressure of the Americans’ push west, the Cherokee, who were the Osages’ main rival, attempted to position themselves as an ally of the Americans. They used this relationship to drive the Osage west as well as protect their way of life, which included slavery. In the end, the Cherokee strategy failed. Like the Osage, they ceded their lands in the eastern part of the state to the United States and agreed to move the western part of

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<sup>32</sup> Kathleen DuVal, “Debating Identity, Sovereignty, and Civilization: The Arkansas Valley after the Louisiana Purchase,” *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 2006): 36.

the state with a July 1817 treaty. In 1818, the Quapaw ceded land claims in the area between the Red and Arkansas Rivers to the area that would become Little Rock. Arkansas's change to territorial status served to speed up Native American relocation.

After Arkansas achieved territorial status, the American government extinguished whatever friendly relationships existed between different Native groups. With a civilization policy that began with Thomas Jefferson's presidency, the United States government developed an increasingly compulsory Native American removal policy.<sup>33</sup> This was evident once the government granted former Louisiana Purchase lands territorial status. With territorial status, white settlers had more backing when it came to fighting Native Americans over land claims in the territory. Put simply, white Americans future vision of their nation did not include Native Americans. As a result, Native Americans were pushed west by the government. For example, in 1825, the federal government moved the Quapaw again, this time further to the South along the Red River in Louisiana. This was because of the increasing number of cotton plantations in the area. For the Cherokee, another treaty in 1828 moved them to Indiana Territory in exchange for their lands in the territory. Historian Kathleen DuVal notes "every time that the civilization policy came into conflict with white Americans' ambitions, white citizens won. By 1828, all Native American land claims in the territory were extinguished."<sup>34</sup> The relocations of these Native American groups paved the way for white settlement in Arkansas. Americans were willing to deal with Native Americans in Arkansas until lands attained territorial status. Once this happened, the government was fully on the side of the territories white settlers.

<sup>33</sup> See S. Charles Bolton, "Jeffersonian Indian Removal and the Emergence of Arkansas Territory," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 62, No. 3, The Louisiana Purchase and the Peoples of Arkansas (Autumn, 2003): 253-271.

<sup>34</sup> Kathleen DuVal, "Debating Identity, Sovereignty, and Civilization: The Arkansas Valley after the Louisiana Purchase," *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 2006): 52.

Like Missouri, Congress carved Arkansas Territory out of the Louisiana Purchase, and settlers made their way there relatively quickly once the United States government opened the area up for American settlement. Some of the earlier American settlers came as early as 1804 and 1805, adding to the approximately 500 French settlers already in what became Arkansas. By 1810, more Americans made their way to Arkansas by way of the Southwestern Trail, which extended from St. Louis to the Red River region in Texas. By the 1820s and 1830s, the Southwestern Trail served as a settler highway, bringing an increasing number of settlers from the east to Arkansas. Most of these early white settlers were of English and Scots-Irish descent and they came from eastern states like Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Virginia. Historian Allen Guelzo points out that “with the sudden boom in cotton, slaves and masters began shifting south and west, first to Georgia, and then after 1810 into the new territories of Alabama and Mississippi, finally lapping up the Mississippi River into Tennessee and across the Mississippi into Arkansas and Missouri.”<sup>35</sup> After the War of 1812, Arkansas saw a great deal of veterans of that war settle there. The United States government promised veterans 160 acres of public lands located in what constituted the Louisiana Purchase. Following Missouri’s application for admission into the Union, the U.S. government organized Arkansas as Arkansas (*Arkansaw*) Territory in 1819.

Once it achieved territorial status, Arkansas developed quickly, like its counterparts in the Deep South. Congress defined Arkansas Territory with the Mississippi River as its eastern boundary, the new state of Missouri as its northern boundary at the 36° 30’N line, west of the Missouri bootheel. The state of Louisiana as its southern border, and its western border consisting of a line running along the 100 Meridian from the Red River north to the Arkansas River, including

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<sup>35</sup> Allen C. Guelzo, *The Crisis of the American Republic: A History of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 22.

much of present-day Oklahoma.<sup>36</sup> Arkansas Post, located near the mouth of the Arkansas River, served as the territorial capital from 1819-1821. In 1821, territory officials moved the capital to Little Rock as it was more centrally located. During the territorial stage, Arkansas's population grew from about 14,000 in 1820 to 30,000 residents in 1830. The flow of settlers to destinations like Texas increased the volume of traffic through the territory, causing many to settle there. Most settled along the various fertile river valleys, but over time, settlers began moving into the forest and more mountainous regions in the northwestern part of the territory. This was difficult as once one moved away from the rivers, transportation was difficult. Travelers along the Arkansas River "freely commented on the equatorial wilderness, impossible travelling conditions, and noticeable lack of refinement among early settlers."<sup>37</sup> Like other frontier settlements, Arkansas had its fair share of frontier lawlessness, especially in its towns and cities. For example, "[t]he lawlessness of society was exemplified by the fact that the citizens of the town [Little Rock] refused to venture into the streets unless armed with a gun or Bowie knife, commonly known as the 'Arkansas toothpick.'"<sup>38</sup> It was during the 1830s that Arkansas really saw a boom in settlement, with population numbers approaching near 98,000 settlers by the end of the decade. Many of these settlers, especially those in southeastern part of the territory brought their slaves.

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<sup>36</sup> The western portions of Arkansas Territory were removed as a part of the treaty with the Choctaws in 1824, moving the border east, resulting in a line from Fort Smith north to Missouri. An 1828 treaty with the Cherokees (along with the secession of Miller county in the southwest to join the state of Texas when it entered the Union in 1845) moved the western border east again to where it is today. Missouri's bootheel is credited to John Hardeman Walker, an influential landowner in southern Missouri. He amassed much of his property holdings following the New Madrid earthquakes in December 1811 when many moved away and he bought their land. When Missouri applied for statehood, his lands were left out of the state borders as his lands fell below the Missouri Compromise Line. Walker refused to have his lands be a part of Arkansas Territory lobbied Washington for the inclusion of his property within the state of Missouri's borders. When Congress redrew Missouri's borders for inclusion in the Union, Walker's lands were included (hence the bootheel).

<sup>37</sup> Ira Don Richards, *Story of a Rivertown: Little Rock in the Nineteenth Century* (Arkadelphia, AR: Privately Printed, 1969), 11.

<sup>38</sup> Jack B. Scroggs, "Arkansas Statehood: A Study in State and National Political Schism," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1961): 230.

Like its northern neighbor, Arkansas saw a steep increase in its slave population as well as its small free African American population during the territorial stage. With the increase in white settlement during the territorial period came an increase in the slave population. Most of Arkansas's slaves were located within its Gulf Coastal Plain and Delta regions (See Fig. 1.1), located in the southeastern part of the territory, where the growing of cotton was the most prevalent. This is not to say that only cotton planters held slaves. For example, historian John Soloman Otto details slavery in Yell County, Arkansas, from the statehood through the Civil War. His study indicates the number of slaves who labored on small farms in the Arkansas backcountry. Slaves here brought in to cultivate cotton, but they also brought in to grow corn, wheat, rye, legumes, and potatoes.<sup>39</sup> Overall, Arkansas's slave population in 1820 numbered 1,617 and it continued to climb in the succeeding decades.<sup>40</sup> Much of this increase resulted from the fact that many of the state's new settlers brought slaves with them from eastern slave states like Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. Arkansas Territory also had a very small free African American population. According to census data, Arkansas had two free African Americans in 1810, fifty-nine in 1820; and 141 in 1830. More than half of the free African Americans were located in the northwestern part of the territory.<sup>41</sup> While the numbers of free African Americans were small, the number of slaves continued to increase, even after statehood. Because of Arkansas's geography,

<sup>39</sup> John Soloman Otto, "Slavery in the Mountains: Yell County, Arkansas, 1840-1860," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 39, No. 1 (Spring, 1980): 35-52. Yell County is located in the Ouachita Mountains.

<sup>40</sup> C. Fred Williams, S. Charles Bolton, Carl Moneyhon, and LeRoy T. Williams, eds., *A Documentary History of Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1984), 52.

<sup>41</sup> James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 180 (Table 2i). Arkansas passed a law that banned the immigration of free African Americans into the state on March 1, 1843. The Arkansas state legislature passed another measure in 1859 requiring free African Americans to leave the state or face enslavement. See S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 179.

its early population developed politically and economically according to the region in which they settled.<sup>42</sup>

During the territorial stage, two different regions developed in Arkansas – they were different both politically and economically – and these regions would play a role in the state’s

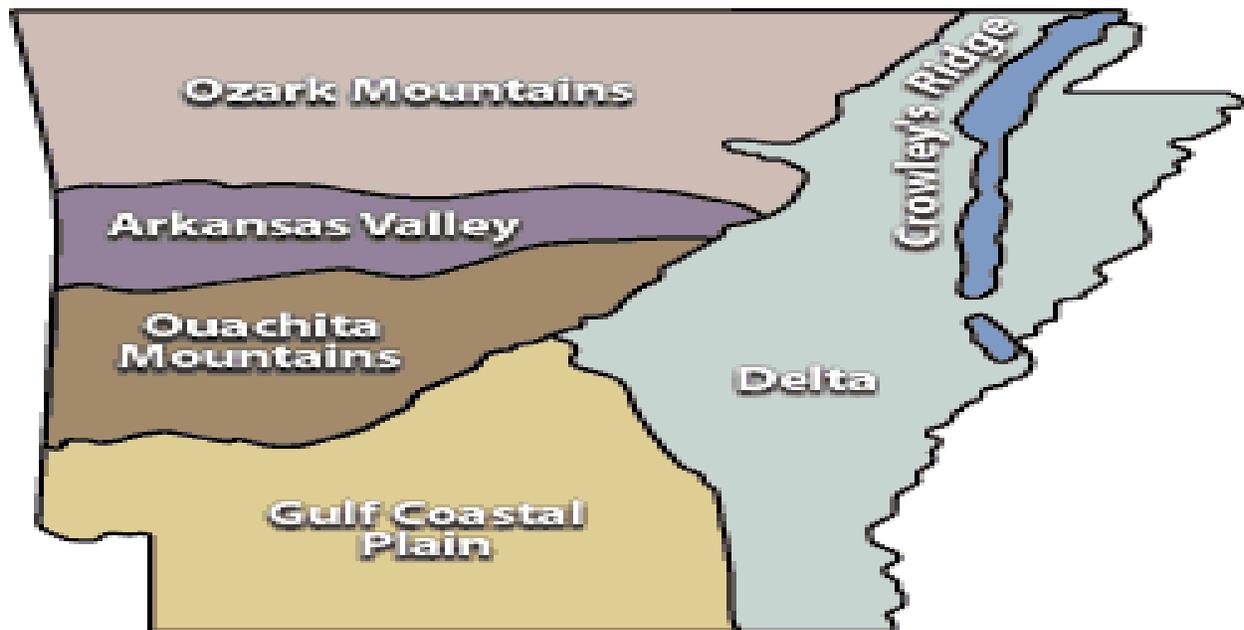


Fig. 1.3: Map of Arkansas’s different regions. Source:

[http://www.arkansasheritage.com/discover/natural\\_environments/regions.aspx](http://www.arkansasheritage.com/discover/natural_environments/regions.aspx)

development through the Civil War. The lowlands, located in the southeastern part of Arkansas, was the cotton belt and ruled by the planter class. While there were a number of yeoman farmers and lower class whites in this region, they did not oppose the slaveholding planters in their economic and political goals. This part of Arkansas was heavily Democratic. The northwestern part of Arkansas was, geographically, very different. Here, rolling hills dotted the landscape, as did the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains – not suitable for the growing of cotton. This region devoted its agricultural resources to the growing of potatoes, tobacco, corn, wheat, and the raising of cattle. This region, politically, consisted primary of Whigs and they offered the greatest opposition to the

<sup>42</sup> S. Charles Bolton, “Slavery and the Defining of Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1999): 1-23.

Democratic planter class in the southeast region of Arkansas. These two sides shaped the debate over Arkansas's entry into the Union.<sup>43</sup>

As the Arkansas population continued to grow during the early 1830s, territorial leaders became increasingly anxious in their desires for Arkansas to enter the Union. It was in the debates concerning statehood that the regional differences mentioned above came to a head. The push for statehood came about in 1833 when Arkansas officials received word that Michigan had requested an enabling act from Congress, the first step in the statehood process. Arkansas territorial delegate Ambrose Sevier urged Arkansas to do the same with the hopes of maintaining the nation's free-slave balance among the states.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the initial push for statehood came out of interests in protecting slavery. By early 1835, Congress refused to issue an enabling act for Arkansas – even though the territory had reached the requirements in terms of population – pushing Sevier to act at the state level. The new territorial governor, William S. Fulton, insisted that Arkansas wait until the following year to seek statehood. Fulton correctly viewed this as acting outside of Congress's authority and refused to take part. Sevier and his supporters were determined not to wait for Fulton or for an enabling act from Congress and pushed that a convention be ordered to draft a state constitution. Sevier gave assurances to President Andrew Jackson that he and his supporters would abide by the laws of the territory until Congress acted on their state constitution. While both the state's Democrats and Whigs were in favor of statehood for Arkansas, they disagreed over the nature of representation in the constitutional convention.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See Jack B. Scroggs, "Arkansas Statehood: A Study in State and National Political Schism," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1961): 227-244; Marie Cash, "Arkansas Achieves Statehood," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 2, No. 4 (Dec., 1943): 292-308.

<sup>44</sup> The only other Southern territory close to entering the Union at this time was Florida.

<sup>45</sup> Jack B. Scroggs, "Arkansas Statehood: A Study in State and National Political Schism," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1961): 227-237.

Initially, after the two state houses compromised over the choosing of delegates, delegates for the state convention were to be split between the state's two regions – twenty-one from the northwest and twenty-one from the southeast. Representatives from the southeast objected, demanding representation based on the apportionment in the state legislature. It is easy to see why representatives from the cotton counties would want it this way – three-fifths of the slaves in these counties were counted when apportioning representation in the state legislature. Representatives from the southeast got their way, and this apportionment method was now ready for a vote. Northeastern representatives would not go down without a fight. State Whig representatives, led by David Walker and Absalom Fowler, objected. They pushed back and, led by Walker, were able to forestall the vote. In the end, delegates reached a final compromise in which each region had twenty-six representatives to the state constitutional convention. Walker and his colleagues had the sense that this compromise would be only temporary. Reporting to his constituents, Walker stated:

It was insisted on by gentleman, in behalf of the east and south, that they possessed much the most wealth and particularly a large slave population, and insisted, as of right, that they should have an additional representation equal to three-fifths of their slave population; while other gentlemen on the same side, towards the close of the debate very modestly insisted that districts of county should have votes in Convention, independent of population. On the other hand, it was insisted by the northern and western members . . . that the only true basis of representation was the free men of the county, whether they live in the north or the south.<sup>46</sup>

This local debate concerning how the state selected constitutional delegates demonstrates how important regional influence had grown in the emerging state of Arkansas. It also serves as a small example of what was to come nationally.

Once state representatives hashed out the details of representative apportionment, they moved forward with the statehood process. Next was the matter of drafting the state constitution.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

By February 4, 1836, the constitution was finished and published in the *Arkansas Gazette* for the citizens to see. The finished product did not face the same kind of debate as the apportionment issue. While there were debates over church and state and if ministers could run for governor or the legislature, there were no debates over slavery in the framing of the document. The final document was flexible, brief, and modeled on the United States Constitution.<sup>47</sup> Sevier waited for news of the newly drafted state constitution in Washington, D.C. and was excited to receive a copy of the *Gazette's* printing of the constitution and on March 1, 1836, he presented it to the House of Representatives. The Senate passed the Arkansas bill the following month and the House debated the bill, along with the Michigan bill, through early June. Then, on June 15, 1836, Congress admitted Arkansas to the Union making it the twenty-fifth state.<sup>48</sup> Sevier became one of the state's two U.S. senators while Arkansans elected James Sevier Conway as the state's first governor. Much like Arkansas's and Missouri's entrance into the Union, political and moral debates over slavery at the national had become increasingly stormy.

### **The Coming Storm Arkansas and Missouri: Slavery and Secession**

Led by the rising Abolitionist movements, debates over slavery and its expansion increased during the antebellum period. Influenced by the Second Great Awakening, the Abolition Movement reached its height during the 1830s continuing through the start of the Civil War, agitated against slavery and contributed to heightened section tensions. Leaders of the movement, like William Lloyd Garrison and Angelina Grimké, spoke and published across the nation advocating for some form of slavery's national abolition. "So convinced, and certain of ultimate victory," writes historian James Brewer Stewart, "youthful holy warriors set out to persuade each

<sup>47</sup> Cal Ledbetter, Jr., "The Constitution of 1836: A New Perspective," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 41, No. 3 (Autumn, 1982): 231-233.

<sup>48</sup> Marie Cash, "Arkansas Achieves Statehood," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 2, No. 4 (Dec., 1943): 303-304.

American citizen to repent the sin of slavery.”<sup>49</sup> Abolitionist activists worked tirelessly to open American’s eyes to the evils of slavery. Part of a larger moral suasion movement in the United States during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Abolition Movement influenced a number of politicians, causing many congressmen to take an antislavery stance with their politics, however they remained a political minority, even in Whig politics, when compared to their counterparts in the anti-slavery or free soil movement.<sup>50</sup>

Supporters of slavery in Missouri and Arkansas did not welcome abolitionists or their message. A November 5, 1847, article in the Liberty [Missouri] *Tribune* warned of an abolitionist meeting in nearby Sparta or Eden, Illinois, and that “[t]hese worthies seem bent on tampering with the rights of other people, and it will be well for the people of Missouri to be on the alert for their property is in danger.”<sup>51</sup> Concerned citizens alerted slaveowners in Missouri to be on the lookout for abolitionists bent on taking their property. Similarly, in Arkansas, a Whig newspaper, *Times and Advocate*, criticized Governor Archibald Yell for not being tough enough on slavery when they felt that he was not vocal enough in speaking out against abolitionist petitions.<sup>52</sup> Agitation over slavery not only increased tensions in Missouri and Arkansas, but it created a growing sectional divide between the North and the South., especially with the United States’ continued westward expansion across the continent during the 1840s and the 1850s.

Westward expansion in the United States greatly accelerated from the mid-1830s through the late-1840s. Beginning in the 1820s, American settlers began making their way to Texas, Arkansas’s neighbor to the southwest. American settlers made their way to Texas as it promised

<sup>49</sup> James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*, revised edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 50.

<sup>50</sup> See Paul Goodman, “Abolitionists and the Origins of Racial Equality,” in Rick Halpern and Enrico Dal Lago, eds., *Slavery and Emancipation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 304-315.

<sup>51</sup> “Local News,” Liberty [MO] *Tribune*, November 5, 1847. [Missouri Digital Heritage]

<sup>52</sup> S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 179.

vast opportunity as well as fertile farmland. Settlers came to Texas from Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Missouri – many bringing their slaves with them - hoping to make good on this opportunity. The problem for white settlers there was that slavery was illegal in Mexico. This was only one way in which white settlers openly flaunted Mexican law. Because of this flagrant law breaking, Mexican officials had enough and marched troops into Texas to ensure that the Texans followed Mexican law. By early 1835, Texas was involved in a war for its independence from Mexico and, a few months later, won. A few years later, in 1837, the Lone Star Republic sought annexation by the United States. This annexation would be hard fought and stir many debates over the nature of American expansion and where the institution of slavery fit into that expansion.

The United States' annexation of Texas became a political hot potato following its defeat of Mexico in 1835. Whigs, who felt that expansion was dangerous, were very much against the annexation of Texas. Democrats, on the other hand, were in favor of Texas's annexation, as they believed that Americans had a right and responsibility to spread liberty through physical territorial expansion. As a result, the debate over the annexation of Texas by the United States occupied, at least in some way, five U.S. presidents. The *Banner of Liberty*, Missouri, published the letter of an "intelligent friend in a distant county in this state" in which he stated:

Let it be shown that this opposition in the part of the Whigs of the West, is insincere, and every other kind of cidal that is either wicked, impolitic or devilish; that it is indeed nothing but a claptrap of Clay and his associates to catch the votes of the Abolitionists, whom they regard as strong enough in some parts of the free States to hold the balance of power between [sic] Whigs and Democrats. That there is now no chance but to take Texas in, or she is gone forever to Britain, and delineate in proper colors the consequences of the establishment of that curious, ambitious, avaricious people there. The certainty that it will result in the abolition of slavery, and perhaps final subjugation of these States.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Local News," *Liberty [MO] Banner*, March 3, 1844. [Missouri Digital Heritage]

This “intelligent friend” in Missouri posited the annexation of Texas as urgent because, first, the United States could lose it to Great Britain. Second, without Texas, slavery would be doomed and the abolitionists would get their way. Both Whigs and Democrats stuck to the party line rather than the sectional line on the Texas controversy. Texas’s annexation served as a critical moment in the coming of the Civil War. The conflict over Texas’s annexation and, as historian Joel H. Silbey argues, “the political fallout from it, has fair claim to be considered as the critical base point on which the rest of the crisis of the Union grew. . . . framing a long process that culminated, a decade later, in a profound reorganization of American politics and then in southern secession and Civil War – crucial in ways that earlier sectional crises had never reached.”<sup>54</sup> Annexation finally came in December 1845 following the election of expansionist James K. Polk as president. Texas served as Polk’s first effort at expansion, the next came at the cost of an unpopular war with Mexico beginning in 1846.

The Mexican War (1846-1848) followed an attempt by President Polk to purchase California and New Mexico from Mexico for the price of \$25 million and settle the Texas border issue.<sup>55</sup> When Mexican authorities refused his offer, Polk grew more determined to wrest this land from Mexico. During the late spring of 1846, the president sent American troops, led by General Zachary Taylor, to the disputed border between newly acquired Texas and Mexico near Corpus Christi. Mexican troops attacked the Americans, as they perceived them to be on Mexican soil, therefore invading Mexico. With this, the U.S. war with Mexico had begun. Immediately after the start of hostilities, Polk asked Congress for \$2 million with the hopes that he would be able to

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<sup>54</sup> Joel H. Silbey, *Storm Over Texas: The Annexation Controversy and the Road to Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), xvii-xviii.

<sup>55</sup> Texans had long claimed that the Rio Grande River served as Texas’s border with Mexico. Upon annexation by the United States, they too held to this same border claim. Mexico claimed that the border was further north, at the Nueces River.

negotiate a peace treaty with Mexico by the summer. When Congress began debating Polk's request, some began suggesting that for Polk to have this appropriation; questions would have to be asked regarding slavery's limitations in the potential territory acquired from Mexico. The cat was out of the bag; Polk went to war to gain territory from Mexico, though not necessarily to spread the institution of slavery. Others, both politicians and the public, saw it differently.

Debates raged in Congress over the war and the meaning of territorial expansion – debates on the Constitution's view on slavery and territorial expansion.<sup>56</sup> Whigs, who were against the annexation of Texas, were against the war as they thought that it would only lead to the expansion of slavery. "America's mission," Whigs argued, "was to spread republican institutions by example, not be coercion."<sup>57</sup> This did not mean, however, that all Americans were against the principle of territorial expansion. Author Fergus M. Bordewich notes: "Most Americans supported territorial expansion if for no other reason than that it was a means to acquire cheap land on which to settle. For slave-owning southerners, however, it was a strategy for survival."<sup>58</sup> The war also faced public scrutiny in the United States, especially from the abolitionist stronghold of the Northeast. Henry David Thoreau penned his famous essay, *On Civil Disobedience*, as a protest against the war and served jail time for his refusal to pay taxes as he did not want any of his money to support the war. Abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass also spoke out against the war: "[Mexico] may be conquered and subdued; her government may be annihilated – her name among the great sisterhood of nations blotted out; her separate existence annihilated; her rights and powers usurped;

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<sup>56</sup> See Don E. Fehrenbacher, "Slavery and Territorial Expansion," in Rick Halpern and Enrico Dal Lago, eds., *Slavery and Emancipation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 326-344. Fehrenbacher argues that the constitution took a neutral stance towards slavery while the federal government favored its expansion.

<sup>57</sup> Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 250.

<sup>58</sup> Fergus M. Bordewich, *America's Great Debate: Henry Clay, Stephen A. Douglas, and the Compromise That Preserved the Union* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 11.

. . . but, so sure as there is a God of justice, we shall not go unpunished.”<sup>59</sup> While many Americans supported the war, those against wanted to be clear: they did not support a war whose purpose was to extend slavery. In an attempt to allow the Americans to have their cake and eat it too, Congressman David Wilmot had a plan for the territory acquired from Mexico in the war.

To alleviate both anti-slavery supporters and abolitionists’ fears about the spread of slavery while at the same time quenching Americans’ thirst for westward expansion, David Wilmot, a first term Democratic Congressman from Pennsylvania, attempted to attach a proviso to the funding of the war in 1846. This proviso sought to prohibit slavery from any potential territory acquired from Mexico in the war. “If any event in American history can be singled out as the beginning of a path which led almost inevitably to sectional controversy and civil war, it was the introduction of the Wilmot Proviso.”<sup>60</sup> The Wilmot Proviso passed the House of Representative many times, but failed each time that it reached the pro-South Senate. In the end, Wilmot’s Proviso had been defeated. The debate over the proviso took its toll on the Democrats, causing a rift between the northern and southern wings of the party. For Whigs, it was the beginning of the end of their party on the national stage. Party loyalties that had held strong began to crumble in exchange for sectional loyalty. On any issue relating to slavery, Missouri and Arkansas would now cast their lot with the South rather than the two political parties. The Mexican War continued and whatever territory the United States acquired from Mexico would have no restrictions placed upon it. By March 10, 1848, the Senate ratified the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, effectively ending the war with Mexico. The war with Mexico was over, but not without a great deal of land acquired because of the United States’ victory and not without a nation more divided over the institution of slavery.

<sup>59</sup> Frederick Douglass, “The War with Mexico (January 21, 1848),” in Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2008), 80.

<sup>60</sup> Eric Foner, “The Wilmot Proviso Revisited,” *The Journal of American History* Vol. 56, No. 2 (Sep., 1969): 262.

After the war ended, Congress hoped to have some time to determine how the slavery issue would be handled in this vast new territory, including more than 500,000 square miles. The discovery of gold in 1848-1849 at Sutter's Mill in California ended that hope. Because of the Gold Rush of 1848-1849, California's population exploded almost overnight, making it ready for statehood – catching Congress unprepared. In 1849, California delegates wanted to enter the Union as a free state, potentially upsetting the balance between free and slave states. Negotiated over the summer of 1850 by Kentucky Senator Henry Clay and, with the help of Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas, the Compromise of 1850 sought to ease sectional tensions and avoid potential civil war. The compromise included five parts: the admission of California as a free state; settlement of the border dispute between Texas and New Mexico; the ending of the slave trade in the District of Columbia; establishment of New Mexico and Utah Territories with no restrictions on slavery (popular sovereignty); and a stronger Fugitive Slave Law. Historians, however, differ on the effectiveness of the compromise. For example, Robert Remini argues that the Compromise of 1850 was successful as it bought time for the North to industrialize: “The resulting Compromise of 1850 delayed the catastrophe of civil war for ten years, and those ten years were absolutely essential for preserving the American nation under the Constitution.”<sup>61</sup> Paul Finkelman, on the other hand, posits the Compromise as “The Appeasement of 1850.” The Compromise was proslavery, explaining the broad support for the Compromise across the South, and Finkelman dismisses the heroic analysis of the Compromise. “In the end,” argues Finkelman, “the compromise failed because it was never a compromise at all. It gave almost everything to slavery and almost nothing

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Remini, *At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise that Saved the Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 157.

to freedom.”<sup>62</sup> While historians may disagree on its effectiveness, the Compromise of 1850 served as another catalyst for war and Missouri and Arkansas felt its impact.

The Compromise of 1850 created little resistance among the citizens in Arkansas and Missouri, though it did cause some rumblings politically. Many Missourians hailed the Compromise of 1850, especially the Fugitive Slave Act. Because free states bordered Missouri, slave owners were in constant fear that their slaves could escape to neighboring states, never to return.<sup>63</sup> The Fugitive Slave Act eased many Missourians’ fears with regard to their slaves. While slaveowners were put at ease, Democrats in the state viewed the compromise with some skepticism. For example, Missouri senator David Rice Atchison remarked, “Although in my opinion the slave States did not get equal and exact justice, yet we escaped dishonor and degradation. Let us hold our northern brethren to a strict observance of all the terms of settlement; they must comply with their part of the bargain.”<sup>64</sup> Arkansans, like much of the South, viewed the Compromise as a triumph of moderation. Politically, the Compromise caused some rumblings in the state Democratic Party dividing it between those in the north and the west, who supported the Compromise and those in the southern and eastern part of the state who shared Atchison’s sentiments. Whigs in the state, and throughout much of the South, enthusiastically support the Compromise, while Democrats supported it reluctantly.<sup>65</sup> Despite these political disagreements in

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<sup>62</sup> Paul Finkelman, “The Appeasement of 1850,” in Paul Finkelman and Donald R. Kennon, eds., *Congress and the Crisis of the 1850s* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 79. See also Fergus M. Bordewich, *America’s Great Debate: Henry Clay, Stephen A. Douglas, and the Compromise that Preserved the Union* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012); Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 226-229.

<sup>63</sup> Silvana R. Siddali, *Missouri’s War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 32.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Christopher Phillips, *Missouri’s Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 196.

<sup>65</sup> See Brian G. Walton, “Arkansas Politics during the Compromise Crisis, 1848-1852,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter, 1977): 307-337.

each state, no major damage was done – to either the Compromise or the state political parties. A few short years later, another national debate over the western spread of slavery ignited in Kansas.

The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, drafted by Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas, opened up the possibility for slavery to take root in that portion of the former Louisiana Purchase lands where it had been forbidden as part of the Missouri Compromise in 1820 as it was north of the 36° 30'N line. Douglas's solution in the Kansas-Nebraska Act was popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty allowed the residents of a territory decide upon the issue of slavery for themselves. As a result, territorial legislatures drafted state constitutions with or without slavery and put it to the citizens for a vote. With the Compromise of 1850 completed only a few years before, Americans hoped to put the divisive slavery issue to rest for the last time. The Kansas-Nebraska Act only served to reopen old wounds with regard to the institution of slavery. "To mitigate the expected northern reaction," notes historian Sean Wilentz, "Douglas's new bill organized two territories, Nebraska west of Iowa (which seemed to mark it for free soil), and Kansas west of Missouri (which seemed to mark it for slavery)."<sup>66</sup> Many Northerners were angry that the Illinois senator outright destroyed a hard fought and delicate compromise over slavery. Northerners asked themselves why the senator would allow the Missouri Compromise to unravel.<sup>67</sup> Southerners took offense when Northerners spoke out against the introduction of slavery to the Sunflower State, as evidenced by the caning of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner by Southerner Preston Brooks.<sup>68</sup> The Kansas-

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<sup>66</sup> Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 672.

<sup>67</sup> Senator Douglas's desire to open Kansas and Nebraska for settlement had roots in his railroad interests. In order to have a transcontinental railroad, with a terminus in Douglas's home state of Illinois (Chicago), Kansas and Nebraska had to attract settlers from the Midwestern and Eastern states so the railroad could be constructed. For this to happen, Congress had to authorize the creation of these territories. Douglas's motives may have also been a test for the northern free soil Democrats who felt that access to land was linked with economic independence following the Panic of 1837. 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).

<sup>68</sup> On May 19, 1856, Sumner gave a speech entitled "The Crime Against Kansas" in which he spoke out against the introduction of slavery into Kansas. During his speech, Sumner insulted South Carolina Senator Andrew Butler (as

Nebraska Act destroyed the perceived sectional harmony only a few years after the Compromise of 1850. In effect, popular sovereignty invalidated the Missouri Compromise making slavery permissible north of the 36°30' Missouri Compromise Line. The Kansas-Nebraska Act had national ramifications in that it solidified the Republicans' place in the newly developed party system; it also had ramifications locally in both Missouri and Arkansas.

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act had important consequences on both the state of Missouri and the coming of the Civil War. This legislation set off massive emigration campaigns for both free soilers and proslavery advocates who sought to settle the territory therefore influencing the territorial legislature to their respective political persuasions with regard to slavery. Slave-owning Missourians feared that a free Kansas would create a haven for fugitive slaves, even with the recently passed Fugitive Slave Act, just on the other side of their western border. Free stater, backed by abolitionists and emigrant aid companies, settled in Manhattan, Lawrence, and Topeka. Proslavery settlements existed in Leavenworth and Atchison. By late May 1854, many proslavery Missourians, led by Missouri Senator David R. Atchison, outnumbered free soilers across the border and intended to push them as far west as possible so that slavery may be extended. By the time of the fall elections in 1854, many Missouri 'border ruffians' made their way over the

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well as Stephen Douglas) in assigning blame for the Kansas-Nebraska Act. A few days after Sumner's speech, Preston Brooks, a relative of Senator Butler who claimed that he had to defend Butler's honor, caned (Sumner was hit thirty or more times) and seriously injured the Massachusetts Senator on the floor of the U.S. Senate. When he heard about the caning of Sumner, abolitionist John Brown (a free-stater living in Kansas) became incensed and murdered slavery supporters at the Pottawattamie Creek Massacre. Brown murdered five proslavery settlers along Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas on May 24-25, 1856 in what became known as the Pottawatomie Massacre. Historians do still not agree upon the exact details about the murder and Brown's role in it. Witnesses claim that Brown "went crazy – crazy" upon hearing about the caning of Sumner. See Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge this Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 126-137. This massacre ushered in a period of violence known as Bleeding Kansas. For more on the caning of Sumner, see See Stephen Puleo, *The Caning: The Assault that Drove America to Civil War* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2012); Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 690-693; Brooks D. Simpson, "Hit Him Again: The Caning of Charles Sumner," in Paul Finkelman and Donald R. Kennon, eds., *Congress and the Crisis of the 1850s* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 2012).

border and voted in favor of the proslavery candidates there in which they succeeded sending a proslavery candidate to Congress. Proslavery Missourians felt justified engaging in fraudulent voting practices in Kansas as “they thought Northerners were breaking the law and wanted to beat them at their own game.”<sup>69</sup> Though Andrew Reeder, the territorial governor of Kansas, cried foul and ordered new elections in many districts, proslavery candidates still won. As a result, free and proslavery forces raced to set up governments in Kansas that reflected their respective views.

The competition between free and slave forces resulted in two governments in Kansas Territory – one free and one slave. In late 1855, Kansas free soilers called their own convention at Topeka to counter the fraudulently elected pro-slavery legislature. Here, free staters drafted a free state constitution (Topeka Constitution) making it the center for free state forces there. This free state constitution most reflected the views of Kansas’s *actual* residents. Free state delegates passed this constitution in December of 1855. Delegates forwarded the constitution on to Washington only to have President Franklin Pierce reject it. In response to the Topeka Constitution, the proslavery forces met at Lecompton in September 1857 where slavery supporters drafted the Lecompton constitution – a proslavery constitution. After Lecompton, many anti-slavery Kansans took matters into their own hands, as they quickly began outnumbered proslavery settlers. Many of these anti-slavery settlers arrived from New England funded by emigrant aid societies located there equipped with Beecher’s Bibles, inspired by abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher who had claimed the Sharp’s Rifle as a moral instrument. Because of the competing legislatures, Kansas had two territorial governments by late 1857, one in Topeka and one at Lecompton. With many of

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<sup>69</sup> Nicole Etcheson, “The Goose Question: The Proslavery Party in Territorial Kansas and the ‘Crisis in Law and Order,’” in Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 52. In this essay, Etcheson explains why pro-slavery forces in western Missouri and Kansas were threatened by anti-slavery forces there beginning in 1854.

the free soilers and proslavery settlers heavily armed, it was only a matter of time before violence broke out in Kansas.<sup>70</sup>

The violence in Kansas began with the murder of a free soiler by a proslavery man in November 1855. Following this incident, a shooting war occurred bringing about Bleeding Kansas. The move towards violence began when approximately 1,500 Missourians marched across the border into Kansas while Federal troops stationed there did nothing. President Pierce refused to act and possibly make the situation there worse. The situation that began in November 1855 was eventually defused by an unseasonable harsh winter only to reignite the next spring. Following an incident where a proslavery judge ordered the indictment of the free state legislature, proslavery Missourians took it upon themselves to attack Lawrence, Kansas – viewed by many proslavery settlers as the hotbed of abolitionism in the state. A proslavery posse made its way into Lawrence and destroyed much of the town, including its newspaper offices, a hotel, the home of the free state governor, and many homes and businesses. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, an antislavery newspaper, published a dispatch on January 19, 1856, that demonstrated the situation on the ground in Bleeding Kansas. “The extra declares that the war has again commenced, and . . . inflammatory appeal to the people to rally at once. I think a serious difficulty has occurred, growing out of the Freesoil election the other day, and regard this as but another move to get up a civil war in Kansas. It is the last desperate game of the Atchinsonites.”<sup>71</sup> The violence in Kansas continued sporadically over the next couple of years. The last violent act came with the Marais des Cygnes

<sup>70</sup> Kansas free staters proposed two additional constitutions to Congress: The Leavenworth Constitution in 1858 and the Wyandotte Constitution in 1859. Congress approved the Wyandotte Constitution allowing Kansas to enter the Union as a free state in 1861. See Pearl T. Ponce, “‘The Noise of Democracy’: The Lecompton Constitution in Congress and Kansas,” in Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2013); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 148-150; Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 146-149.

<sup>71</sup> “A St. Louis Newspaper Laments the ‘Fratricidal Strife on the Soil of Kansas,’” in Silvana R. Siddali, *Missouri’s War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 39-40.

Massacre on May 19, 1858, in which proslavery forces attempted to execute eleven free staters on the banks of the Marais des Cygnes River in western Missouri along the Kansas border.<sup>72</sup>

The Kansas-Nebraska Act and the resulting violence along the Kansas-Missouri border had an impact on Arkansas politics as well, with state Democrats and Whigs offering different opinions in the events there. Arkansas Democrats and state Democratic organs praised the Kansas-Nebraska Act and Stephen Douglas. Democrats felt that the Act was a nod to Southern principles and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was in the best interest of the states, especially slave states, and the territories. The *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat* viewed it as an exorcism of the abolitionists: “The dark demon of abolition agitation, which has so long possessed a part of the Congress of the United States, has been exorcised . . . .”<sup>73</sup> Whigs in the state, however, felt very differently about the Act. Nationally, the Whig Party viewed the Act as a national issue, not a moral one. Whigs, along with Free Soilers and Anti-Slavery Democrats were “weary of carrying the South’s water in national affairs.”<sup>74</sup> While much of their opposition was in line with the rest of the Whig Party in the North, there was a key variation from the national party. Arkansas Whigs felt that the Kansas-Nebraska Act and its effective repeal of the Missouri Compromise put Southern slave owners in peril as they could lose assurance that slavery would be permitted below the Missouri Compromise line. Like most Southerners, they were not pleased with the concept of popular sovereignty as they wanted no restrictions on slavery, but they figured that they would take what they could get with regard to slavery. Whig newspaper editors in the state found the Kansas-Nebraska Act to be against the best interests of the South and took the sectional line rather

<sup>72</sup> See William Garret Piston and Thomas P. Sweeney, M.D., *Portraits of Conflict: A Photographic History of Missouri During the Civil War* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2009), 41-42. Five of those attacked survived their wounds.

<sup>73</sup> “Passage of the Nebraska Bill,” *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat*, September 6, 1854.

<sup>74</sup> “If I Went West, I Think I Would Go to Kansas’: Abraham Lincoln, the Sunflower State, and the Election of 1860,” in Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 123.

than the party line. Neither side, however, were moved enough to make the short journey to Kansas and partake in the events happening there. Only when violence in Kansas broke out did Arkansans show real concern about what was happening in Kansas.<sup>75</sup>

No matter an Arkansan's political affiliation, they were well aware of the fact that the battles in Kansas were only a short distance away from their home state and the violence there raised concerns over the future of slavery, especially among proslavery Arkansans. The northwestern part of Arkansas was very close to Kansas and Arkansans were well aware of this fact and Arkansas newspapers called for citizens to act before the violence spread to their state. Proslavery advocates called for collections to aid pro-slavery forces in Kansas. In addition, proslavery newspapers in the state called for proslavery men to go to Kansas and fight the abolitionists there, as it was better to fight them in Kansas than it would be in Arkansas. For example, the *True Democrat* in Little Rock editorialized that "Arkansas has been too lukewarm. She has yet to contribute to the cause, through her interests in the issue are second to those of no State in the Union. Let us do our duty. . . . Kansas is on the very border of Arkansas. With Kansas a Slave State, all will be well. With it a Free State, our property will be rendered insecure, and troubles and annoyances the lot of our people."<sup>76</sup> Quite simply, it was a call for retaliation. If they did not retaliate, the Arkansas press warned, there would be a variety of dangers if Arkansas became an outpost for slavery if the free staters were to win in Kansas. While some Arkansans from the eastern and southern part of the state and to a lesser degree, western Arkansas, moved to

<sup>75</sup> Granville D. Davis, "Arkansas and the Blood of Kansas," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 16, No. 4 (Nov., 1950): 432-434; Nicole Etcheson, "The Goose Question: The Proslavery Party in Territorial Kansas and the 'Crisis in Law and Order,'" in Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 48-49.

<sup>76</sup> Little Rock *True Democrat*, September 2, 1856, quoted in James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 65-66.

help proslavery forces in Kansas, nothing of significance came of these measures pushed by the Arkansas proslavery press. Why did proslavery Arkansans not heed the call in Kansas?

Arkansans were fully aware of the situation in Kansas, but few citizens there intervened. Historian Granville D. Davis argues that Arkansans failed to take any noticeable concern over Kansas because of the states' relatively small population and the fact that many Arkansans were in the state for the short term. By 1860, Arkansas's white population was only 324,143, a low number considering size of the state.<sup>77</sup> Many Arkansans went to Texas, Louisiana, and California, not swayed by the pleas of proslavery advocates in their state to head to Kansas. Davis's research shows that between 1850 and 1860, "the number of Arkansans in Texas rose from 4,693 to 11,319, in Missouri from 2,120 to 4,395, in California from 350 to 2,216, and in Louisiana from 803 to 1,314." Only 448 went to Kansas.<sup>78</sup> To be sure, it was not a result of a misunderstanding or the Arkansas press not reporting enough on the events in Kansas. The Arkansas press constantly reminded readers of what could happen if they failed to help in Kansas – it would become a haven for fugitive slaves. The Arkansas *True Democrat* reported, "Our citizens have a deep stake in the issue. – With Kansas a slave State, all will be well. With it as a free State, our property will be rendered insecure, and troubles and annoyances unnumbered will be the lot of our people."<sup>79</sup> Even with these pleas, Arkansas planters failed to register any kind of concern about the events in Kansas. The ultimate reason for planters failing register any major concern regarding the events in Kansas, notes Davis, was that planters knew that Kansas's soil was not ideal for the growing of cotton. In short, "Arkansas bowed to the inevitable," since cotton could not be grown there, it was

<sup>77</sup> Granville D. Davis, "Arkansas and the Blood of Kansas," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 16, No. 4 (Nov., 1950): 453 n113.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

<sup>79</sup> Little Rock *True Democrat*, September 2, 1856. Quoted in Granville D. Davis, "Arkansas and the Blood of Kansas," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 16, No. 4 (Nov., 1950): 440.

pointless to be a part of the fight in Kansas.<sup>80</sup> They would remain focused on the political developments that resulted from the episode in Kansas.

Nationally, the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the violence that followed enabled the rise of the Republican Party. For the Republicans, the actions of both Brooks and the Border Ruffians along the Kansas-Missouri border demonstrated that the Slave Power would stop at nothing to introduce slavery into the territories. Bleeding Kansas and Bleeding Sumner became “a powerful weapon in the Republicans’ propaganda arsenal” during the 1856 presidential election.<sup>81</sup> The events in Kansas enabled Republicans to have an unprecedented showing in the 1856 presidential election, winning the vote in the North with Missouri’s own John C. Frémont as its candidate. While the Republicans lost the election to Democrat James Buchanan, the result of the Republicans’ showing in the 1856 presidential election demonstrated that they had supplanted the dying Whigs as a viable party in the North. This showing demonstrated that the newly formed Republican Party would not be a temporary success. Events beyond those in Kansas would play a key role in further shaping the Republicans as well as escalate tensions surrounding this sectional party.

During the mid-1850s, the events in Kansas and along the Kansas-Missouri border played an important role in the transformation of the American political landscape in the form of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Sumner, and the Lecompton constitution. These actions also had political implications in Arkansas and Missouri. For the Republicans, the events in Kansas confirmed that the Slave Power was encroaching against the North and had no limits –

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<sup>80</sup> Granville D. Davis, “Arkansas and the Blood of Kansas,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 16, No. 4 (Nov., 1950): 454; James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas’s Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 66.

<sup>81</sup> Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 117.

not even the Missouri Compromise. Republicans utilized the events in Kansas to boost their party as the nation's premiere sectional party, absorbing many northern Whigs and nativists into their ranks. For the Democrats, it hurt Stephen Douglas's presidential aspirations in that he was alienated from the Democratic Party due to his stance on Lecompton. The events in Kansas signaled the end of the Democrats in the North, making room for the Republicans. The elimination of both the Whigs and the American Party, combined with the decline of the Democrats enabled the Republicans to become the party of the North. The first national issue to confront this new party was the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* handed down in 1857.

With the case of Dred Scott, a Missouri slave who challenged his freedom in the Missouri state courts for nearly a decade, the United States Supreme Court attempted to resolve the slavery issue in the territories in a single decision. In its most simple form, the case involved Scott's claim to freedom by his residence in a free territory - Illinois and Wisconsin Territory. Initially, Scott won his freedom through the local courts, winning his case as high as the Missouri Supreme Court, but through subsequent challenges to this decision, Scott saw his case before the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, a Marylander and slavery supporter, not only ruled that Scott was not a free man, but that he was not a citizen of the United States when he wrote the majority opinion in March 1857, just two days after the inauguration of James Buchanan as president of the United States. The decision, notes historian Eric Foner, "propelled to the forefront of public debate questions that would dominate politics until the outbreak of the Civil War: the founders' intentions regarding slavery; whether slavery should be viewed as a local or national institution; and the constitutional authority of the federal government to prohibit slavery in the territories."<sup>82</sup> It was

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<sup>82</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 94-95.

Taney's constitutional interpretation that the Missouri Compromise that caused particular trouble in the West. Taney, in an attempt to cripple the newly formed Republican Party, went further to declare that Congress did not have the authority to legislate slavery in the territories. Taney declared, with regard to the Missouri Compromise, "it is the duty of this court to declare it void and inoperative, and incapable of conferring upon any one who is held as a slave under the laws of the United States."<sup>83</sup> In short, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Missouri Compromise was invalid - unconstitutional. This decision set the stage for increased sectional tensions as well as Abraham Lincoln's election as president – but not before it sent ripples through Missouri and Arkansas.<sup>84</sup>

The Supreme Court's decision in the *Dred Scott* case had implications nationally, but it also had effects at the state level in Missouri and Arkansas. In 1857, Arkansas attempted to pass a proposal that would enslave all free blacks who did not leave the state within one year. The proposal failed, but after *Dred Scott*, this proposal had new life. Because of Taney's decision in the case, the Arkansas legislature passed an expulsion act in 1859 causing Arkansas's free African Americans to leave the state post haste.<sup>85</sup> In Missouri, the *Dred Scott* decision negated the 1824 decision in the state case *Winny v. Whitesides*. In this case, the Missouri Supreme Court declared, citing the Northwest Ordinance as their legal authority, that once an African was free, he or she would always be free. Once the United States Supreme Court made its ruling in *Scott v. Sandford*, however, the *Winny* case would no longer serve as the legal standard in the state of Missouri. Chief

<sup>83</sup> *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 19 How. 393 (1857).

<sup>84</sup> Paul Finkelman, *Dred Scott v. Sandford: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford- St Martin's Press, 1997), 1-25; See also Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 90-93; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 708-710, 712-714; Dennis K. Boman, "The Dred Scott Case Reconsidered: The Legal and Political Context in Missouri," *The American Journal of Legal History* Vol. 44, No. 4 (Oct., 2000): 405-428.

<sup>85</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Slavery, Law, and Politics: The Dred Scott Case in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 237.

Justice Taney's ruling in the case and an attempt by John Brown, the abolitionist who earned a fanatical reputation in Kansas, to foment insurrection in the mountains of Virginia would serve as the final steps towards secession and civil war.

John Brown's raid on the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in the fall of 1859 inched the nation ever closer to war. Brown, and twenty of his supporters, hoped to begin an armed slave revolt by seizing the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry. The plan failed and Brown was defeated, brought to trial, and executed for his role in his attempt to bring about a massive slave insurrection in the South. Brown and like-minded Northerners who wished to destroy slavery in such a manner horrified Southerners.<sup>86</sup> Newspaper editors in Arkansas used the opportunity to defend slavery as a *positive good* as well issue a warning. "We would warn crazy fanatics that the slaves in the South are," the [Little Rock] *Arkansas Gazette* editorial read, "as a general thing, in a better condition than the poor laborers of the North – that they are happy and contented, and that no part of the are at all likely to participate, either in sentiment or action, with any attempt of madmen to change their present condition. We hope, however, with the manifest hopelessness and thanklessness of such undertakings, and the fate of Brown staring them in the face, that no fanatic will be mad enough to make a similar attempt in the future."<sup>87</sup> Papers in both Missouri and Arkansas painted Brown as a fanatic, a lunatic, and a madman. They also warned that Brown acted outside of the Constitution. Other papers, like the St. Louis *Christian Advocate*, published accounts of John Brown sympathizers who defended Brown's stance against slavery, but not his methods.<sup>88</sup> Generally speaking, newspapers in Missouri and Arkansas were either highly critical of Brown or

<sup>86</sup> Tony Horwitz, *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid that Sparked the Civil War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011); Paul Finkelman and Peggy A. Russo, eds., *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005); Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1970).

<sup>87</sup> "The Harper's Ferry Insurrection," November 12, 1859, [Little Rock] *Arkansas Gazette*.

<sup>88</sup> See "Reflections Upon the Fate of John Brown," St. Louis *Christian Advocate* May 3, 1860; "John Brown's Sympathizers," St. Louis *Christian Advocate*, February 16, 1860.

they took some kind of middle way to prevent any kind of controversy. The national excitement surrounding John Brown's raid would give way nearly a year later with the election of the Republican nominee for president, Abraham Lincoln.

With the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln in fall of 1860, many Southern states began the process of secession, igniting civil war. During his campaign for president, Lincoln ran against slavery's westward expansion though he clearly stated that he would do nothing to the peculiar institution where it already existed, placing him in the middle ground of Republican opinion.<sup>89</sup> While compromises had worked to save the Union in the past, compromises over the slavery issue were out of the question for the president-elect. Following the election, Congress put forth a variety of compromises with the most prominent of these being the Crittenden Compromise in December of 1860, proposed by Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden.<sup>90</sup> A series of constitutional amendments and Congressional resolutions, this compromise sought to protect slavery in the United States as well as extend the Missouri Compromise Line to the West. Lincoln, however, held firm to his stance on preventing the westward expansion of slavery and Republicans in Congress rejected the proposed compromise. Lincoln again made his stance clear in his inaugural address given on March 4, 1861. For secessionists, Lincoln's platform went against everything that they believed for both the South's and the nation's future. As a result, Southern secessionists viewed Lincoln's election as their opportunity to create a better future for slavery. Historian Stephanie McCurry notes: "Secessionists saw a bright future for slavery if they could set its destiny in a new republic. To them slavery was no worn-out vestige of the past but a social

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<sup>89</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 132-133.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148. Foner notes other compromises including replacing the president with a regional executive council, barring future legislation on the institution of slavery, and national police force in charge of enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act.

system uniquely adapted to the conditions of the modern world.”<sup>91</sup> With Lincoln’s election, South Carolina made the first move out of the Union and the first move towards their slave-based nation.

For the Deep South, Lincoln’s election was the last straw. The events of the 1850s combined with a Republican in the Executive Mansion proved too much for the cotton states. The first to secede was South Carolina who passed an ordinance of secession on December 20, 1860. South Carolina voted 159-0 in favor of secession. South Carolina was the first to secede because it was a state where “the ideological and political defense of slavery had been assiduously nurtured since the origin of the republic, fire-eaters really did hold sway by the fall of 1860.”<sup>92</sup> Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana followed the Palmetto State out of the Union in January of 1861. February of 1862 saw the secession of Texas, putting the newly formed Confederacy at seven states early in the new year. The Deep South rationalized that the only way to escape Black Republicanism was secession. “States’ rights, historical political abuses, territorial questions, economic differences, constitutional arguments[,]” argues historian Charles B. Dew, “all these and more paled in significance when placed alongside this vision of the South’s future under Republican domination.”<sup>93</sup> The Upper South took a wait-and-see approach with regard to how the Lincoln Administration would act. Once in office, President Lincoln made multiple attempts to resupply a Federal garrison inside of Fort Sumter, located in Charleston Harbor. On April 12, 1861, South Carolina forces fired on the fort, bringing about the start of the Civil War. Federal forces

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<sup>91</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 12. See also Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought on the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005); David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

<sup>92</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 41.

<sup>93</sup> Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 80.

inside of the fort surrendered and the nation was at war. President Lincoln soon acted in an attempt to put down the rebellion in the cotton states.

Immediately following the outbreak of hostilities in Charleston Harbor, President Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion in the South. While many Northern states happily contributed troops to quash the rebellion, this action triggered the Upper South's secession from the Union. After Lincoln's call for troops in April 1861, the Upper South, comprised of Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina, seceded that April and May. The decision to secede in the Upper South was not as clear as it had been in the Deep South – given the fact that secession was not made possible in the Upper South until South Carolina fired upon Fort Sumter. “On April 12 but not before, the Upper South impasse - between Unionists and unreconciled secessionists, between United States and Confederate States – was finally broken.”<sup>94</sup> With this, the planter class of the cotton states achieved their goal of forcing slaveowners in the Upper South to choose between the Union and the Confederacy. These states could no longer hold the middle ground. “By precipitating war,” notes author Bruce Levine, “the cotton masters had indeed forced their more cautious brethren to choose sides in a fight defined by their own most basic institutions and values.”<sup>95</sup> The Upper South chose to side with the cotton states, as they felt that this was in their collective best interests. These eleven states of both the Upper and Lower South composed the Confederate States of America. There were, however, four slave states whose fate still hung in the balance.

Four slave states – Missouri, Delaware, Maryland, and Kentucky – did not secede from the Union. These states held the political status of *Border State* in that they were slave states, but did

<sup>94</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 68.

<sup>95</sup> Bruce Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South* (New York: Random House, 2013), 50.

not secede from the Union. They did not secede because these states shared ties with both the North and the South. Unionism here edged out secessionist sentiment. To be sure, their place in the Union was not guaranteed, as secession remained a possibility in each of these states for the duration of the Civil War as Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland had “large and resolute secessionist minorities.”<sup>96</sup> Both Missouri and Kentucky had competing Confederate and Unionist governments. As a result, this Border State status in these four states was one that Lincoln sought to preserve, not wanting to give these states any reason to join the Confederacy.<sup>97</sup> Lincoln had to walk gently as any of these states, perhaps with the exception of Delaware, could have gone to the Confederacy with even the most minor political or military miscalculation. Their importance was not lost on the president. “These states had the white population of 2.6 million – a little less than half that of the Confederacy – and about 420,000 slaves. Maryland and Kentucky, with their diverse economies and key strategic positions, were especially crucial to Union prospects.”<sup>98</sup> Lincoln’s task, however, would not be easy, as the case of Missouri and its two wartime governments demonstrate.

Many Missourians were not happy with the outcome of the 1860 presidential election, but this did not mean that they wanted to secede from the Union. “Missouri does not unite with them [the Southern States] in their desperate schemes[,]” notes the *Liberty [Missouri] Tribune*. “With annoyances in regard to her slave property ten-fold greater than those endured by the ‘Cotton

<sup>96</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 284.

<sup>97</sup> The delicate nature with which Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in September of 1862 was very much a result of his attempting to balance the concerns of the Border States. During the summer of 1862, before he issued the Proclamation, he offered the Border States a plan for gradual, compensated emancipation. Ultimately, the Border States refused in the form of their Border State Manifesto. In the final version of the Proclamation issued on January 1, 1863, Lincoln excluded the Border States from the edict. See Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 94-95.

<sup>98</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 169.

States,' it has never entered into the minds of her people that Disunion would improve their condition. They are, with few exceptions, steadfast in their devotion to the Union."<sup>99</sup> Northern Democrat Stephen A. Douglas carried the state with 58,801 votes; Constitutional Unionist John Bell came in second with 58,372 votes; Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge received 312,317 votes, while Republican Abraham Lincoln received only 17,028 votes.<sup>100</sup> Most Missourians in the center of the state, wanted to avoid secession, but not at the cost of their Southern institutions – slavery in particular. With both the Republican Party and the state's new German immigrants actively against the spread of slavery, Missourians in Little Dixie grew increasingly tense over the fate of the peculiar institution in their state. As a result, a clash between an old and a new Missouri over their state's future came about because of Lincoln's election.

The old Missouri consisted of planters who had been in Missouri since it became a state. The new Missouri consisted of a variety of new immigrants from the east who came to take advantage of the newer, booming industry in the state. Most prominent among these newer immigrants to the state were the *Achtundvierziger* – the newly arrived Forty-Eighters, from Germany – centered in St. Louis. The *Achtundvierziger* were a powerful voting bloc and tended to vote Republican. In addition, they did not view the planter class in a very favorable light. "For such men, and even for their less radical compatriots" notes author Adam Goodheart, "Missouri's slaveholding class represented exactly what they had detested in the old country, exactly what they had come here to escape: a swaggering clique of landed oligarchs, boorish aristocrats obstructing the forces of modernity and progress."<sup>101</sup> Because of the Germans stance on the slavery issue, they often clashed with the state's older settlers – the "Damn Dutch" they were called, a corruption of

<sup>99</sup> "Shall St. Louis Speak for the Union?," Liberty [MO] *Tribune*, November 23, 1860.

<sup>100</sup> William R. Guise, "Missouri's Confederate Capital in Marshall, Texas," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* Vol. 66, No. 2 (Oct., 1962): 193-194.

<sup>101</sup> Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 237.

*Deutsch*. As fall turned into secession winter in Missouri, the new governor would have to make a decision regarding his state's future in the Union.

Missouri's newly elected governor Claiborne Fox Jackson, at least initially, felt the same way as many Missourians regarding secession. Jackson, a planter from Little Dixie who participated in horse-trading, card playing, and led a group of armed Border Ruffians during Bleeding Kansas, remained neutral on the issue of secession. "As matters are at present," Jackson stated in his January 5, 1861, inaugural address as the new Missouri governor, "Mo., will stand her lot, and hold to the Union so long as it is worth an effort to preserve it."<sup>102</sup> Jackson's inaugural address gives the impression that he wanted to maintain some form of armed neutrality for his state. Despite his veiled neutrality for Missouri, one of Jackson's first acts as governor was to seek approval for a statewide convention to determine Missouri's fate in or out of the Union. Jackson and the state legislature, where nearly three-fourths of the delegates were slaveholders, were unsure as to which way Missouri citizens would vote.<sup>103</sup> Governor Jackson, along with his lieutenant governor and avowed secessionist Thomas C. Reynolds, pushed the Missouri legislature to authorize a convention to vote on an ordinance of secession. Shortly after Jackson's inauguration, the Missouri legislature authorized this convention. In the meantime, Jackson worked behind the scenes to plot a takeover of the different Federal arsenals located in his state. The convention, made up of many men who were not secessionists, met for the first time in late February 1861 and again in March to decide Missouri's fate. Each meeting of the convention failed to produce an ordinance of secession of as many delegates present at the convention were against federal coercion, but not prepared to move the state closer to secession. Not seeing any kind of rapid movement by the convention with regard to secession, Jackson pressed the legislature to

<sup>102</sup> "Governor's Message," *Liberty [MO] Tribune*, January 11, 1861.

<sup>103</sup> Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 234-235.

grant him broad military powers in the form of a military bill so that he may deal with any emergencies that might arise in the meantime. Initially, the legislature refused to do so – until the president’s call for volunteers on April 13, 1861.<sup>104</sup>

As it was in other Southern states, Lincoln’s call for troops looked like it might be a turning point for Missouri’s secession debates in early 1861. With the president’s call for volunteers after Fort Sumter, the Missouri legislature passed Jackson’s military bill, giving him the broad military powers that he desired. Because of this new military authority, Jackson controlled the St Louis police and organized the pro-Confederate state militia who would seize a Federal arsenal in Liberty, Missouri, on April 20, 1861. Some Missourians, including Congressman Francis P. Blair and Captain Nathaniel Lyon in particular, wondered if Jackson was working behind the scenes to secure Missouri’s secession. On April 17, Jackson wrote to Confederate president Jefferson Davis for some kind of military support. Davis responded in early May by sending captured Federal canons and ammunition to Governor Jackson, which he placed in a fort on the outskirts of St. Louis named Camp Jackson. Jackson did this in preparation for any possible military action against the Federal government. While Jackson attempted to do this secretly not to arouse any suspicion, Blair and Lyon’s watchful eyes would foil Jackson’s plans with the arsenal.

At the same time that Jackson moved Jeff Davis’s canons into Fort Jackson, Captain Lyon organized a number of regiments composed of the staunchly Republican German-American population of St. Louis. This was the beginning of the Camp Jackson Affair. On the evening of April 25, 1861, Lyon very astutely loaded up many of the Camp Jackson’s surplus arms and shipped them across the Mississippi River so that pro-Confederate forces could not use them. Lyon then went one-step further and captured the artillery as well as the 700 pro-Confederate militiamen

<sup>104</sup> William R. Guise, “Missouri’s Confederate Capital in Marshall, Texas,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* Vol. 66, No. 2 (Oct., 1962): 193-195.

without a shot at Camp Jackson on May 10. Lyon and his men then marched their prisoners through the streets of St. Louis as a crowd gathered throwing both blunt objects and insults at the German-American soldiers present. Then, shots rang out and killing or wounding twenty-eight civilians and two soldiers. More violence followed the next day. The Camp Jackson Affair demonstrated how close the state of Missouri was to a civil war of its own.<sup>105</sup>

Following the Camp Jackson Affair, the seeds were sown for the creation of Missouri's two wartime governments. By July 31, 1861, a new state convention met in Jefferson City and declared the offices of governor, lieutenant governor, and the seats of the general assembly vacant, and called for new elections to fill vacancies with Hamilton Rowan Gamble seated as the new governor of Missouri. The new state government under Gamble occupied Jefferson City "with the older one growing ever more shadowy as the war went on."<sup>106</sup> With Captain Lyon occupying the state capitol at Jefferson City, Governor Jackson and the remaining state officials withdrew to the southwestern part of the state so that they could better communicate with Confederate officials. Here, Jackson and his supporters plead for help from Jefferson Davis so that they might have a chance at taking Missouri for the Confederacy. From this point forward, Jackson cast his lot fully with the Confederacy and led an illegitimate pro-Confederate government on the run.

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<sup>105</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 76; Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 251-266; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 290-292. Shortly after the Camp Jackson Affair in May 1861, a treaty was negotiated between Brigadier General William S. Harney and Sterling Price in which Harney stated that he would not use military force in the state of Missouri if Price delayed the buildup of the State Guard. The treaty drew the ire of both local Unionists and officials in Washington. General Lyon ignored the Price-Harney Treaty and General Harney was eventually relieved of his command. See Kenneth E. Burchett, *Battle of Carthage, Missouri: A History of the First Trans-Mississippi Conflict of the Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 8.

<sup>106</sup> William R. Guise, "Missouri's Confederate Capital in Marshall, Texas," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* Vol. 66, No. 2 (Oct., 1962): 197.

Unfortunately, for Jackson, his absence from Jefferson City allowed the Unionists to tighten their grip on the state government.<sup>107</sup>

By siding with the Confederacy, Jackson and his cabinet became a government on the run and did what it could to survive. On August 5, 1861, Governor Jackson, then at New Madrid, Missouri, declared the state its own sovereign republic. While neither side recognized this action, Jackson did this with hopes of encouraging Confederate assistance. His plan worked, because the next day the Confederate Congress appropriated one million C.S.A. dollars in aid for the state. In October 1861, then at Neosho, Missouri, located in the southwestern part of the state, Jackson's government ratified the Confederate Constitution and elected representatives to the Confederate Congress in Richmond. A month later, on November 28, 1861, the Confederate Congress admitted Missouri into the Confederacy, making the fugitive government legit, at least in the eyes of the Confederacy and Jackson. The satisfaction of this action would be short-lived for the refugee governor.

The Missouri government-in-exile would have its resolve tested by the end of 1862. Governor Jackson died in Little Rock on December 6, 1862, forcing the lieutenant governor, Reynolds, to assume the exile governorship of the state. Reynolds, who was staunchly loyal to Confederate president Jefferson Davis, worked hard so to get the most out of Missouri for the Confederacy. For example, Reynolds worked to recruit Missouri troops for the Confederate war effort an estimated 15,000-20,000 Missourians within Confederate lines.<sup>108</sup> He moved the refugee government to Marshall, Texas, in November of 1863 to maintain better communication with Confederate officials in Richmond. Marshall, Texas, remained the home of Missouri's exile

<sup>107</sup> For more on Governor Jackson, see Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000).

<sup>108</sup> Clement Eaton, *Jefferson Davis* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 191-192.

government for the remainder of the war.<sup>109</sup> Missouri's move for secession from the Union was, to put it bluntly, messy. The story of Arkansas's secession is nowhere near as complicated as the Missouri case, though there were some similarities in the general sentiment surrounding secession in that state.

Unlike other states from the Deep South, like South Carolina or Georgia, Arkansas never had an extremist position with regard to secession or state's rights. Until Lincoln's 1860 election, most Arkansans were satisfied with the Compromise of 1850, feeling that it was the best long-term solution to the sectional issue. Arkansas, long a Democratic state, did not buck this political trend when they went with John C. Breckinridge, the Southern Democrat, in the 1860 election. Unlike other Southern states, Arkansas did not bow to the radical politicians who drummed up paranoia among their citizens over Bleeding Kansas and John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in October of 1859. With Lincoln's election in 1860, an uneasy feeling came over many Arkansans, eventually pushing the state to secession. The year 1860, notes historian James M. Woods, "witnessed the culmination of another trend, a metamorphosis of the state toward Deep South culture and economy."<sup>110</sup> Not just planters in the state feared Lincoln and the Black Republicans. White workingmen in Little Rock had developed fears about what would happen to their jobs if African Americans were emancipated because of future Republican policies. White citizens in the state capital as well as planters in the south and in the east came together with their realization that secession was Arkansas's best option.<sup>111</sup> Not all Arkansans, however, favored leaving the Union.

<sup>109</sup> After the war, Reynolds fled to Mexico where he remained until 1868.

<sup>110</sup> James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville, The University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 91.

<sup>111</sup> Michael Pierce, "The Mechanics of Little Rock: Free Labor Ideas in Antebellum Arkansas, 1845-1861," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 67, No. 3 (Autumn, 2008): 242-243.

Citizens in the north-central counties of Arkansas, three of which bordered Missouri, organized into an organization known as the Peace Society or Peace Organization Society in early 1861 opposing the secession of their state. With the tide of Confederate support in the state, these societies met secretly, out of the site of possible pro-Confederate neighbors. Peace Societies were fully formed in that they had a constitution, oaths, passwords, and signs as a part of their operation. Unionism in a Confederate state was something that was often difficult to hide, and, with this, Confederate sympathizers discovered them and carried out extralegal arrests. Because the state government considered the peace societies as treasonable organizations, many Confederate sympathizers tracked down accused members of these societies and, in some instances, given a choice as to their fate. Governor Rector offered some captured members of the peace societies two options: standing trial or serving in the Confederate army. Those who chose the former could not be convicted, as there was not enough *written* evidence of their treason as the societies were very good about leaving very little evidence in the way of written records. Men who chose the latter served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arkansas, which proved to be a failure for the Confederacy in that many of the men who served were too old for military service. Despite the Unionist sentiment in both the north-central and northwestern part of the state at the very start of the war, it was not enough to keep Arkansas in the Union.<sup>112</sup>

Lincoln's victory in the 1860 presidential election caused a spike in secessionist sentiment in Arkansas, eliminating any potential obstacles for joining the forming Confederacy. The state's Democratic governor, Henry Massey Rector, felt very strongly that Arkansas should leave the

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<sup>112</sup> Ted R. Worley, "The Arkansas Peace Society of 1861: A Study in Mountain Unionism," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Nov., 1958): 445-456; see also Thomas A. DeBlack, "'A Remarkably Strong Union Sentiment': Unionism in Arkansas in 1861," in Mark K. Christ, ed., *The Die is Cast: Arkansas Goes to War, 1861* (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2010), 54-75.

Union, as there was no chance for reconciliation with Lincoln in office.<sup>113</sup> Voting for the convention began across the state on February 18, 1861, and citizens voted in favor of a convention to decide if they would leave the Union. The decision to hold a convention was not necessarily a signal that the secessionists had won, as many anti-secessionists/Unionists felt the need to hold one as well. Unionist candidates received more than 5,000 more votes than secessionist candidates, indicating Arkansans' desire to remain in the Union. Much of the state's opposition to secession remained strong in the northwest and north-central part of Arkansas.<sup>114</sup> The state legislature called a convention on March 4, 1861, in Little Rock – the same day as the president's inauguration in Washington, D.C. – to decide the future of their state.<sup>115</sup>

The March 4 convention met in the Old State House in Little Rock to debate the recent events. Delegates gave fiery speeches and emotions ran high for the entire two and a half weeks that the convention remained in session. The convention failed to provide an ordinance of secession for Arkansas with a 55-15 against secession. The convention delegates even failed to pass a resolution denouncing Lincoln's inaugural address. Many delegates hoped that, as in the past, some kind of compromise would be reached to avoid civil war and put an end to the state's

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<sup>113</sup> Henry Massey Rector served as governor of Arkansas from 1860-1862. Rector had close ties to 'the Family,' a very powerful political group of Democrats made up of the Conways, Johnsons, and Seviars who dominated the state from the territorial period through the Civil War. He left office in 1862 because of a political battle with 'the Family' over a new state constitution in 1862 that scheduled a gubernatorial election at that time. Rector's term was shortened by two years in a decision by the secession convention, which continued to meet after the ordinance of secession was passed in May 1861. These additional meetings yielded a state military board to oversee the operations of Arkansas's troops, taking the authority away from Rector. Rector did not keep his promise for the 1862 election and, as a result, the state Supreme Court removed him from office. On October 6, 1862, Arkansans elected Harris Flanagin as the state's new governor. See Timothy P. Donovan, Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., and Jeannie M. Whyne, eds., *The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1995); Michael Dougan, "A Look at the 'the Family' in Arkansas Politics, 1858-1865," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1970): 99-111.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 30.

<sup>115</sup> Arkansas citizens voted 27,412 to 15,826 in favor of the convention, with Unionist candidates receiving 23,626 votes to the 17,927 votes for the secessionist candidates. See Ralph Wooster, "The Arkansas Secession Convention," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer, 1954): 173-174; Michael B. Dougan, "'An eternal chitter chatter kept up in the galleries': The Arkansas Secession Convention in Action, March-June, 1861," in Mark K. Christ, ed., *The Die is Cast: Arkansas Goes to War, 1861* (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2010), 13-30.

consideration of secession. Convention delegates wanted to be sure that delegates took every measure to preserve the Union until some kind of outrageous act had been committed.<sup>116</sup> With this, delegates agreed to return home and meet again in August following a special election that would allow the people of Arkansas to decide on the secession question for themselves. This special election never came.

Once war broke out in April, anti-secessionist feelings in Arkansas faded fast, led by Governor Rector, and Arkansas sealed its fate as a part of the Confederacy. The president's call for troops a few days later only intensified secessionist feelings in the state. The president's call for troops generated outrage among many of the convention delegates. Governor Rector too took the president's call for troops as an insult and refused. In the meantime, the governor ordered Arkansas state militia to take the Federal arsenal at Fort Smith and began to organize and prepare these same regiments for service in the Confederacy. In addition, Rector looked to the west for help when he appealed to the Cherokees to join forces with the South.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, by May 7, 1861, the convention signed an ordinance for Arkansas secession in its second session, paving its way to join the other Southern states, with a 69-1 vote. The only dissenting vote came from the future Unionist governor of the state, Isaac Murphy of Madison County. A few days later, on May 10, the convention approved the provisional constitution of the Confederate States of America by a 63-8 vote. On May 20, Arkansas was admitted into the Confederate States of America. Why did Arkansas move from a stance that hoped to avoid secession to one that dove headlong in separating itself from the Union?

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<sup>116</sup> Ralph Wooster, "The Arkansas Secession Convention," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer, 1954): 175-180.

<sup>117</sup> David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 25-26. Nichols notes that Rector appealed to the Cherokee because they too practiced slavery and, if Lincoln got his way, they too would be overrun with abolitionists.

The make-up of the delegates at the convention provides some insight to indicate why Arkansas voted in favor of secession. Only four of the delegates were native-born Arkansans, the rest were born in other states, mostly in Tennessee. Convention delegates were mostly lawyers and farmers, some of which grew cotton. The typical convention delegate in Arkansas was a slaveholder, typically one with smaller holdings of slaves, usually less than twenty. Because many of the delegates had small slave holdings, few of them wanted to dive headlong into civil war by taking Arkansas out of the Union. Slaveholding and wealth were the driving factors pushing an individual to support secession, usually people who resided in the cotton counties.<sup>118</sup> Many of the anti-secessionists in northwestern and north-central Arkansas were less wealthy, owned few or no slaves, and often lived in the more remote parts of the state.<sup>119</sup> These political divisions in the immediate months before the war foreshadow the same divisions that forced many in the state to leave their homes.

### **Conclusion**

The development of Arkansas and Missouri during the antebellum period played a critical role in each state's response to the national crisis in 1860-1861. Beginning with the rapid settlement of both states following the conclusion of the War of 1812, settlers, many of whom brought their slaves, quickly settled the area. The rapid settlement of Missouri increased national tensions over slavery during the Missouri Crisis. Beginning with the Missouri Crisis of 1819-1821, sectional tensions over the westward expansion of slavery increased with each succeeding decade. Though Congress averted crisis in this instance through compromise, it was only temporary. Over three decades later, the Kansas-Nebraska Act invalidated the prohibitive Missouri Compromise of

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<sup>118</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State During Wartime* (Birmingham: The University of Alabama Press, 1976), 35-46.

<sup>119</sup> Residents here were known as "Mountain Federals" because of the region's strong Unionist sentiment both before and during the Civil War.

1820, opening up the possibility for slaves in those territories through Stephen Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty. Missourians did not want the territory sitting immediately to their west to become a haven for runaway slaves. Arkansans were concerned, but simply lost interest because the region was not hospitable for the growing of cotton. It was with the election of Abraham Lincoln that each state grew weary of their place in the Union. Despite their weariness, each state hoped that crisis could be averted through compromise, as it had been done before. The outbreak of civil war in April 1861 changed this. The leadership of both Missouri and Arkansas, because of their slave populations, thought that their states should go with the South. After much heated debate, Missouri remained in the Union while Arkansas made the decision to leave. Governor Jackson of Missouri tried to steer his state out of the Union, but was foiled by the Union military with the Camp Jackson Affair. Following the Camp Jackson Affair, Missouri would be a state with two governments – one loyal to the Union and the other, Jackson's, loyal to the Confederacy. While Arkansas leaders did their best to act with caution regarding secession, Lincoln's call for troops was the signal for cotton planters located in the central and eastern part of the state. The Ozark region of the state, where there were very few slaves, hoped the state remained in the Union. Much to these anti-secessionists chagrin, by May 1861, Arkansas became a part of the Confederacy. Each state's creation, settlement, and moves for secession form an important framework in which displaced people in the Trans-Mississippi West are viewed and understood.

## CHAPTER 2: THE EMERGING CRISIS

*Come all ye sons of freedom and our southern band  
We're going to fight the enemy and drive them from our land  
Justice is our motto and Providence our guide  
So jump in the wagon and we'll all take a ride*

### CHORUS

*Wail for the wagon  
The Secession wagon  
The South is a wagon  
And we'll all take ride<sup>120</sup>*

A parody of the popular tune *Wait for the Wagon*, this Southern version entitled *The Southern Wagon*, written at the start of the Civil War, enthusiastically asked Southerners to pile on and come for a ride. For many Southern whites, such enthusiasm was short-lived and many chose or were forced to use their wagon for much different purposes – to flee their homes. After secessionists in South Carolina fired on Fort Sumter in April 1861 and President Abraham Lincoln's subsequent call for troops to quell the rebellion, Arkansas joined the Confederate States of America – and began its ride on the secession wagon. With the Confederate victory at Bull Run in Virginia that summer, the war began in earnest. Before long, citizens in Arkansas, Missouri, and the rest of the West would see both armies marching through their communities interspersed with guerrilla bands fighting for citizens' allegiance.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, people scattered throughout the region had to ask themselves if they would remain in their homes or be forced to flee.

<sup>120</sup> "The Southern Wagon," n.d., Lorraine Blore Raglund Collection, 1863-1981, Box 2: File 4, Special Collections at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. The complete poem is located in Appendix A.

<sup>121</sup> Here, I will use Daniel Sutherland's definitions concerning guerrilla warfare. The use of the term *guerrilla* is often used to describe those involved in irregular warfare. There are, however, difficulties with this. The use of the term *partisan* also poses difficulties as partisans were expected to follow the rules of war as well as the army chain of command. For the Confederates, according to Sutherland, *bushwhackers* were "lone gunmen who 'whacked' their foes from the 'bush'." Sutherland also denotes that, "on the Union side, there were *Red Legs*, *buffaloes*, and *jayhawkers*, although jayhawker, like bushwhacker, gained more universal application. While the term is not perfect, I chose to use the term *guerrillas* to describe people who participated in the irregular warfare that was common in both Missouri and Arkansas. For more on guerrilla warfare, see Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009);

The wartime displacement of people in Arkansas and Missouri was not a single, simultaneous act – but many. Some families fled their homes and communities at the very start of the war, while others were able, for a variety of reasons/factors, to wait out much of the war before displacement affected them. In short, every wartime experience was different in both duration and hardship for residents. Sometimes, these men and women had some control over their situation. They were able to buy time by disguising their loyalties for part of or even the entire war. Hence, they might have been deemed useful by the armies operating in the region allowing these people to provide food for soldiers, or perhaps their home was used as an official's headquarters for a time. There were others, however, who did not have this luxury.

The large number of displaced people in the region came out of a variety of factors – some unique to the West, some not. Unique factors to the region, including guerrilla warfare, wreaked havoc on local populations causing many people to flee. Divided allegiances existed among communities throughout the Border States, and these were especially acute in Missouri and Arkansas. Factors common to war like food shortages, clashes between the armies, and the inability to secure their family's safety sent many to seek refuge. The clashes between the regular armies did not always play by the rules of conventional warfare. Unconventional army policies and irregular warfare in the region are the most prominent examples of this. Historian Louis S.

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Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013); Mark W. Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Michael Fellman, "Women and Guerrilla Warfare," in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 66-67; Leo E. Huff, "Guerrillas, Jayhawkers and Bushwhackers in Northern Arkansas During the Civil War," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 2 (Summer, 1965): 127-148; Phillip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981); LeeAnn Whites, "The Tale of Three Kates: Outlaw Women, Loyalty, and Missouri's Long Civil War in Stephen Berry, ed., *Weirding the War: Tales From the Civil War's Ragged Edges* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 73-94.

Gerteis notes, “[c]onventional warfare took on an added significance in Missouri because of the intensity of guerrilla activity.”<sup>122</sup> Ewing’s order that evacuated a swath of Missouri’s western border complicated the already growing crisis in western Missouri, as did military clashes at Wilson’s Creek, Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove, and others in the Western Theatre. Sometimes, just one of these factors displaced citizens, other times it was a combination of them.

The Western Theater encompassed the lower Mississippi Valley as well as areas to the west including Texas, Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), and other territories all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Many of the military heroes of the Eastern Theater gained valuable experience in the West - like General Ulysses S. Grant who earned his military acumen at Forts Henry and Donelson being the best example. Conditions in the West could be tough not only for its citizens, but for the armies as well. Western military leaders often had to do more with less in that their armies lacked necessary supplies and rail lines were sparse throughout the region.<sup>123</sup> Battles in the Western Theater include Pea Ridge, Wilson’s Creek, Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and Shiloh – played an important role in the outcome of the war. Union victories here brought about the eventual defeat of the Confederacy, mostly because of their ability to control key points along the Mississippi River, cutting the Confederacy in two.

To control Missouri was to control the mighty Mississippi as it snaked south – deep into the Confederacy. As a result, controlling it became a Union army objective at the start of the war. “At the outbreak of war,” notes historian Allen C. Guelzo, “the importance of controlling the Mississippi River and its vast system of tributary rivers was obvious to both the Union and the

<sup>122</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012), 3.

<sup>123</sup> Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 98-99; Lawrence Lee Hewitt, Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., and Thomas E. Schott, eds., *Confederate Generals in the Trans-Mississippi, Volume I: Essays on America's Civil War* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013), xi.

Confederate governments.”<sup>124</sup> Controlling the river would allow the Federals to divide the Confederacy in two and destroy the two halves in detail, as it was a vital interior artery of the Confederacy. The army’s understanding of this explains their desire to launch offensives in both Missouri and Arkansas.

### **The War Comes West: Wilson’s Creek, Pea Ridge, and Prairie Grove**

Missouri passed its first test when it navigated the waters of secession early in 1861. The next test for it came at what became known as the ‘Bull Run of the West’ - the battle of Wilson’s Creek.<sup>125</sup> In an attempt to pursue Missouri’s secessionist government as it fled for the Arkansas border, Union General Nathaniel Lyon under the command of John C. Frémont gave chase during the first week of August 1861 in the southwestern corner of the state near Springfield. At the same time, Confederate Generals Benjamin McCulloch and Sterling Price and their approximately 12,000 troops approached Springfield in southwestern Missouri. Lyon was at a disadvantage. He had about 5,500 troops and added to his disadvantage when he divided his smaller force in the face of the enemy. Lyon hoped to deceive his enemy by making his force appear larger than it was. The armies clashed under the hot Missouri sun on August 10, 1861. Each side lost about 1,300 men, but Price and McCulloch drove Lyon from the field in defeat. While the defeat did not cause Missouri to reconsider secession, the Confederate victory here kept guerrilla activity alive for the

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<sup>124</sup> Allen C. Guelzo, *The Crisis of the American Republic: A History of the Civil War in Reconstruction Era* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 143. See also Edward B. McCaul, Jr., *To Retain Control of the Mississippi: The Civil War Naval Campaign for Memphis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014).

<sup>125</sup> The battle at Wilson’s Creek earned this nickname as it gave the Confederacy a feeling of invincibility in the Western Theater at an early stage of the war, just like the Confederate victory at Manassas fought in the Eastern Theater on July 21, 1861, had done. For more on Arkansans who served at Wilson’s Creek, see William Garrett Piston, ‘When the Arks. Boys goes by they take the rags off the bush’: Arkansans in the Wilson’s Creek Campaign of 1861,” in Mark K. Christ, ed., *The Die is Cast: Arkansas Goes to War, 1861* (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2010), 101-130.

remainder of the war.<sup>126</sup> Following the battle came the first significant surge of displaced whites in the West.



Figure 2.1: Map of Missouri Civil War battles. Source: <http://www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/battles/MOmap.htm>

The carnage of Wilson's Creek led to the creation of the Western Sanitary Commission. While injured Union soldiers necessitated its creation, the Commission also helped with the influx of the dispossessed in the region. While one might generally assume that people who sympathized with the Union made their way north, while uprooted persons who cast their lots with the Confederacy headed south, people's experiences were not always this clear-cut. People fled to places where they felt protected. Unionists, many displaced because of the Union defeat, fell back with the army to Rolla, Missouri, then eventually to St. Louis.

Rolla, located about halfway between Springfield and St. Louis, was an important location of activity regarding displaced people in Missouri. According to a Western Sanitary Commission

<sup>126</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 350-352; Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America's Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 56; Louis S. Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012), 59-76; William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher, III, *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Report detailing the initial flood of people to the city, “this military post [Rolla] has been a city of refuge for many refugees from Southwest Missouri. An average of three hundred persons have been sheltered and rationed here by the Government all the time, and thousands have reached this post and passed on to St. Louis to scatter themselves through the free States of the West.”<sup>127</sup> Rolla was the epicenter of the displacement crisis during the first two years of the war. The large numbers of people who massed here created a logistical problem for the army, as they had to find a way to feed and clothe this large, ever-increasing number of people.

The mass of people at Rolla would be one of the first large encounters between displaced people and the army and philanthropic organizations in the region. This small central Missouri community would also be the starting point on how both civilians and military officials treated displaced people. By 1860, the rail line west from St. Louis was finished only as far as Phelps County and while it served as the end of the line in a railroad-sense, it was the beginning of the end for many peoples’ journey northward. Here was also the potential for transportation further north to receive aid and supplies. The stories of the men, women, and children who arrived at Rolla from various points in Missouri and Arkansas were certainly extraordinary. One undated account, that involved an unnamed blind woman at Rolla, detailed her husband’s murder at the hands of guerrillas early in the war. This woman “and her poor family of six children, who had walked all the way from Arkansas to Rolla, MO., her little children leading her several hundred miles by the hand . . . .”<sup>128</sup> Others, with similar stories, made their way from points across Arkansas and Missouri to escape murderous guerilla bands in search of aid and protection in St. Louis. There is

<sup>127</sup> The Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission on the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on the Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: R.P. Studley & Co., 1864), 18.

<sup>128</sup> The Western Sanitary Commission, *The Western Sanitary Commission: A Sketch of its Origin, History, Labors for the Sick and Wounded of the Western Armies, and Aid Given to Freedmen and Union Refugees, with Incidents of Hospital Life* (St. Louis: R.P. Studley & Co., 1864), 125.

little doubt that this woman and her family made their way here for this reason. The problem at Rolla intensified with other military engagements sent an increasing number of people here. The Union army transported many of the dispossessed in central Missouri further east to St. Louis, where they received whatever help they needed from the various aid societies located there.

With the start of hostilities at Wilson's Creek, St. Louis also saw an increasing number of displaced people approach its borders. Few cities played a more important role in wartime crisis than did St. Louis. Cities, in general, were important for people on the run because they provided police protection, employment, a better opportunity for living arrangements, opportunities to socialize, and safety in numbers.<sup>129</sup> The city was the gateway to the West and, given its location on the Mississippi River, the path to the heart of the Confederacy. It became one of the primary hubs for benevolent aid societies like the Western Sanitary Commission and the Ladies' Union Aid Society and had some of the best hospitals in the West. The Gateway City became a 'hospital town' as the Federals transported many wounded troops here from battlefields to the south and the west. "From spring 1862 through the surrender of Vicksburg in July 1863," Louis S. Gerteis observes, "St. Louis had the largest concentration of wartime medical activity in the West."<sup>130</sup> Because of its location, available medical treatment, and benevolent aid societies located in the city, many displaced people made their way to this Mississippi port seeking relief at the war's outset.<sup>131</sup>

Many people who found themselves in St. Louis came from Rolla, Missouri, and places further to the south and west – most notably Texas and Arkansas – usually by train and others on foot and in wagons. People who arrived here were often very ill, injured, suffered the effects of

<sup>129</sup> Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 135-180.

<sup>130</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 214.

<sup>131</sup> The work of these benevolent aid societies will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter.

starvation, dehydration, or exposure to the elements. According to the Western Sanitary Commission's 1864 report on refugees, many entered St. Louis "consisting almost entirely of helpless women and children, widows, orphans and half orphans, often sick or debilitated by disease, poorly clad and bare-footed with few bundles of bedding, on arriving here, having no friends to go to . . ." <sup>132</sup> In St. Louis, aid societies gave people food, money, clothing, and assistance in locating lost or missing family members. For this reason, the Gateway City served as an oasis in the desert of war for many displaced people.

By the spring of 1862, Union forces controlled much of Missouri. Military commanders here had to defend the state from Confederate aggressors who hoped to take the state for the Confederacy. The situation in Arkansas was different. Arkansas had seceded however reluctantly from the Union and therefore the army had to wrestle control of the state from Confederate authority. The second year of the war served as an important year for the army and its activity within Arkansas. The year would see the Federals begin to loosen the Confederate grip on the state. Two key battles that resulted in Union victory - Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove – did just that. The battle that took place at Pea Ridge on March 6-8, 1862, would be the first step in the army establishing control of the Ozark region of the state.

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<sup>132</sup> The Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission on the White Refugees*, 3-4.



Figure 2.2: Map of Arkansas Civil War battles. Source: <http://www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/battles/ARmap.htm>

Riding high following their victory at Wilson's Creek, the Confederate army entertained hopes of striking a military blow that would help bring Missouri into the orbit of the Confederacy. At Pea Ridge, located in the northwestern corner of Arkansas near the Missouri border, Confederate General Earl Van Dorn and his force comprised of about 16,000 troops would clash with the smaller Union forces of General Samuel R. Curtis, who had about 11,000 men. A Confederate victory at Pea Ridge was only a part of Van Dorn's larger goal – an invasion of Missouri and a chance to take on the forces of Ulysses S. Grant in a deciding battle for the Border State bringing it within the orbit of the Confederate States of America. Despite the fact that Confederate forces outnumbered him, Curtis was prepared and defeated an overzealous Van Dorn. Historian James McPherson has called it “the most one sided victory won by an outnumbered

Union army during the war.”<sup>133</sup> Confederate forces tucked tail and scattered in virtually every direction.<sup>134</sup> Major General Thomas C. Hindman’s Confederate forces retreated to northwestern Arkansas, where there were ample foodstuffs for his troops while the rest of the Confederate troops moved east of the Mississippi to help battered forces in Tennessee. While a series of smaller skirmishes took place over the summer and fall like the battle of Whitney’s Lane/Searcy in north-central Arkansas, the next major battle would not come until the following December.

### **The Confederate Conscription Act**

As the second year of the war approached, Confederate leaders came to the realization that their armies could not sustain themselves unless they replenished the ranks. By the time the smoke had cleared on the Pea Ridge battlefield on March 8, 1862, the Confederacy had lost 67,233 men to that point.<sup>135</sup> While Richmond could never replace the men that it lost in earlier battles, at the very least they hoped that it would spur enlistment in the army. The increasing death toll on the battlefields during the first year and a half of the war forced congress to act and attempt to refill the ranks. The Conscription Act went into effect on June 20, 1862, making all able-bodied white men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five subject to a three-year term of service in the army.<sup>136</sup> There was the option of hiring a substitute for one’s service and even an exemption for

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<sup>133</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 405. See also William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); William L. Shea, “The Road to Pea Ridge,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 205-222.

<sup>134</sup> Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America’s Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 92-93.

<sup>135</sup> Darrouch Greer, “Counting Civil War Casualties, Week-By-Week, for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum,” BRC Imagination Arts, 2005.

<sup>136</sup> The act passed the Confederate Congress on April 16, 1862. It was the first national conscription law in United States history. The Confederate government stopped the practice of draft substitution in December 1863. Later, an exemption allowed plantation owners with twenty or more slaves (known as the Twenty Negro Law) to avoid the draft, creating a great deal of tension in the Confederacy. See Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 56-57; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press), 611-612; Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America’s Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, Inc., 2011), 118-119.

owners of twenty or more slaves, causing a great deal of class conflict throughout the South. The act was later expanded to include men up to the age of forty-five and then, in 1864, was revised again to include the all men between the ages of seventeen and fifty years old. Historian Mary Elizabeth Massey adeptly made the connection between the draft and displaced people, in that it “ironically increased the ranks of both the army and the refugees.”<sup>137</sup> Fears of conscription were more prevalent in the Trans-Mississippi West as the army needed more troops here than the number provided by men who volunteered for service. These fears were especially strong in Arkansas where there remained pockets of wartime Unionism.

Even before the draft commenced, Arkansans in the north-central and northwestern part of the state organized into what they called the Arkansas Peace Society. The Peace Society, a loose, local organization of men opposed to the state’s secession from the Union and committed to protecting their homes, might be the first organized resistance to the Confederacy in the South. These Peace Societies existed in secret throughout the northern part of the state beginning in the fall of 1861 and they opposed impressment into service when Governor Rector called for the raising of state militias. While there was a concentrated effort by local Confederate officials to arrest and put them on trial for treason, society members in Van Buren, Fulton, and Izzard Counties, men who were not caught were simply flushed into the arms of the army or laid low, simply wanting to be left alone. Others spied or scouted for the army near their communities.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 20.

<sup>138</sup>See Ted R. Worley, “The Arkansas Peace Society of 1861: A Study in Mountain Unionism,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Nov., 1958): 445-456; Ted R. Worley, ed., “Documents Relating to the Arkansas Peace Society of 1861,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1958): 82-111; Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln’s Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 73-87; Kenneth C. Barnes, “The Williams Clan: Mountain Farmers and Union Fighters in North Central Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 286-317; Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 102-103; James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas’s Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 164; James J. Johnston, “Reminiscence of James H.

Loyalty to one side or the other could offer peace of mind or it could cause a family's displacement. Southern whites faced constant tests of loyalty. George W. Heath's 1872 play, *Southern Refugees, or The South during the War: A Military Drama in Five Acts*, detailed the importance of loyalty. The play narrates the travails of Fred Weston, a Union sympathizer in Brazoria, Texas. Fred, a planter who had studied engineering before the war was forced to choose sides and, according to others in his hometown, chose wrong. Following a heated debate in which Fred refused to vote in favor of secession for Texas, the town's leading secessionist, Harrison Rathbone, attacks him. A shot rings out and Fred falls to the ground, seconds later, his slave Dolph and friend Catastrophe kill Rathbone saving Weston's life. Soon thereafter, secessionist forces accuse Fred of murder and horse stealing. After a family discussion in which they determine that it is not safe for the family or himself if he stays, Fred went north, in search of the Union army. Once in Union territory, he will become a spy for the army with numerous narrow escapes along the way. Upon hearing about her brother's displacement, Carrie Weston laments in Act II, Scene 1: "Oh, my poor father, what will become of us? My brother a Southern Refugee; yourself doomed to a Southern prison; while mother and I are left to the mercy of a reckless mob. May God protect us all."<sup>139</sup> Throughout the twists and the turns of the play, there is a message with regard to the dispossessed and loyalty to the Union. At the conclusion of the play, Fred presumably turns to the audience and reminds them about the sacrifice of these people in the name of loyalty: "Our Drama's ended; 'Our Flag is there[.]'" Fred notes in the play's final scene, "Long and hard did we

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Campbell's Experiences during the Civil War," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. LXXIV, No. 2 (Summer, 2015): 147-177.

<sup>139</sup> George W. Heath, *Southern Refugees, or the South During the War: A Military Drama in Five Acts* (Haverhill, MA: Woodward and Palmer, Printers, 1872), Act II, Scene I, 24. Historian Alice Fahs has pointed out that popular wartime literature was important in shaping the cultural politics of the war. Plays, like Heath's, reveals a discussion of the meanings of the war and adds to the ever-growing story of the war as cultural histories. See Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

labor to bring it back, and severe were the sufferings of the SOUTHERN REFUGEE. . . .let us not forget, that, while the North was pouring forth her patriots, resolved to do or die, there were some LOYAL HEARTS in THE SOUTH DURING THE WAR.”<sup>140</sup> As the play’s final scene demonstrates, the constant testing of loyalties caused a strain on many communities in the region and contributing factor the problem there.

Fear of the conscription law generated such fear among Arkansans – especially Unionists - that they left their communities.<sup>141</sup> At the local level, the Confederacy had already impressed a number of men into service with the local militias. The new conscription law made recruitment efforts much more widespread and, as a result, made it much more difficult for Union men to dodge attempts at recruitment into the Confederate army.<sup>142</sup> With this law, notes historian Nola A. James in her study of Independence County, “[m]any of those who had hoped to remain neutral or, at least, avoid military service, became frantic. Some found a place of safety behind the lines. Beginning in late June 1862, many Southern citizens, especially Unionists, fled their communities fearing that the Confederacy would force them to fight. Several Pro-Union citizens tried to make their way to Missouri, but Confederate picket lines prevented it.”<sup>143</sup>

With the Conscription law, many Unionists in the Ozark Mountains of northwestern Arkansas, known as Mountain Federals, did their best to remain out of view so as not to be drawn into any conflicts with their pro-Confederate neighbors. Because of the Conscription Act, many of these Arkansas Unionists fled out of fear, not wanting to fight against the nation for which they

<sup>140</sup> George W. Heath, *Southern Refugees, or the South During the War: A Military Drama in Five Acts* (Haverhill, MA: Woodward and Palmer, Printers, 1872), Act V, Scene V, 58.

<sup>141</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 111-114.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln’s Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 7, 47-51.

<sup>143</sup> Nola A. James, “The Civil War Years in Independence County,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 28, No. 3 (Autumn, 1969): 241. See also Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 20-22.

professed their loyalty. Unionist men from both Arkansas and Missouri fled as they feared conscription by the army or, for men already on the run, faced a very real threat of capture, forced conscription, or death for refusing to fight for the Confederacy. Fear of conscription also pushed these Union men into the arms of the army as recruits.<sup>144</sup>

Unionist families in Arkansas lived life on the edge, imagining that they might have to flee at a moment's notice. Should they leave? Should they stay and hide the fact that they were Unionists? Citizens throughout the region did what they could to hold on as long as they could. For example, Lina Hermann who lived in the German settlement of Hermannsburg in Washington County asked herself these very questions in her wartime diary. Her entry on November 12, 1862, elaborated upon this internal fear of Confederates discovering that they were Union supporters. "We live in constant fear and danger. It is said that all men must join the Southern army. A negro stole a horse, saddles and took my Melinda with him. We have been considered sympathizers for the South so far but if the Northern troops come we will openly declare ourselves. Today starving secessionists were in our mill and acted as if it were their property."<sup>145</sup> Because of this tension, families sometimes arrived at the decision to flee their homes rather than forced service in the Confederate army.<sup>146</sup> Before the year was out, the Hermanns would come to that decision.

<sup>144</sup> See William Harris, "East Tennessee's Civil War Refugees and the Impact of the War on Civilians," *Journal of East Tennessee History* Vol. 64 (1992), 4-5.

<sup>145</sup> W.J. Lemke, editor, *The Hermanns of Old Hermannsburg, Washington County, Arkansas* (Fayetteville: Washington County Historical Society, 1965), 61.

<sup>146</sup> For more on the Confederate Conscription Act, see Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 133-177; Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 55-57; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 260-261; Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 21-22; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 429-433; Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America's Civil War* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012), 118-119.

While conscription made things more difficult for Unionists, not just Unionists who resisted. Moneyhon's research on southwest Arkansas demonstrates how Confederate conscription polluted enthusiasm for the Confederate cause by opening class divisions in that part of the state. By the winter of 1862, poorer citizens there were openly hostile against the government in protest of what they viewed as favoritism towards the area's wealthier citizens. Through various exemptions for wealthier individuals in the southwestern corner of the state, poorer citizens there saw conscription for what it was – making it a rich man's war, but a poor man's fight. Because of the events in late 1862 into 1863, the Confederacy never regained the support that it had from that region at the start of the war.<sup>147</sup>

As the war moved into its second and third years, the government had to ensure that white Southerners remained dedicated to the cause. Officials in Richmond moved against any activity deemed unpatriotic or interfered with the effort. "By late 1861 authorities in the individual states and the central government were already moving hard against the Unionists," notes historian Stephanie McCurry, "jettisoning protections for freedom of speech and assembly, abandoning distinctions between sedition (disloyal speech) and treason (disloyal acts), encouraging vigilante action within communities, and moving anew to bring the power of the state down on its internal enemies."<sup>148</sup> The Conscription Act was just a part of a larger government program stripping away its citizens' rights to ensure the government's survival.

A white Southerner's decision to flee to avoid conscription can be viewed as a form of protest against it and an indication of the various positions white southerners held toward the

<sup>147</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, "Disloyalty and Class Consciousness in Southwestern Arkansas, 1862-1865," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 223-243.

<sup>148</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 119.

war.<sup>149</sup> While the law was not the only cause of one's displacement, it could sometimes be the deciding factor, especially as the conflict continued. The law served as a test of loyalty for many whites in a region where devotion to secession was fragile. Loyalty tests lasted for the war's duration. "They report that all the men that could be found have been conscripted," detailed an October 1864 account in the Fort Smith *New Era*, "and that a great many are secreted in the hills and brush."<sup>150</sup> Unionists scattered everywhere in an effort to evade Confederate officials who might press them into service for the army. Missouri's *Springfield Journal* noted that hundreds of men had made their way to Missouri in the weeks before the conscription law was to take effect in Arkansas.<sup>151</sup> Most importantly, if someone could make their way into Union-controlled territory, it would all but assure their safety from conscription. Because of this, many of the dispossessed made their way to Missouri and places further north using their feet in protest of the draft law. As the army increased its presence in Arkansas as 1862 turned into 1863, there was less of a need for citizens to flee the draft law because of reduced Confederate army activity in the state.

Following a string of Union victories in the Northern part of the state, commanders prepared to take the state capital with the hopes that it would secure Arkansas. Curtis, who was determined to press on to Little Rock, had to secure the state's northern region and this included removing Hindman's forces. During the summer of 1862, the Union army was able to establish itself at the river town of Helena, a key site on the Mississippi. From here, Curtis was able to establish supply lines for his men allowing him to focus on Hindman and eventually help with the siege of Vicksburg. In the campaign, the two armies squared off over the course of five months in

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<sup>149</sup> For more on Southerners' conflicted feelings on secession and the war, see Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 38-84; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979), 85-90.

<sup>150</sup> "From Texas," Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, October 8, 1864.

<sup>151</sup> Quoted in Bobby L. Roberts, "General T.C. Hindman and the Trans-Mississippi District," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. LXXI, No. 2 (Summer, 2012), 117. The *Memphis Daily Bulletin*, July 9, 1862 (from the *Springfield [MO] Journal*) originally published this information.

a series of skirmishes at places like Whitney's Lane/Searcy, in north-central Arkansas, and Cane Hill in the northwestern part of the state. The two armies finally met on the morning of December 7, 1862, at Prairie Grove, about ten miles west of Fayetteville. At day's end, Union losses were over 1,200 casualties while Confederate losses were over 1,300 casualties. Tactically a draw, the result of the battle was an end to Confederate offensive operations west of the Mississippi River. The Federals were able to move in and secure most of the state for the remainder of the war.<sup>152</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of Prairie Grove, it was not yet determined that the blue coats were there to stay. Civilians who lived in the path of the retreating Confederate army bore the brunt of the hardships near the battlefield as many soldiers scavenged the countryside for whatever food and supplies that they could find. Sometimes, these soldiers pestered local families for supplies or simply took whatever civilians refused to provide to the battered and hungry men. Tales of wartime theft and harassment of these families were frequent – especially if these civilians were Unionists and/or had men serving in Union regiments.<sup>153</sup>

The Hermann family, founders of Hermannsburg, experienced a number of fearful incidents in the aftermath of Prairie Grove.<sup>154</sup> Brothers John (Johann) and Karl Hermann and their wives, Nanni and Lina (Wilhelmi) were German immigrants who came to Arkansas in search of prosperity and stability during the 1850s in the aftermath of the failed Revolutions of 1848 in their homeland. Once there, they established a steam-powered mill that processed wheat, corn, sawed lumber, and wool. Both Hermann couples, as well as about a dozen or so German immigrant

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<sup>152</sup> See William L. Shea, *Fields of Blood: The Prairie Grove Campaign* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

<sup>153</sup> Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 153-154; Joan E. Cashin, "Hungry People in the Wartime South: Civilians, Armies, and the Food Supply," in Stephen Berry, ed., *Weirding the War: Tales From the Civil War's Ragged Edges* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 163-164.

<sup>154</sup> Hermannsburg, sometimes called Old Hermannsburg, was located in western Washington County, Arkansas, near the border with Oklahoma (then Indian Territory). Today, the town goes by the name Dutch Mills.

families and Native Americans who lived in the general vicinity, experienced relative prosperity during the 1850s. Then the war came.<sup>155</sup> The location of Hermannsburg, in western Washington County, put them in the direct path of the moving armies – especially in the aftermath of the recent battles in the area. This put families in some rather difficult situations.

By November of 1862, the Hermanns determined that their best course of action was to seek the help of Federal troops, so brothers John and Karl went north in search of protection, leaving their wives in charge of the mill in Hermannsburg. The women faced numerous instances of harassment from Southern troops that November, mostly Hindman’s Confederate soldiers. Both Nanni and Lina noted their hardships in their respective diaries. Indicating just how bad the situation had become, Lina wrote on November 16<sup>th</sup> “We dare not undress to sleep and even the children sleep with their clothes on.”<sup>156</sup> The women and their children faced harassment and incidents of theft from Confederate troops nearly every night. In addition, the lack of supplies was taking its toll on the families. “I cut up window curtains and also used a piece of floor carpet and bed-spreads,” noted Nanni in her November 26<sup>th</sup> diary entry, “for it is impossible to secure clothes elsewhere.”<sup>157</sup> As December approached, Nanni, Lina and the eight children between them, had heard no word from John and Karl and their situation grew increasingly tense. This was evident in Nanni’s December 12<sup>th</sup> entry in her diary: “We cannot hold out much longer. During the night, robbers came to Lina’s house. What terror!”<sup>158</sup> Thankfully, for their sake, good news was soon to arrive in Hermannsburg.

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<sup>155</sup> W.J. Lemke, editor, *The Hermanns of Old Hermannsburg, Washington County, Arkansas* (Fayetteville: Washington County Historical Society, 1965), 15.

<sup>156</sup> “From the Diary of Lina (Mrs. Karl) Hermann,” *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>157</sup> “From the Diary of Nanni (Mrs. Johann Hermann),” *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

Following the Confederate defeat at Prairie Grove, the Hermanns finally received word from their brother Fritz that a Union escort of 100 men would help them flee the area. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, the Hermanns, nineteen men, women, and children made their way to General F.J. Herron's camp at Prairie Grove. "We had to flee, leaving all possessions behind, but we have our men."<sup>159</sup> The party spent Christmas Day camping in Fayetteville, the pain and suffering of the previous months wearing on everyone. Karl Hermann reflected on recent events when he wrote, "The Christ-Child had lost its magic that day. Satan was ruling the land. Looking up at the star-studded sky, our memory saw again the lighted Christmas trees in our Fatherland."<sup>160</sup> From Fayetteville, they made their way to Rolla via an army commissary train. Many in the party, including John, had taken ill during the journey north in the early months of 1863. February and March of 1863 saw them on the road to St. Louis, their ultimate destination of refuge. By April, they had reached St. Louis only to have tragedy strike once more - Nanni fell ill and died six days later on April 30, 1863. As Federal troops were able to solidify their presence in Arkansas that same year, Unionists and residents who only demonstrated a half-hearted support of the Confederacy started to feel a sense of security. For die-hard Confederates in the state, they too would have to make decisions on whether or not to stay in their home state.

### **Planters on the Move**

While the draft made things uncomfortable for many Unionists in Arkansas forcing some to flee, Confederates there became equally uneasy with the increasing presence of the Federals as they pushed further south. Of special concern was their chattel property – slaves. This military uncertainty in Arkansas and Missouri, caused many in the Confederate planter class to flee and they were not about to leave their slaves. Many white Southerners feared that their slaves would

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

flee plantations seeking protection from the closing Union army, especially after the Lincoln Administration moved towards a policy of emancipation beginning in the summer of 1862. In consequence, Confederates decided to take their property elsewhere with the hopes of preventing their slaves from reaching Federal lines.

Confederate supporters had much more to lose when compared to people in the other Southern states. Most masters owned less than twenty slaves. For Southerner planters, twenty slaves served as the dividing line between large-scale plantation agriculture and small, yeoman farms. Moneyhon points out that by 1860 “an estimated 50 percent of all slaves in Arkansas were on holdings of under 20 slaves, a figure considerably higher than the 38.0 percent in the Lower South.”<sup>161</sup> While there were not as many slaves in Arkansas as in other states across the antebellum South, more whites owned slaves here. Slave owners located in the Ozark and Boston Mountains in the northwestern part of the state tended to grow more food than cotton, so slavery was different here. Because of the mountainous nature of the region, cotton was more difficult to grow and, therefore, there were fewer slaves here.<sup>162</sup> With the start of the war, Arkansas ranked only eleventh out of the fifteen slave-holding states with 111,115 slaves concentrated in the southern and eastern part of the state.<sup>163</sup> Missouri on the other hand, according to its 1860 census, had 112,032 slaves within its borders.<sup>164</sup> This number is relatively small when compared to the slave populations of

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<sup>161</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, “The Slave Family in Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1999): 28. For more on slavery in Arkansas, see Clyde W. Cathey, “Slavery in Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring, 1944): 66-90, 150-163.

<sup>162</sup> John Soloman Otto, “Slavery in the Mountains: Yell County, Arkansas, 1840-1860,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 39, No. 1 (Spring, 1980): 35-52.

<sup>163</sup> Bobby, L. Lovett, “African Americans, Civil War, and Aftermath in Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 54, No. 3 (Autumn, 1995): 305-306.

<sup>164</sup> Missouri Senate Journal, 21<sup>st</sup> Assembly, “1860 Census,” St. Louis: 1860. [MSDA]. See also Harrison Anthony Trexler, “Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865,” (Ph.D. diss, Johns Hopkins University, 1914), 9. The national census of 1860 indicates that Missouri had 114,931 slaves. *U.S. Census, 1860: Classified Population of the States and Territories by Counties*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864.

other states in the Deep South during the same period.<sup>165</sup> Once the war began, slave owners had something else to fear: large numbers of their slaves leaving the plantation in search of freedom.

Many slaves fled plantations throughout the South to reach Union lines, in search of freedom. Slaves also played an important role in the Confederate war machine. Within the Confederate Army, slaves “dug trenches and built fortifications . . . serve[d] as teamsters, cooks, and hospital attendants” and “labored on the home front, tilling fields, raising crops, and picking cotton, so their masters could go to war.”<sup>166</sup> James McPherson notes that “[s]lave labor was so important in Confederate armies as well as on the home front that the government impressed slaves into service before it began drafting white men as soldiers.”<sup>167</sup> Correspondingly, a combination of military measures followed up by more stable measures from the federal government by the summer and fall of 1862. Through a series of acts, both generals in the field and the Lincoln Administration chipped away at the slave labor component of the Confederate Army and attempted to deal with the increasing numbers of slaves making their way to Federal lines.

The evolution of the Lincoln Administration’s emancipation policy during the first year and half of the war demonstrates how unprepared both the president and Congress were for the number of slaves who fled Southern plantations.<sup>168</sup> Lincoln’s move toward emancipation,

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<sup>165</sup> For example, the 1860 census indicates that other states had the following numbers of slaves: Georgia – 462,198; Mississippi – 436,631; Alabama – 435,080; South Carolina – 402,406; Louisiana – 331,726; North Carolina – 331,059; Tennessee – 275,719; Kentucky – 225,483; Texas – 182,566; Missouri – 114,931; Arkansas – 111,115; Maryland – 87,189; Florida – 61,745; Delaware – 1,798; Nebraska – 15; Kansas – 2. *U.S. Census, 1860: Classified Population of the States and Territories by Counties*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864.

<sup>166</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 462.

<sup>167</sup> James M. McPherson, “How President Lincoln Decided to Issue The Emancipation Proclamation,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* No. 37, (Autumn, 2002): 108.

<sup>168</sup> For more on the evolution of Lincoln’s emancipation policy, see Harold Holzer, Edna Greene Medford, and Frank J. Williams, *The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); William K. Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation, 1861-1865* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001); Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). For more on the impact of this emancipation policy on Union troops, see Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

culminating with the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation issued after the battle of Antietam in September 1862, came through a series of smaller, incremental measures in 1861. The move towards a Federal emancipation policy began in the battlefields of Virginia almost as soon as the war began. With the start of the fighting, three slaves, who had been leased by their masters to the Confederate army, presented themselves at Fort Monroe in Hampton Roads, Virginia. When their masters requested their return, General Benjamin Butler refused to return them and instead labeled them as ‘contraband of war.’<sup>169</sup> Building upon Butler’s treatment of escaped slaves as contraband of war, the First Confiscation Act, issued in August of 1861, enabled the Union Army to confiscate any slave put into service by the Confederate Army.

What to do with slaves who made their way to Union lines not only created confusion in the upper levels of the United States government, but it also forced military commanders to create ad hoc ways of dealing with this unforeseen consequence of the war. General John C. Frémont issued what amounted to a battlefield emancipation measure early in the war. Frémont, in August of 1861, proclaimed all slaves within the Department of the West free in an effort to erode Confederate sympathies in Missouri and strike a blow to guerrilla fighters there – as these people were the ones supporting them.<sup>170</sup> President Lincoln was not enthusiastic about Frémont’s field order emancipation, feeling that it would force his hand with regard to emancipation. As a result,

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<sup>169</sup> Kate Masur, “‘A Rare Phenomenon of Philological Vegetation’: The Word ‘Contraband’ and the Meanings of Emancipation in the United States,” *The Journal of American History* Vol. 93, No. 4 (Mar., 2007): 1050-1084. Here, Masur explores the widespread adoption of the term ‘contraband’ and traces its meanings both implied and otherwise during and after the Civil War. For more on Butler and contrabands, see Patricia C. Click, *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Freedmen’s Colony, 1862-1867* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 1-2, 37.

<sup>170</sup> James Oakes, “Reluctant to Emancipate?: Another Look at the First Confiscation Act,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* Vol. 3, No. 4 (December, 2013): 458-466. General David Hunter also issued a battlefield proclamation during the Spring of 1862 that declared “Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible; the persons in these three states – Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina – heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared forever free.” See U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Vols. (Washington Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series III, Volume II, 42. Henceforth, *O.R.*

he ordered Frémont to rescind his order. It would take that summer to nudge Lincoln closer to embracing the kind of emancipation found in both Frémont's and Hunter's orders and building upon the First Confiscation Act.<sup>171</sup>

Another measure that paved the way for the Emancipation Proclamation was the Second Confiscation Act, passed by the United States Congress in July of 1862. This act enabled the confiscation any slave of persons supporting the rebellion by Federal troops. The primary focus of this act concerned eliminating the return of fugitive slaves back to Confederate lines, unless their masters remained loyal to the United States. Together, the Confiscation Acts aimed at “the backbone of Confederate power – property, cotton, and slaves – and to use these resources for the benefit of the Union armies.”<sup>172</sup> It was a step for the president to clarify a variety of issues – both legal and constitutional – in a move towards eventual emancipation.<sup>173</sup> These acts dealt with slaves in the Confederacy, what about African Americans in the North who wanted to help the war effort?

The summer of 1862 served as a turning point for the Federal government's emancipation policy. On the same day that the Second Confiscation Act passed, July 17, 1862, the United States Congress also passed the Militia Act. This act allowed free African Americans' enlistment in the army, though it did not stipulate that they be armed and allowed to join in battle.<sup>174</sup> The Militia Act essentially relegated African American enlistees to the manual labor positions vacated by the white soldiers who left for the front lines. It provided for “persons of African descent . . .

<sup>171</sup> Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 73-74

<sup>172</sup> Earl J. Hess, *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress: Northerners and Their War for Union*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>173</sup> Paul Finkelman, “Lincoln and the Preconditions for Emancipation: The Moral Grandeur of a Bill of Lading,” in William A. Blair and Karen Fisher Young, eds., *Lincoln's Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 37.

<sup>174</sup> James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 196-197. The Militia Act repealed the provisions of the 1792 law that prohibited African Americans from serving.

employment in any military or naval service for which they may be found competent and granted freedom to slave men so employed, as well as to their families, if they, too, were owned by disloyal masters.”<sup>175</sup> As enslaved African Americans continued to come into Union lines, many wanting to participate in the war effort, the army moved towards more uniform emancipation policies. These measures demonstrate the ways in which the United States government put formal policies in place to deal with the increasing number of slaves making their way into the lines.

By that same summer, there were formal policies put forth by the federal government on how to handle the large numbers of slaves running away from Southern plantations. To prevent their slaves from falling into Federal hands, many fleeing slave owners sent their slaves out of harm’s way – and out of the way of the army. Many slave owners feared that their slaves would flee if the Federals came close enough to their communities and, by 1863 the possibility of this happening was very real in the West. Therefore, many planters removed both their families and their slaves further south in a practice called *refugeeing*.<sup>176</sup>

Drew Gilpin Faust notes that Texas was a very popular place for the planter class, calling it “that favored destination for planters hoping to locate slaves out of the reach of Union armies.”<sup>177</sup> Refugeeing planters came to Marshall, Waco, and Tyler, usually settling in central or eastern Texas.<sup>178</sup> Sometimes, just the slaves were sent further south, other times, their owners went along

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<sup>175</sup> Berlin et al., 41.

<sup>176</sup> Refugeeing was not without its problems for the planter class. Some slaves resisted attempts at their relocation, while others ran away once their masters relocated them. The increased number of runaways often increased fears of insurrection throughout the South because of this refugeeing. For more on the practice of refugeeing during the Civil War, see Ira Berlin, et. al., *Slaves No More: Three essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 56-57; See also Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979), 240; Bruce Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South* (New York: Random House, 2013), 195-199; William W. Freehling, *South vs. the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 142-143.

<sup>177</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 43.

<sup>178</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 92-93.

as well. “Refugees from Arkansas and Louisiana come to Texas with their slaves,” noted *Harper’s Weekly* in early 1864, “[t]hey should be welcomed.”<sup>179</sup> For loyal Confederates, they had to protect their slaves and not allow them to fall into the hands of the Federals. These slaves, once moved, labored on cotton plantations elsewhere in the South.<sup>180</sup> Slave owners usually had a tough go of it as they could not grow enough or sell enough cotton to make ends meet. As a result, they had to rent their slaves out “to public and private war industries, as teamsters, ironworkers, and even ‘nitre diggers.’”<sup>181</sup> For these slave owners, this was vital to preserving the Confederacy.

In a sense, it was the patriotic duty of every true Southerner to do what they could to move these slaves from the reach of the Union army. Other Southern whites, however, did not always view it in this way, viewing these planters as being very unpatriotic for leaving when the time became difficult.<sup>182</sup> Soldiers were fully aware that these Southerner planters were sending their slaves away for safekeeping. Soldiers saw it both first hand and in print in periodicals like *Harper’s Weekly*.<sup>183</sup> Some slave owners did this well before President Lincoln even hinted at emancipation as a war policy during the summer of 1862. Union soldier Joseph Trego noted in late 1861 that “on our return we learned that a man who own a number of slaves was about to move them South and was going himself to join the southern Army.”<sup>184</sup> The man described by the Union soldier sent

<sup>179</sup> “Texas,” *Harper’s Weekly*, January 16, 1864.

<sup>180</sup> Estimates of the number of slaves moved to Texas are about 150,000. See Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 99-100.

<sup>181</sup> Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightening: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Nitre (or potassium nitrate/saltpeter) was a key component of gunpowder and mined for in caves located in northwestern Arkansas. This key ingredient was difficult to come by because of the blockade. Operations here were so valuable to the Confederate government that the Confederate government exempted anyone who served in these mines as a part of the Confederate Nitre and Mining Bureau from the military draft. See James J. Johnston and James J. Johnson, “Bullets for Johnny Reb: Confederate Nitre and Mining Bureau in Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 49, No. 2 (Summer, 1990): 124-167.

<sup>182</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 42-43.

<sup>183</sup> “Negroes Driven South by the Rebel Officers,” *Harper’s Weekly*, November 8, 1862.

<sup>184</sup> “Joseph H. Trego letter to Thomas Trego,” October 9, 1861, Joseph H. Trego Letter, Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield – Republic, MO [Missouri Digital Heritage].

his slaves for safekeeping further south. “Wartime refugeeing, like prewar slave sales, showed that planter paternalism, sometimes impressive in flush times, grew more tenuous in disruptive times.”<sup>185</sup> While planters who took their slaves with them when they fled or sent them for safekeeping further south often had more available to them than other displaced white Southerners, in terms of wealth and resources, their actions are telling. The idea that many displaced Confederates would add to their already difficult task of seeking refuge by protecting the peculiar institution demonstrates the importance of slavery to so many white Southerners.

### **The Search for Food and the Sudden Displacement of War**

The war was particularly hard for Southern civilians as it attacked both their populations and economy. With each passing year of the war, the United States government moved away from conciliatory policies to one of hard war – with the help of General William Tecumseh Sherman.<sup>186</sup> “We are not only fighting armies,” observed Sherman as he prepared to take Savannah, Georgia, late in the war, “but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies.”<sup>187</sup> The army destroyed sources of food production as well as the rail networks that distributed that food as it pushed deeper into Confederate territory. Even before the war, the Confederacy’s rail system was very fragmented and, with the coming of the war, strained to a point that rendered it virtually useless.<sup>188</sup> Playing a key role was the Federal government’s Anaconda Plan.

<sup>185</sup> William W. Freehling, *South vs. the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143.

<sup>186</sup> For more on this change in war conduct, see Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Towards Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); James M. McPherson, “The Hard Hand of War,” in McPherson, *The Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 123-129.

<sup>187</sup> “William Tecumseh Sherman to H.W. Halleck,” December 24, 1864, *O.R.*, 128 Vols. (Washington Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 1, Vol. 44, Part 1, (Savannah), 799.

<sup>188</sup> Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America’s Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 223-224.

With the start of the war, the Lincoln Administration needed to develop a strategy to limit the effectiveness of Southern armies. The implementation of General-in-Chief Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan at the start of the war only magnified the South's strained rail networks as the war continued. Scott's plan made it difficult for Southern ports to receive much needed food and supplies. The navy blockaded Confederate ports in the Atlantic, all along the Mississippi River, and the Gulf of Mexico, applying an increasing amount of pressure on the Confederacy, like a giant snake. The Union navy blocked the ports of Charleston, New Orleans, Mobile, and Vicksburg, thus restricting trade between different parts of the Confederacy and making trade with Europe much more difficult. The goal of the plan was simple, the Confederacy's isolation. Historian Andrew F. Smith points out that "[n]o one can seriously believe that the North could have won the war without the blockade."<sup>189</sup> The blockade made it very difficult for Southerners to obtain everyday supplies as well as maintain any kind of steady income. This combined with the Confederacy's self-imposed cotton embargo made it difficult to export whatever crops planters were able to produce.

In an attempt to bring much-needed goods to Southern ports, the lucrative business of blockade running came about. A key defect in *Old Fuss and Feathers'* Anaconda Plan was that it would take time to be truly effective and Southern merchants took advantage. "During the early days of the war," notes Steven Woodworth, "no such purpose-built blockade-runners were available, and none were needed, as ordinary merchant vessels came and went from southern harbors with only moderate risk of apprehension by the thin cordon of blockaders."<sup>190</sup> Profit-

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<sup>189</sup> Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 26. For more on the Anaconda Plan, see: Louis P. Masur, *The Civil War: A Concise History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25-26; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 333-334, 378-383; Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America's Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 66-69.

<sup>190</sup> Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America's Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 68. For more on blockade running, see: James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The*

mindful Confederates built fast, sleek blockade-runners, often constructed in England, to sneak goods past Federal gunboats enforcing the blockade – especially as the blockade became stronger. Goods smuggled through included ammunition, tea, salt, liquor, and medicines with cotton sent out for sale to European markets. Often working out of ports in the Caribbean like Nassau or Havana, blockade-runners sought both glory and profit. The success of the blockade, however, was limited. While more than two-thirds of blockade-runners were successful early in the war, and that number decreased to about fifty percent later in the war, it was nowhere near what would have come through had a blockade not existed. Furthermore, the demand for supplies was greater during wartime.<sup>191</sup>

Much of the South's farmland grew crops like cotton and tobacco – not wheat and corn. As a result, the South relied on the North for much of its food in 1860. The North produced “half of the nation's corn, four-fifths of its wheat, and seven-eighths of its oats,” despite the fact that only 40 percent of the North's population engaged in agriculture compared to 84 percent in the South.<sup>192</sup> This, combined with the increasing number of slaves leaving plantations as the war progressed, forced these communities to rely on themselves to produce a great deal of their food. Historian Sam Bowers Hilliard points out the need for Southern self-sufficiency with regard to its pre-war food production. “Food was essential to the sustenance of the area's populations, but in some areas the temptation to grow cotton resulted in periodic shortages and, consequently, a

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*Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 378-380, 546-547; Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

<sup>191</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 381-382.

<sup>192</sup> Benjamin T. Arrington, “Industry and Economy in the Civil War,” in National Park Service, *The Civil War Remembered: National Park Service Handbook* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 2011), 104; see also Joan E. Cashin, “Hungry People in the Wartime South: Civilians, Armies, and the Food Supply,” in Stephen Berry, ed., *Weirding the War: Tales From the Civil War's Ragged Edges* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 161-162.

dependence upon other areas for food.”<sup>193</sup> As food production became more difficult with each passing day of the war, the Confederate government had to come to a decision on how to remedy this problem facing its communities.

Because of the Anaconda Plan, the Confederacy had to develop other means of procuring necessary supplies – especially food. The government resorted to taking the food out of the mouths of its own citizens with the Impressment Act of 1863. Because of the difficulty in procuring supplies, the Confederacy turned to their citizens from the start of the war for those very supplies – especially food. Unofficially, these policies began in 1862 and eventually became law by 1863 in the form of the Impressment Act passed by the Congress. Impressment enabled Southern soldiers to take much needed supplies – portions or entire crops, horses, wagons, etc. – in exchange for what amounted to IOUs. These IOUs were supposed to be a fair market value for the supplies taken by the army, but this was usually not the case if they ever received payment at all.<sup>194</sup> In addition, the government also told its citizens what crops it could grow and which ones that it could not. “In adopting measures that told farmers what they could and could not grow, and in allowing for the seizure of individual citizens’ crops,” notes historian Chandra Manning, “the Confederate government and southern state governments touched white Southerners’ daily lives far more directly than the Union government ever had, and not in ways that advanced individual white Southerners’ interests.”<sup>195</sup> Citizens also had to endure the tax-in-kind policies, 10 percent of

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<sup>193</sup> Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 20.

<sup>194</sup> Harry N. Scheiber, “The Pay of Troops and Confederate Morale in the Trans-Mississippi West,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter, 1959): 353-354. Scheiber notes in his study of Confederate troop pay in the Trans-Mississippi that the Confederate government could not meet the pay required to maintain troop levels (and morale), part of this was because of the large debt owed to civilians for supplies. Scheiber estimates the amount owed to civilians close to \$13,000,000.00.

<sup>195</sup> Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 57; See also Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011), 41-44; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979), 210; Clement Eaton, *Jefferson Davis* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 192-193, 206-207;

one's crop, imposed by the government. Tax-in-kind policies appeared to be more orderly on the surface, but they affected citizens just the same.

The inability of families to produce food for the family played a role in the displacement of people in the region, often tied to the presence of the armies or guerrilla fighters there. An irony of the Confederate South is that one of the world's most powerful agricultural economies," remarks historian James L. Roark, "people went hungry."<sup>196</sup> As the armies crisscrossed the countryside seeking or avoiding a battle, they caused similar destruction of foodstuffs in addition to that of homes and businesses. Armies and guerrilla fighters destroyed mills, homes, cattle, and crops. Soldiers often noted this as they moved through Arkansas and Missouri. "Left Camp Davidson this morning[,]" noted Union soldier David Allan writing from southeastern Missouri on November 13, 1862, "and after a march of about 10 miles encamped on the banks of a creek near the ruins of a mill which was destroyed by Heckers [sic] Division on account of it being a source from which Confederates drew their supplies."<sup>197</sup> Guerrilla fighters often consumed remaining crops to sustain them during their campaigns. These armies lived off the land, taking whatever crops or livestock they needed to survive while destroying what they did not need to keep it out of enemy hands. "The Yankees had stripped the country pretty well of horses, cattle, hogs," the only pro-Confederate paper in Arkansas, the *Washington Telegraph*, reminded its readers, "and had thus put it out of the power of the citizens to raise a subsistence, even if there was an assurance

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237. For the intricacies of the Confederate Impressment Act of 1863, see Rick Beard, "Impressed in the South," *The New York Times*, March 27, 2013.

<sup>196</sup> James L. Roark, "Behind the Lines: Confederate Economy and Society," in James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr., eds., *Writing the War: The Quest to Understand* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 205.

<sup>197</sup> "Private David Allan Cares Little for Suffering Farmers in Southeast Missouri," in Silvana R. Siddali, *Missouri's War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 139.

that they could keep it when made.”<sup>198</sup> The Union army often punished civilians who they believed to be aiding the enemy and, sometimes, this meant destroying their ability to survive.

Like the Union army, the Confederate army also participated in the destruction of private homes and public buildings and their ability to produce food. Citizens, who witnessed this devastation perpetrated upon civilians, often questioned its effectiveness. Some spoke out against this military carnage. For example, a March 1862 article did just that. “To destroy public stores and provisions is military good sense,” the article began, “To destroy private property (not necessarily for military subsistence) is decided nonsense. A house is of no use to the enemy. They get along just as well in tents. Why burn the houses? Whom does it hurt? Them or us?”<sup>199</sup> Written in response to Confederate General Earl Van Dorn’s destruction of various homes in Arkansas, the author details the frustration experienced by so many citizens at these armies and their disregard of personal property. For example, areas in the northwestern part of the state experienced food shortages and hunger after the Confederate army moved north following their defeat at Prairie Grove. Many people shared this experience as armies moved back and forth through their communities living off the land – oftentimes, *their* land.

Many civilians fled their communities because they were hungry. Because of the blockade and increasing presence of Federal troops, food became difficult to find and produce. Arguing that hunger played a key role in the defeat of the Confederacy, Smith notes that “[b]y the war’s end, an estimated 400,000 Southerners had left their homes – in many cases, farms or plantations – and many had taken refuge in Southern cities. Hence, less food was being produced in what remained

<sup>198</sup> “Life in the Federal Lines,” June 8, 1864, *Washington Telegraph* [AR].

<sup>199</sup> “Burning Towns,” *Washington Telegraph* [AR], March 5, 1862. The editor of the *Washington Telegraph*, John R. Eakin, was unabashed supporter of the Confederacy. His public support of the Confederacy often translated into propaganda for the Southern cause during the war. See Robert Freeman Smith, “John R. Eakin: Confederate Propagandist,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter, 1953): 316-326.

of the Confederacy while the need for food was growing, especially in urban areas.”<sup>200</sup> Individuals on the ground, soldiers and guerrilla fighters in particular, noticed this fact as they passed in and out of their communities. “Luxuries such as sugar, coffee, and tea were unknown even on the tables of the most fortunate [.]” noted Confederate guerrilla fighter and native Arkansan Joseph Bailey, “[t]he plainest of food only was to be had, and many families were already destitute and dependent on their more fortunate neighbors for bread.”<sup>201</sup> Sometimes, families left because of conscription and impressment, as each affected a community’s wartime food production. With many able-bodied men away from home to either fight the war or resist conscription, many families had to farm without their patriarch, therefore limiting food production. This absence of the head of household resulted in a major disruption of the yearly farming cycles. No form of destruction, however, was more devastating to these communities than the destruction of gristmills.

An important part of life for nineteenth-century communities was the gristmill. Gristmills were a key element in a community’s ability to produce food. Historian Michael A. Hughes notes “[b]eyond processing the flour and meal providing the nineteenth-century staff-of-life, the rural mill was the factory of its day.”<sup>202</sup> Often, one of the armies or guerrilla fighters, in an effort to prevent the other side from being able to use them in support of their troops, demolished these mills. Therefore, the loss of gristmills and other property was a key factor in driving people from their communities. Gristmill destruction hindered the production of foodstuffs for many communities throughout Missouri and Arkansas. “[W]e cannot appreciate the policy of devastating our own country on our retreat [.]” noted the March 5, 1862, *Washington Telegraph*, “[t]he houses

<sup>200</sup> Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011), 35.

<sup>201</sup> T. Lindsay Baker, *Confederate Guerrilla: The Civil War Memoir of Joseph M. Bailey* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 53

<sup>202</sup> Michael A. Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military-Farm Colonies,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer, 1987): 168.

and mills and goods which are devoted to the flames belong, not to the enemy, but to ourselves.”<sup>203</sup> Soldiers also noticed the destruction of the farms and mills in the countryside. For example, Union soldier Robert Carnahan described the conditions in central Missouri: “This war has ruined the country Splendid houses and Farms and Deserted and the army distroying [sic] the Hay Corn and Fences, and the Furntur [Furniture] in the Houses taken by the troops.”<sup>204</sup> The loss of these mills eliminated the means by which these communities produced food – sometimes leaving them unable to do so during the cold of winter – making their situation more miserable, forcing some to leave their communities. For citizens who chose to remain, they saw very quickly the land’s inability to support them for any duration.

Like the wartime destruction of homes, farms, and mills by guerrillas, the same destruction by the armies often disrupted the production of food for many communities and served as important factors in driving many people away from their communities. War not only devastated many farms in the region but it also created straggling soldiers who wreaked havoc. In addition, crop failures in the summer of 1863 made starvation a reality for many of these people.<sup>205</sup> Both armies created paths of destruction as a part of their own military strategies made evident when it came to food and the inability to produce food in these communities.

The forcible separation of families and, in some cases, the removal of children from their parents further added to the troubles of displaced people. In St. Louis, all kinds of stories of mothers forcibly separated from their children. One such instance involved a Mrs. Hargrave who fled Arkansas for the relative safety of the city. Upon her arrival during the spring of 1863, her

<sup>203</sup> “Burning Towns,” *Washington Telegraph* [AR], March 5, 1862.

<sup>204</sup> “Robert Carnahan Letter to My Dear Wife,” November 5, 1861, Robert Carnahan Letters, Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield Civil War Museum, Republic, Missouri, [Missouri Digital Heritage].

<sup>205</sup> Leo E. Huff, “The Martial Law Controversy in Arkansas, 1861-1865: A Case History of Internal Confederate Conflict,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer, 1978): 164; Bell I. Wiley, *The Plain People of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 36-69.

children “were spirited away and found in the Covent of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. . . . Soon after, they were missing again, and found in another institution of the same kind. They were rescued a second time, only to be abducted again, and have not been discovered yet.”<sup>206</sup> Whether or not the Convent of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart had good intentions or not is unclear, but the story certainly adds to a long list of hardships endured by displaced people. Accidental or incidental separation of families took a terrible toll on families. These partings were sometimes temporary, as weeks, months, or years down the road, families were reunited and moved on with their lives. Other times, family dissolutions were permanent as stories of death while seeking refuge were common.

Many white Southerners forced from their homes lost contact with friends and family in their communities. This left many of them to wonder where their loved ones had gone, leaving them searching for weeks, sometimes months. Relatives of the uprooted often placed ads in papers throughout the region searching for their loved ones, hoping to locate them. “Information Wanted” - read one of these ads in search of a loved one during the final days of 1863 – “The undersigned desires to obtain information of the whereabouts of his parents C.W. and Elizabeth Patterson. They formerly resided at Lake Providence, Louisiana [just south of the Arkansas border]. He has not heard from them since the Federals occupied the country some 18 months ago. He supposes them to be some place about Red River or in Texas. Any information concerning them will confer a favor, which will be gratefully acknowledged.”<sup>207</sup> Like other displaced people, they may have trekked out of harm’s way into a federal fort or found a train that was to take them to safety. Now, presuming they reached a safe place of refuge, the task was to reunite the family. Others, sometimes separated from their families in their flight, made similar pleas for help in finding their

<sup>206</sup> “Outrage Upon Arkansas Refugees,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, March 25, 1863.

<sup>207</sup> “Information Wanted,” *Washington Telegraph* [AR], December 30, 1863.

loved ones: “John Leonidas Murray, a displaced Unionist, left independence county, Arkansas, in the month of January, 1863, for the purpose and with the intention to reach Fayetteville, Arkansas, where the 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas and 11<sup>th</sup> Illinois cavalry were then stationed. Since then nothing has been heard from him. His mother and family have since removed to Ironton, Missouri, and any information of his whereabouts would be thankfully received by his anxious mother [Amelia Murray].”<sup>208</sup> These notices were scattered in papers throughout the region and indicated the suddenness of displacement from one’s community. Another notice in a Missouri paper included a “brother refugee” looking for his relatives from Texas. Possibly separated from each other in their refuge, such a request indicates the difficulty of the journey.<sup>209</sup> Some of these notices ran a single time or only a few times in a single paper, others ran for weeks and weeks sometimes in multiple papers across the state or region. In many cases, they indicate the traumatic impact of displacement upon many families.

### **Displacement in Little Rock and Fort Smith**

By the fall of 1863, the Union army had exerted a considerable amount of control within Arkansas. While the state was far from won, the presence of the army allowed displaced Arkansans to relocate to areas within their home state. With victories at Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove, the army was able to build upon these successes on the field of battle and provide a “real blow to Confederate authority in Arkansas” with the Confederate surrender of Little Rock on September 10, 1863.<sup>210</sup> This made the ‘little river town’ relatively safe for people on the run – especially displaced Unionists. They felt much safer in the larger city under the protection of troops than they would have wandering the Arkansas countryside. Historian Nate Coulter notes that, even with

<sup>208</sup> “Information Wanted,” *Liberty Tribune* [Clay County, MO], March 4, 1864.

<sup>209</sup> “Personal,” *The Morning Herald* [St. Joseph, MO], July 27, 1864.

<sup>210</sup> Ruth Caroline Cowen, “Reorganization of Federal Arkansas, 1862-1865,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer, 1959): 33.

Little Rock in Federal hands, there was still “reason to believe that central Arkansas represented one of the safest places to be found in the state. Consequently, more than a few drifters or refugees probably sought the confines of Pulaski County during the 1860s.”<sup>211</sup> The fall of Vicksburg in July 1863 combined with the fall of Little Rock, cemented the Federal presence in central Arkansas by the end of the year. This, in turn, led to a number of displaced persons to seek refuge in Little Rock and Fort Smith

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**INFORMATION WANTED.—John Leonidas Murray, a Union refugee, left Independence county, Arkansas, in the month of January, 1863, for the purpose and with the intention to reach Fayetteville, Arkansas, where the 1st Arkansas and 11th Illinois cavalry were then stationed. Since then nothing has been heard from him. His mother and family have since removed to Ironton, Missouri, and any information of his whereabouts would be thankfully received by his anxious mother.**

**AMELIA MURRAY.**

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Fig. 2.3: “Information Wanted,” *Liberty Tribune* [Clay County, MO], March 4, 1864.

With the growing Union presence in Arkansas and increased guerrilla warfare in the northern part of the state, Fort Smith attracted a great number of the wartime dispossessed because of its capacity as a Federal military base. Located at the Arkansas border with Indian Territory, at the confluence of the Poteau and Arkansas Rivers, the fort saw a number of uprooted citizens enter its borders

<sup>211</sup> Nate Coulter, “The Impact of the Civil War Upon Pulaski County, Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring, 1982): 71.

from the surrounding areas, especially people from Texas and the countryside of western Arkansas. These forts offered protection, food and supplies, and the opportunity to obtain transportation to points further away from the war zone. “The town is full of refugees from the country,” began a November 1863 article in the *New Era*, “of whom a large number is supported by the Government. This is deplorable, not so much because of the expense of feeding them, as from the injury the community at large is receiving by the almost total suspension of farming operations. The cause of all this is bush-whacking.”<sup>212</sup> The fort experienced a steady stream of displaced people once the Federals were in control after 1862, only to increase in number. One Union army chaplain noted in September 1864 that “he issued 40,000 rations to those poor people [at Fort Smith alone], and from the 22d of May to the 22d of June, 49,000, issuing to none who were not in absolutely destitute of circumstances.”<sup>213</sup> While the exact number of people who made their way to the fort is difficult to determine, displaced persons numbering in the thousands would not be an unreasonable estimate. The federal fort served as a final stop for some Arkansans while others continued on to Texas or Kansas seeking refuge.

The large number of displaced people at Fort Smith created a burden upon the facilities there. “At this time all of the Federal posts had numbers of refugee families stationed near them,” writes author William Monks in his 1907 work, *History of Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas*, “entirely destitute of food and raiment, and relying entirely for their preservation upon the small amount of help they received from the government.”<sup>214</sup> Under Confederate occupation, commerce all but stopped. Armies and guerrilla fighters cut supply routes, businesses closed, and

<sup>212</sup> “Prospect of the Farmers – Bush-Whacking,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, November 14, 1863.

<sup>213</sup> Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, September 3, 1864.

<sup>214</sup> William Monks, *A History of Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas: Being an Account of the Early Settlements, the Civil War, the Ku Klux Klan, and Times of Peace* (West Plains, MO: West Plains Journal Co., 1907), 133.

most citizens had left in search of safety. Further complicating the situation, the Arkansas River at the fort was very shallow, making it difficult for the delivery of supplies. The situation here was so dire that citizens petitioned President Lincoln in February of 1865, asking him either to curtail the army's rations or to send stores independent of the army so that the loyal citizens there could purchase these supplies.<sup>215</sup> An official communication from John M. Thayer, a Brigadier General, to John Levering, the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Arkansas conveyed a similar request on behalf of the people there:

SIR: I would respectfully call your attention to the fact that there is a large number of persons at this post entirely destitute of the means of living and to whom the refugee rations are issued by the post commissary. There are also many families here who have the means to purchase, but there is nothing here in the way of breadstuffs outside of the commissary. Frequent applications are made to purchase at the commissary, which, of course, cannot be granted. There is great suffering among these people. I send off the destitute as fast as there is transportation. I would request that some instructions be given in regard to the matter.<sup>216</sup>

The federal fort had a very simple problem: too many people and not enough food. This food shortage was a result of the large number of people who had made their way to the fort by early 1865. Military officials would be unable to find a complete solution to this problem, but it would plant that seeds for *farm colonies* (discussed in a later chapter) as an alternative solution to the problem at the fort.

With the establishment of control in many of Arkansas's key outposts, Unionists from other Western states began to trickle into the state. Roads from a variety of points in the Lone Star State made their way east to Fort Smith. "Refugees from Texas continue to arrive constantly" begins a November 1864 account in the *New Era* about Texans coming into Arkansas.<sup>217</sup> By mid-1863, a

<sup>215</sup> Edwin C. Bearss, "General Bussey Takes Over at Fort Smith," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Autumn, 1965): 222. Bearss' article has a direct quote from the authors of this petition to the president, but does not cite his source.

<sup>216</sup> "Brigadier General John M. Thayer to John Levering, Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Arkansas," February 7, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1, (Powder River Expedition), 767.

<sup>217</sup> "Affairs in Northern Texas," Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, November 14, 1863.

steady stream of displaced Unionists left Texas because of constant harassment and threats of violence by Confederate sympathizers. They felt that it was safe to seek refuge here. For example, *New Era* reported in October 1864 that

Several families of refugees came in from Texas [to Fort Smith], yesterday. They are the wives of Union men who are in the service, and were driven from their homes. . . . They were five weeks on the road. Will the Copperheads make a note of this; that while they are growling at the way their rebel friends are treated, these same gentry are oppressing the poor and defenceless [sic] families that are left in their midst. We feed the families of the rebels and they in turn, starve ours.<sup>218</sup>

Besides detailing the fact that displaced Texans came to and through Arkansas, it is also revealing in that this account calls out Confederate sympathizers for being unsympathetic to the plight of displaced Unionists in Arkansas. The *New Era* and its editor, Valentine Dell, used the nearby Union army to his advantage. He wrote in support of, and asked for the protection of displaced Unionists in the area.<sup>219</sup>

### **Guerrilla Warfare and General Orders No. 11**

The first two years of the war saw guerrilla fighters terrorize citizens throughout the Trans-Mississippi region. Historian Nicole Etcheson best summarized the wartime situation in Missouri and Arkansas: “Unionist civilians likewise frequently found themselves a partisan target. Bushwhackers might shoot an unarmed farmer despite his wife’s pleadings, or they might show mercy. Neighbors might settle a grudge by telling the guerrillas that someone was a Union sympathizer. Victims often refused to even identify guerrillas they recognized, for a fear of savage reprisals.”<sup>220</sup> To put it simply, guerrilla warfare in the region was unpredictable and brutal. The mere mention of infamous guerrilla fighters like “Bloody Bill” Anderson, William Quantrill, or

<sup>218</sup> “From Texas,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, October 8, 1864.

<sup>219</sup> The *New Era* published its first issue in September 1863, at the same time that Union troops took control of Fort Smith. Printers published the first issues on the backside of George Washington’s “Farewell Address to Congress,” as paper was in short supply in the Confederacy. See Sonny Rhodes, “Opposite Extremes: How Two Editors Portrayed a Civil War Atrocity,” *American Journalism* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Fall, 2005): 27-45.

<sup>220</sup> Nicole Etcheson, “Another Name for Death,” *The New York Times*, March 23, 2013.

James Henry Lane sent chills up any person's spine. The actions by Bushwhackers and Jayhawkers were instrumental in sending people on the run. For many people, guerrilla bands could be the deciding factor sending their family on the run.

For many communities in Missouri and Arkansas, they were often unable to determine for whom the guerrillas fought – the Union, the Confederacy, or themselves. “For thousands of people in the northern half of Arkansas,” observes historian William L. Shea, “the Civil War was not only a contest between organized military forces, but also a desperate struggle for survival against barbarism.”<sup>221</sup> External appearances of these guerrilla groups meant nothing. Guerrilla fighters changed appearances often to conceal their identity as well as their next move. Bushwhackers with long, scraggly hair, beards, specially made shirts, covered with blue, Union Cavalry coats operated the border between Missouri and Kansas as well as the southwestern border between Arkansas and Missouri.<sup>222</sup> Jayhawkers looked much the same and operated in many of the same areas. Their methods and reasons for resorting to guerrilla warfare varied almost as much as their physical appearance. These men attacked communities to elicit support for their cause, take food and supplies for their campaigns, or recruit men for service in the army.

Whispers concerning approaching guerrillas, whether valid or false, contributed to the displacement of so many in the Trans-Mississippi West. These rumors, often from unfounded reports of an approaching army or guerrilla band sent towns into panic, causing citizens to flee or, at the very least, consider that as an option. Writing from Mornington, Missouri, transplanted Michigander and farmer Alonson Royce wrote, on New Year's Day 1862, “An awful panic has set

<sup>221</sup> William L. Shea, “1862: A Continual Thunder,” in Mark K. Christ, ed., *Rugged and Sublime: The Civil War in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 92.

<sup>222</sup> For more on the appearance of guerrilla fighters as well as the role of gender in their mission, see Joseph M. Beilein, Jr., “The Guerrilla Shirt: A Labor of Love and Style of Rebellion in Civil War Missouri,” in Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013).

afloat, among the union people, some of the most astounding conjectures with regard to the ultimate intentions of their enemy. False reports, and unfound[ed] alarms, together with ingenious lies, have brought upon us the reign of terror.”<sup>223</sup> Both individuals and newspapers often talked in false reports and what people might be forced to do if they proved true. By the summer of 1862, Royce had fled to Illinois selling many of his belongings at about thirty percent of its worth. Shortly after his arrival, he invested in some land in New Douglas, Illinois – about 47 miles east of St. Louis.<sup>224</sup> Royce made his move permanent, not wanting to take any chances on his life or his property. For many civilians in the region, rumors were just that, rumors. Eventually, some turned into threats, which only intensified panic among civilians here.

Some threats proved to be very real, sending citizens in the region on the run. For example, author Ward L. Shrantz noted in his compilation of the history of Jasper County, Missouri, that “[m]any union residents about this time [1861] received anonymous warning to leave the country at once or it would be worse for them and a wholesale exodus of the peaceably inclined seems to have resulted.”<sup>225</sup> Not all citizens, however, received this kind of advanced warning. Many citizens had to go by what they heard via word-of-mouth and this often induced community-wide panic. Communities that lay in their path took potential guerrilla threats very seriously. Historian Michael Fellman’s research findings support Royce’s actions when he noted that “[n]ews of the approach of a large band of guerrilla bands or the Union army was sufficient enough to drive many potential victims away, at least until the immediate threat passed.”<sup>226</sup> After nearly two years of these

<sup>223</sup> “Letter from Alonson Royce to Orin Baker,” January 1, 1862, Alonson Royce Letters, Folder 1, University Archives & Historical Collections of Michigan State University, East Lansing.

<sup>224</sup> “Letter from Alonson Royce to Dear Brother,” July 20, 1862, *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> Ward L. Shrantz, *Jasper County, Missouri, in the Civil War* (Carthage, MO: The Carthage Press, 1923), 49.

<sup>226</sup> Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 73.

guerrilla attacks, the Federals tired of the effects on these communities in western Missouri and took very controversial measures to prevent their continuation.

Guerrilla activity put many citizens in a position where they had to decide, rather quickly, if they were going to leave and, if they made that decision, where they would stay for the future. Describing a loved one who left an account of approaching irregulars near their home in Laclede County in south-central Missouri, Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Gilmore detailed the experience of a civilian encounter with these guerrillas in December of 1864. She noted that these Bushwhackers

were in one mile of us the night he stayed at home they robbed [sic] Sister Helen’s house that night took two fine mares \$350 about 25 dollars worth out of the house Sister was at our house to see Mr. Gilmore Mr. Pridgen was at Lebanon with the train so you see there was no person but the children at home the cruel demons threatening to shoot the childrens [sic] brains out.<sup>227</sup>

Threats of property destruction, theft, and murder were made very real by these men, and often, left citizens no choice but to flee their homes and communities if they hoped to survive. In so many instances, families chose to flee simply out of a fear of the unknown as it related to guerrilla activity in the hopes that it would spare their property and, most importantly, their lives.

Once a person left their community, it did not mean that they were out of harm’s way. There are accounts of people who left home because of guerrillas only to run into another guerrilla band somewhere else. One account contained in author William Elsey Connelly’s *Quantrill and the Border Wars*, detailed the story of a group of Bushwhackers, led by the infamous Bushwhacker William Clarke Quantrill, who caught up with some displaced Missourians in Kansas. Some displaced residents were Germans whose “lives were forfeit to any guerrilla who might find them.”<sup>228</sup> These Bushwhackers went door to door searching for their targets only to discover they

<sup>227</sup> “Lizzie Gilmore, James E. Gilmore, and A.B. Gilmore letter to N.W. and M.C. Green, December 6, 1864, Lizzie Gilmore Collection, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Rolla, MO [Missouri Digital Heritage].

<sup>228</sup> William Elsey Connelly, *Quantrill and the Border Wars* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Torch Press, 1909), 325. Historian Matthew C. Hulbert refers to Connelly as a “pseudo historian” because of his methods in writing history. Hulbert notes that Connelly “relied on unacceptable methods of historical inquiry, such as theories of ‘inherited vice,’ that

have escaped, thanks to some quick thinking by both the men and their wives.<sup>229</sup> Just because citizens fled one area that posed risks, it did not mean that they were completely safe. Life of a displaced person was one of constant looking over one's shoulder and making ready on a moment's notice to escape danger.

In some instances, displaced people settled old scores with neighbors through guerrilla activity – by actually taking part. Divided loyalties made for a very tense situation for many who lived there. Confederate sympathizers held prejudices against local Unionists and vice-versa when the war began. As it continued, these tensions increased creating what might be termed *mini civil wars* in various borderland communities in Arkansas and Missouri. For example, Elvira Weir Scott, a Southern sympathizer living in north-central Missouri, recorded the impact of Jayhawkers operating near her home on March 9, 1862.

Generally they have a malicious, envious feeling toward their neighbors who by honest industry have surrounded themselves by the comforts of life. They openly boast that they will have possession of their fine farms, & they think that the time has arrived for them to take the time to better their fortunes. Such are nine-tenths of the Union refugees. We know some of them from the east in this country. They owned nothing, were in debt, & had lived off the community as long as they could. They left of their own free will & became Union refugees. Now they are creating sympathy by their support of the free States. Or they are jayhawking in other counties of the State . . .<sup>230</sup>

Displaced people actively taking part in these guerrilla activities demonstrate just how fragile North-South relations were throughout the different communities that dotted the region. Guerrilla activity provided an opportunity for residents seeking some kind of revenge against Confederate sympathizers in their communities.

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differentiate him from modern historians.” See Matthew C. Hulbert, “How to Remember “This Damnable Guerrilla Warfare”: Four Vignettes from Civil War Missouri,” *Civil War History* Vol. 59, No. 2 (June, 2013): 152 n20.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 325-326.

<sup>230</sup> “Elvira Scott Laments That Her Home is ‘No Longer a Safe Asylum,” in Silvana R. Siddali, *Missouri's War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 129.

While people in New York City and Washington D.C. crowded around newspapers detailing the Confederate shelling of Fort Sumter, guerrilla warfare gripped Western communities and sent many residents on the run. Historian Christopher Phillips nicely details a general trajectory of the guerrilla violence that would plague the region. Phillips has recently argued that not only did guerrilla attacks on civilians grow with each year of the war, but guerrilla attacks escalated following the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Part of this, Phillips argues was because these irregular fighters sought to unleash “collective retribution on the West in part to preserve slavery and terrorize people who sought – and fought – to end the peculiar institution.”<sup>231</sup> In Arkansas, there was an increased intensity of guerrilla attacks corresponding with the increased Union presence in the state. In a review of the Union Provost Marshall Papers in Missouri, files including the terms ‘guerrilla,’ ‘guerrillas,’ or ‘bushwhackers,’ increased by 61 percent. In 1863, 75 percent of guerrilla-related activities occurred in the spring, immediately following the Proclamation, representing “a clear extension of emancipation related violence.”<sup>232</sup> Guerrilla violence in both Missouri and Arkansas plagued citizens there, creating a very fluid crisis in that there was no set or well-defined period in which individuals fled. However, based on Phillips’ evidence, more people left their homes because of guerrilla attacks in 1864 and 1865.

The constant presence of guerrilla fighters in the Trans-Mississippi region brought about some rather unconventional military decisions that could trigger or intensify crises.<sup>233</sup> None was more unconventional than Ewing’s General Orders, No. 11. Ewing, a lawyer and judge originally from Ohio, had no previous military experience but was determined to make a name for himself

<sup>231</sup> Christopher Phillips, “The Wicked War in the West,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 2013.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>233</sup> See Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 176-180; Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 49-51.

in the war.<sup>234</sup> In an effort to deal with these irregular forces, Union military officials sought alternative solutions to their problems in the region, Missouri in particular. General Orders, No. 11, issued on August 25, 1863, removed all but a handful of citizens, probably around 20 percent - from the counties of Bates, Cass, Jackson, and part of Vernon County in western Missouri.<sup>235</sup> Inhabitants had one week to vacate their homes in the affected area. If residents could prove their loyalty to local Union officials, they would be relocated within the district; otherwise, they had to leave. These four counties had seen some of the most intense guerrilla warfare. Ewing's thinking behind this order was that guerrillas lived off civilians and the found both sympathetic and vulnerable people in western Missouri. Sympathetic residents furnished guerrillas with the food, shelter, and information they needed for their campaigns. Guerrilla violence in western Missouri, notes historian Don R. Bowen, "concentrated on the western border of the State in Jackson County proved to be the longest lasting, the most costly, and virtually impossible for the Union occupation forces to contain."<sup>236</sup> Citizens had to evacuate within fifteen days of the order.<sup>237</sup>

Ewing issued this unpopular order as a means of curtailing the activities of guerrilla leader William Clarke Quantrill, who sacked Lawrence, Kansas, only four days before. Quantrill and approximately 500 men looted and wreaked havoc in the town, killing at least 150 civilians in the raid before fleeing with their loot into the dense Missouri woods, out of the reach of Federal troops.

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<sup>234</sup> Ronald D. Smith, *Thomas Ewing, Jr.: Frontier Lawyer and Civil War General* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

<sup>235</sup> Donald L. Gilmore, *Civil War on the Missouri-Kansas Border* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2006), 253.

<sup>236</sup> Don R. Bowen, "Guerrilla Warfare in Western Missouri, 1862-1865: Historical Extensions of the Relative Deprivation Hypothesis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Jan., 1977): 31. It is also possible that Ewing thought he was acting with benevolence as Union General W.T. Sherman had done when he evacuated a number of families from Atlanta. For Sherman, this was a means to minimize suffering among these families as well as preventing female mistreatment of Union troops (similar to that seen by General Benjamin Butler in New Orleans). For more on this, see Lisa Tendrich Frank, *The Civilian War: Confederate Women and Union Soldiers during Sherman's March* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015).

<sup>237</sup> Jeremy Neely, *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 2007), 119-131.

A witness to the attack, the former publisher of the Kansas Free State newspaper R.G. Elliot recounted to his sister a few days later that “[s]ome were murdered in their beds, others after they had given up all they had [text stricken through] and surrendered themselves as prisoners were shot down in cold blood. Every man who was seen on the streets was pursued and shot, even prisoners that were wounded and saved by some of the more human were butchered by others while under guard[.]”<sup>238</sup> One historian considered this order to be “one of the cruelest and most unusual orders issued by a general during the Civil War.”<sup>239</sup> While General Orders, No. 11 created many enemies for the Union army, militarily it achieved its goal. Following Ewing’s order, much of the guerrilla activity there declined. While historians like Charles R. Mink question the orders’ effectiveness and its necessity, one thing is certain: this order created a large number of displaced people along the Missouri-Kansas border with an estimated displacement of about twenty thousand Missourians.<sup>240</sup>

Despite its controversy, President Lincoln only cautiously approved of the order. If the president felt that a military order or action might jeopardize the government’s standing in a state, Lincoln had no problem rescinding the order. This example had been set with his rebuke of General Frémont for his emancipation order in Missouri as well as his ending of assessments on disloyal citizens in the state. While the president did not immediately comment on Ewing’s order, he did share his feelings with General John M. Schofield a month later. “With the matter of removing the inhabitants of certain counties en masse; and of removing certain individuals from time to time, who are supposed to be mischievous,” the commander-in-chief hesitantly endorsed the order in a

<sup>238</sup> “R.G. Elliot to Dear Sister,” August 24, 1863, Elliot Family Papers, Box 1, Folder 17, Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas Digital Repository Project.

<sup>239</sup> Charles R. Mink, “General Orders, No. 11: The Forced Evacuation of Civilians During the Civil War,” *Military Affairs*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Dec., 1970): 132; Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 25.

<sup>240</sup> Donald L. Gilmore, *Civil War on the Missouri-Kansas Border* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2006), 253.

letter to Schofield on October 1, 1863, “I am not now interfering, but am leaving to your own discretion.”<sup>241</sup> The president’s confidence in his Western generals allowed the order to remain in place.

Homes and businesses had been torched and destroyed to prevent them from being used by any returning guerrilla fighters, causing the area to earn the nickname the ‘burnt district.’ The St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican* took note in a November 2, 1863 article:

Our border counties south of the Missouri river suffered incalculable, not only much directly, but even more indirectly, from the operations of the bandits. Our authorities, when Curtis was in power, identified the whole people with them, and, by a monstrous and dreadful assumption, made the whole people liable for outrages which, disarmed as they had been, they were utterly powerless to prevent or punish. We have seen the deplorable consequences – consequences at the sight of which a Christian or civilized world may well, as Lord Brougham says, “stand aghast.” The silence of death no reigns over those border counties. Burke’s description of the Carnatic ravaged by Hyder Ali is realized in Jackson, Cass, Bates, and other once flourishing counties in our state.<sup>242</sup>

Union troops destroyed crops and drove off or slaughtered livestock making the four counties uninhabitable. Furthermore, troops enforcing the order and subsequent evacuation failed to differentiate between Unionist and Confederate supporters in both person and property.<sup>243</sup> Confederate troops, like the Confederate surgeon William M. McPheeters, detailed the destruction in simpler terms during Price’s 1864 raid: For several days, [we have been] traveling through the

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<sup>241</sup> “Abraham Lincoln to John M. Schofield (Affairs in Missouri),” October 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Lincoln probably allowed Ewing to keep the order in place because General Orders No. 100 issued earlier in the year. Later known as the ‘Lieber Code’, this order defined “as military necessity all measures ‘indispensable for securing the ends of war,’ including summary punishment of guerrillas. It carefully categorized irregular and civilian combatants, denying them the rights of legitimate soldiers.” See Christopher Phillips, “The Wicked War in the West,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 2013.

<sup>242</sup> “Marauders and Crime in Kansas,” *Daily Missouri Republican* [St. Louis], November 2, 1863. Few written accounts of this destruction exist because of citizens’ resulting expulsion because of Ewing’s order. Recent archeological digs have offered new insight into what happened in this region after the order. See Heather Pringle, “Digging the Scorched Earth,” *Archeology* Vol. 63, No. 2 (March/April 2010): 20-25; Tom A. Rafiner, *Caught Between Three Fires: Cass County MO., Chaos, and Order No. 11, 1860-1865* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation: 2010); Tom A. Rafiner, *Cinders and Silence: A Chronicle of Missouri’s Burnt District, 1854-1870* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation: 2011).

<sup>243</sup> Ron Soodalter, “General Order No. 11,” *Missouri Life* Vol. 42, No. 2 (April 2014): 56-60.

border counties of Mo. – Jackson, Bates, Cass – every house has been burned and the whole country devastated by the Yankees.”<sup>244</sup> This was more than a year after Ewing had issued the order, evidence of the total destruction committed by the Federals.

While clashes between armies understandably caused families to leave their homes, General Orders, No. 11 did not give them a choice. Some civilians searched out family, some wandered the countryside, and others left to places as far away as Texas. In this instance, loyalty made no difference. Ewing’s order displaced both loyal and disloyal residents in the region. Missouri resident Partheny Horn noted that “[i]t was this last order that caused me to emigrate to Texas.”<sup>245</sup> The outright removal of citizens from the four western counties in Missouri not only intensified the situation in that region in an instant, it also created many enemies of the Federals as a result, sending many citizens impacted by the order into the arms of guerrilla fighters in the area. Nationally, observes Michael Fellman, General Orders, No. 11 “appeared to be a wildly punitive attack on noncombatants in a Union state.”<sup>246</sup> Citizens would not be allowed to return the four Missouri counties until January 14, 1864, under an order from General Egbert B. Brown.

Artist George Caleb Bingham’s detailed the resulting crisis in his 1870 painting (see Fig. 2.4) of citizens torn from their western Missouri homes while their neighbors’ homes burned in the background as Ewing looked on. The artist faced criticism for his work; many thought that his painting was disrespectful to Union troops. Other critics felt that he criticized the wrong side. The year after his painting came out; he defended himself against many of these accusations in a public

<sup>244</sup> Cynthia DeHaven Pitcock and Bill J. Gurley, eds., *I Acted from Principle: The Civil War Diary of Dr. William McPheeters, Confederate Surgeon in the Trans-Mississippi* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 235.

<sup>245</sup> Partheny Horn Memoir, ca. February 14, 1919, Private Collection [Missouri Digital Heritage], 20.

<sup>246</sup> Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 96.

address in Kansas City, Missouri. Bingham's 1871 public address made no apologies as he stated that he painted simply what he saw.

The great mass of the adult male population were immediately compelled to seek safety in flight. The few who ventured to linger with their wives and daughters until they could pack up such scanty effects as absolute necessity required, did so at their peril; as they were shot down, without hesitation, whenever they dared to venture a word of expostulation, or denunciation against the cruel injustice of their oppressors. It was the evident purpose of spoilers to appropriate themselves everything of value, and to allow the distressed inhabitants to bear with them, in their friendless and hopeless exile, nothing but the clothing which covered their persons, and rarely, indeed, were they granted a sufficiency of this. That this purpose might be fully accomplished, all wagons and teams, fit for the service of transportation, were seized and freighted with the spoils of robbery. An occasional dilapidated cart, and a few blind or superannuated horses, were spared to the refugees. These relieved, to some extent, the mothers and infants, and the aged and infirm, and rendered more striking the melancholy aspect of the processions in which, as to the funeral of every earthly hope, the exiled inhabitants slowly move from their once happy homes, to find a resting-place, they knew not, in the wide world, where.<sup>247</sup>

Even with such a description of the displaced Missourians created by the order, he still felt that both words and even the strokes of his pencil were not enough to convey the suffering of uprooted citizens. For Bingham, who became involved in politics later in life, illuminating this event was his duty as both an artist and as a citizen.

In many ways, Kansas was a wartime no man's land in that it was a place that lacked any enforceable authority from either side. The state saw its share of small-scale military engagements, including Baxter Springs in 1863 and Marais des Cygnes in 1864, as well as its fair share of guerrilla activity. There were Union forts at Fort Scott and Fort Leavenworth, offering some

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<sup>247</sup> George C. Bingham, "An Address to the Public, Vindicating a Work of Art Illustrative of the Federal Military Policy in Missouri During the Late War," Kansas City, MO., 1871, 13. During the war, Bingham served as a captain in the U.S. Volunteer Reserve Corps and then, as the Missouri State Treasurer in Jefferson City from 1862-1865. See also, W. Arthur Mehrhoff, "Echoes of Order No. 11," *Missouri Life* Vol. 42, No. 2 (April 2014): 60-61; Nicole Etcheson, "An Artist's Revenge," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2013; Paul C. Nagel, *George Caleb Bingham: Missouri's Famed Painter and Forgotten Politician* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005); LeeAnn Whites, "Forty Shirts and a Wagonload of Wheat: Women, the Domestic Supply Line, and the Civil War on the Western Border," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* Vol. 1, No. 1 (March, 2011): 56-78.

protection for displaced people – but they were also targets for irregulars. Both displaced people and guerrilla fighters used Kansas as a place to gather. However, this was not their greatest fear; their greatest fear was the elements. Many of the displaced who made their way to the Sunflower State were scantily clad and had to face the brutal Plains winter with few blankets and very little food. Forts here had few supplies for the winter and many of these garrisons had not planned on taking on so many people. The area’s climate challenged many during the winter months, as did its frontier setting with its limited supplies and protection. The best that the army could do was, with the cooperation of the railroads, offer free transportation of supplies from any citizens who wished to donate them for displaced people.<sup>248</sup>



Figure 2.4: George Caleb Bingham’s 1870 painting “Order No. 11.” It detailed Ewing’s General Orders No. 11 of August 25, 1863. The painting was quite large – it measured 56”x78. Source: <http://shs.umsystem.edu/historicmissourians/name/b/bingham/>

Many arrived in Kansas by rail with many trains originating in places like Fort Smith. “Government-sponsored train,” notes historian Kenneth Burchett, “could sometimes be 250 wagons long – six mules to a wagon – carried refugees and their belongings across the border to

<sup>248</sup> “From Texas,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, October 8, 1864.

safety.”<sup>249</sup> Newspapers in both Missouri and Arkansas reported the departure of these *refugee trains* quite often. For example, the *New Era* reported in October 1864, “[a] large train of refugees left here [Fort Smith] the first part of the week for Kansas.”<sup>250</sup> Another newspaper noted “There is more suffering among these poor families than can be realized; many of whom have seen better days. . . . They are among us, demanding our sympathies and our charity.”<sup>251</sup> Some were fortunate enough to have friends and relatives in the Northern states and, as a result, many displaced residents made their way north.

While General Orders No. 11 reduced attacks in the region, they did not come to a complete stop. Guerrilla attacks affected citizens in a variety of ways. For example, it often deprived “the widow of her last chicken, burn[ed] her barn, waste[d] her corn, [stole] her money, and [drove] away her slaves.”<sup>252</sup> Vast destruction accompanied these guerrillas as they made their way across the Trans-Mississippi landscape. Attacks were sudden and it could be quite intense. Guerrillas erupted against armies, railroads, civilians, and their property. In this orgy of violence, they burned homes and farms, confiscated or destroyed crops, and these guerrilla bands took valuable possessions. In an 1864 letter to her brother Edwin, Lizzie Brannock described these conditions around her home in western Missouri. “Our country is desolate,” Lizzie began, “indeed almost entirely a wilderness, robbery is an every day [sic] affair so long as their [sic] was anything to take our farms are all burned up, fences gone, crops destroyed no one escapes the ravages of one party or the other; we will remain where we are this winter but this spring we shall be obliged to leave.

<sup>249</sup> Kenneth E. Burchett, *Battle of Carthage, Missouri: A History of the First Trans-Mississippi Conflict of the Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 167.

<sup>250</sup> “More Refugees,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, October 15, 1864.

<sup>251</sup> “Suffering Among Union Refugees in Southern Kansas,” *Daily Missouri Republican* [St. Louis], January 19, 1863.

<sup>252</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 107-108.

Where I shall go, or what do; I do not know. . . .”<sup>253</sup> The constant threat of robberies and destruction by these irregulars, especially along the Kansas-Missouri border, put fear in the hearts of many residents there. This forced them to contemplate their immediate futures in those communities as a result. Treacherous conditions forced many families to flee, decisions were made very quickly, and one had to be careful on how he or she navigated their journey.

While guerrilla violence and the federal policies enacted to eradicate it had an effect on citizens in the West, one had to be careful not to be caught in between. Consider the case of Sarah Jane Smith, a native of Washington County, Arkansas. According to trial proceedings, eighteen-year-old Sarah cut down four miles of telegraph poles and wires between Springfield and Rolla, Missouri, during the spring of 1864. This was in direct violation of an 1861 order (General Orders, No. 32) that made such an offense punishable by death.<sup>254</sup> Smith’s background had already put her at a disadvantage in the eyes of the military – her mother had died, her father served in Price’s Confederate army, and she had been known to associate with her cousins who were known guerrillas active in the region. Court records indicate that she acted in concert with her cousins when she cut down the telegraph poles, claiming that some citizens in Rolla, who she indicated were lawyers from Rolla, promised her five dollars for each pole taken down. She also claimed membership in a secret society, probably the Order of American Knights.<sup>255</sup> While Smith pled not

<sup>253</sup> “I Had Nothing Much To [Lose] and What I Had Is Gone,” in Silvana R. Siddali, *Missouri’s War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 166.

<sup>254</sup> Issued by Major-General Henry W. Halleck in response to a number of railroad bridge burnings in December of 1861. General Orders, No. 32 read in part: “Insurgent rebels scattered though the northern counties of this State [Missouri] which are occupied by our troops under guise of peaceful citizens have resumed their occupations of burning bridges and destroying railroads and telegraph wires. These men are guilty of the highest crime known to the code of war and the punishment is death. Any one caught in the act will be immediately shot, and any one accused of this crime will be arrested and placed in close confinement until his case can be examined by a military commission and if found guilty he also will suffer death.” “General Orders, Headquarters Department of the Missouri,” December 22, 1861, *O.R.*, Series 2, Vol. 1, Part 1, (Prisoners of War), 237.

<sup>255</sup> Thomas Power Lowery, *Confederate Heroines: 120 Southern Women Convicted by Union Military Justice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 3. The Order of American Knights (O.A.K.), headquartered in St. Louis, sought to protect Southerners against encroachments on their civil liberties, protect Democrats from Republican organizations like Lincoln Leagues and Union Leagues (which promoted loyalty to Lincoln and the

guilty to the charges against her, the military commission convicted her and sentenced the woman “to be hung by the neck till dead, at such time and place as the General Commanding may direct.”<sup>256</sup> Smith’s life would not end at the gallows, as Union doctors at the U.S. Military Prison Hospital, located in St. Louis, deemed her to lack the mental capacity to understand her crime. As a result, the commission spared her life and paroled Smith in April 1865.<sup>257</sup>

While Smith’s case is indeed interesting, it might perhaps shed some light on how locals might have exploited so many displaced people’s unfortunate situations. Smith, who was unable to read or write, gave the following statement during her trial in front of the military commission during the fall of 1864: “I am Eighteen years of age. My father and mother are in Arkansas. I have no friends or relatives in Mo. I left home without any money. I came to Springfield with a family of refugees from Arkansas. I didn’t know it was wrong to cut the wires at the time I did it. They didn’t pay me the money they promised me. I never saw them again.”<sup>258</sup> While it is difficult to know for sure, it is possible that the Rolla citizens who she claimed offered her money for cutting down the telegraph poles had taken Smith advantage. Rolla was a known haven for people displaced by war and it is possible that people who lived there took advantage of people who made their way there. It is also possible that Smith acted in the interest of her guerrilla cousins or the secret society to which she claimed membership.

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Union), and this organization sought an immediate and peaceful end to the Civil War. The O.A.K. was very active in the West during the Civil War. See *Report of the Judge Advocate General on “The Order of American Knights,” Alias “The Sons of Liberty.” A Western Conspiracy in Aid of the Southern Rebellion*. Washington, D.C.: Chronicle Print, 1864.

<sup>256</sup> “Sarah Jane Smith Trial Proceedings,” Sarah Jane Smith Papers, 1864, 15. Special Collections at the University of Arkansas [MC736].

<sup>257</sup> Thomas Power Lowery, *Confederate Heroines: 120 Southern Women Convicted by Union Military Justice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 4-5.

<sup>258</sup> “Sarah Jane Smith Trial Proceedings,” Sarah Jane Smith Papers, 1864, 6. Special Collections at the University of Arkansas [MC736]. With regard to her mother, this statement contradicts an earlier statement in the trial in which she stated, “My mother has been dead 5 years, my Father’s name is John Smith, a private in [Sterling] Price’s Army for two years.” *Ibid.*, 3.

Guerrilla violence in Arkansas and Missouri continued, even as the Union army mounted more and more victories and as Confederate morale plummeted.<sup>259</sup> In fact, guerilla warfare continued and, as historian Daniel E. Sutherland notes, “[t]he internal war of neighbor versus neighbor, not to mention swarming bands of deserters and outlaws, disrupted the southern homefront for the remainder of the war.”<sup>260</sup> Not only did it last throughout the Civil War, newspaper reports during early 1865 as well as after Lee’s surrender at Appomattox indicate that guerrilla violence continued into the early stages of Reconstruction. For example, one report in the *North Missourian* [Gallatin] reported on May 4, 1865, that bushwhacker activity continued in Warrensburg, Missouri. “They [bushwhackers] told citizens they were going to the Law and Order District of North Mo.,” concluded the report, “and they would show them that Mo. was not yet in a state of Law and Order, by at least a year.”<sup>261</sup> While the threat of guerrilla attacks in Missouri dwindled, they were certainly not over.

### **Paths of Displaced People**

Most displaced people fled on foot or were able to pile a few of their belongings into a cart or wagon drawn by a horse. This often occurred in a very haphazard fashion and there is no way to quantify the ways in which people fled their homes and communities. The long distances that they had to travel caused many horses and wagons to break down which forced exhausted people to continue their journey on foot. Travel for displaced people was made more difficult by the poor state of Southern infrastructure. Roads were terrible, gunboats threatened individuals who attempted to travel by boat, and railroads could be overcrowded, slow, and in desperate need of

<sup>259</sup> For more on Confederate morale in the West, see Bradley R. Clampitt, *The Confederate Heartland: Military and Civilian Morale in the Western Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011).

<sup>260</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, “Guerrilla Warfare, Democracy, and the Fate of the Confederacy,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 68, No. 2 (May, 2002): 291.

<sup>261</sup> “Bushwhackers Threat,” *The North Missourian* [Gallatin, MO], May 4, 1865.

repair.<sup>262</sup> Many displaced whites travelled hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles in search of family and friends, or they hoped to find somewhere they could find help. Each passing year of the war found more and more people having to travel further and further to find a place of refuge. Seeking other modes of transport was important for these civilians if they hoped to survive the war.

The railroad was one way that many citizens fled the dangers they faced. Displaced people could put more distance between themselves and whatever dangers they faced at home by using one of the many railroads in the region. Destinations might include Texas, Kansas, Kentucky, and Illinois. An October 1864 *New Era* article noted:

A large train of refugees left here the first part of the week for Kansas. Among them were many of our best Union citizens, farmers and mechanics who remained here through the summer, hoping that they would be permitted to return to their homes and farms this fall; but the unsettled state of the country and scarcity of provisions make it necessary for them to winter in the North. Many, when the troubles are over, will come back to Arkansas, but most of them will permanently settle in Kansas and the States of the North-west.<sup>263</sup>

To take the train required these people to, first, make their way to a rail hub located in cities like St. Louis, Memphis, or Fort Smith. Once citizens were at the train station, they received transportation tickets to board the train and travel to their destination. Rail travel, according to various newspaper accounts, was often free or discounted for many as such large numbers arrived with only the clothes on their back and whatever possessions they could carry. The Western Sanitary Commission often arranged for this free transportation for the dispossessed.<sup>264</sup> Upon their arrival at the departure station, if they were lucky enough, displaced people received clothing from benevolent aid societies before they began their journey west. Displaced whites likely welcomed

<sup>262</sup> Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 143.

<sup>263</sup> "More Refugees," Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, October 15, 1864.

<sup>264</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 8.

and appreciated this gesture as traveling in the winter months could be brutal. For people who made it this far, unless a more well off family riding the train took pity on them and paid for coach passage, traveled along with the freight.

Newspaper reports and observations from nearby soldiers tell us a great deal about who this displaced were and what their condition was upon arrival. From various accounts, some displaced people were very poor while others were more well off – at least before the war came to the West. For example, Union soldier Christian H. Isely notes in an October 1864 letter home to his family in Arkansas that the

Refugee Train [starting out in Ft. Scott, Kansas] consists rich & poor, young & old, men, women & children. . . . The rich folks, or rather those that were rich before the war, look as poor, as poor folks generally can look, and what I shall say them of then of the poor, I cannot begin to discribe [sic] their intense poverty many children are without shoes, and but thinly clad in rags, many are sick and several died already, they are not only houseless & homeless, but also friendless & helpless, and most of them had once comfortable homes which were dear to them, but far their countrys [sic] sake they became as poor paupers.<sup>265</sup>

To be sure, people who were poor and destitute at the war's start were worse off because of their flight. Isely's account, however, also details the impact of a wealthier person's sudden displacement.

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<sup>265</sup> "Christian H. Isely to Marie Elizabeth Dubach Isely," October 9, 1864, Isely Family Letters, Wichita State University [Missouri Digital Heritage], 3-4.

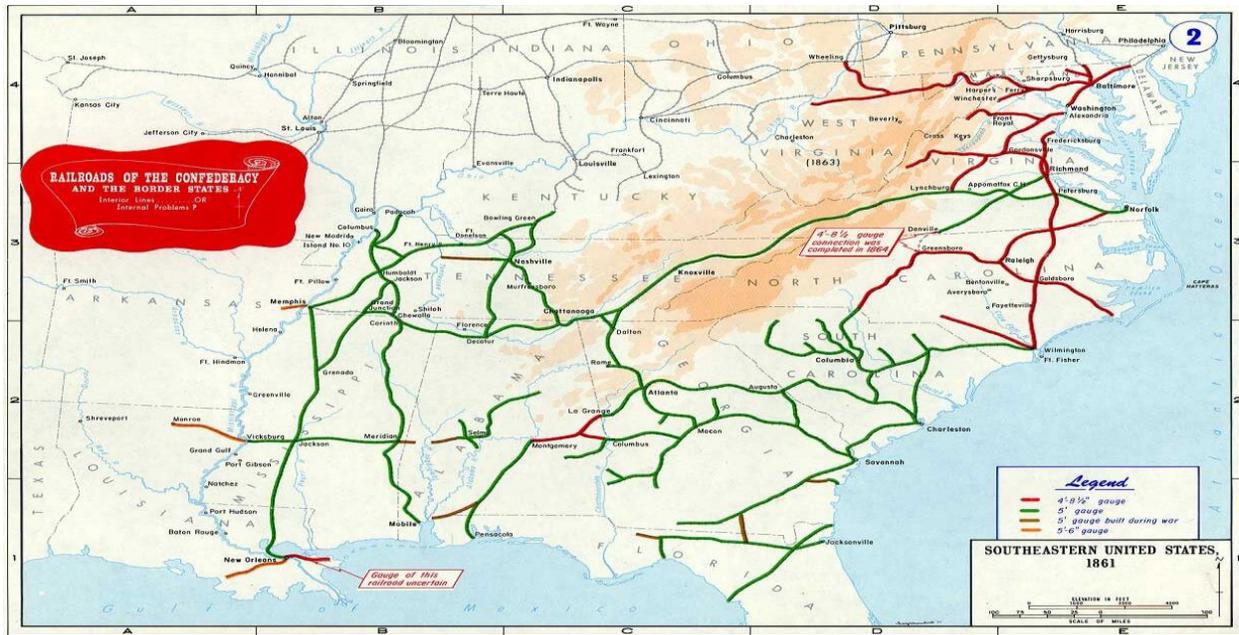


Figure 2.5: Railroads of the Confederacy and the Border States. Source: <https://www.msu.edu/~hodgesje/Srailroads.htm>

A life on the run, and the war in general, certainly took its toll on people considered a community's better citizens. It caused many to go through whatever money they had at the start of the war – paying for food, shelter, and other necessities of life on the run. “It is reported home that the federals are going back and I do not think it likely that many of them will remain long in Washington County[,]” notes Arkansan W.C. Braly in January 1863, “[i]f they have destroyed and devastated our country as it is represented I do not see how the people can live there.”<sup>266</sup> Like people who started the war poor whose condition only worsened, there were likewise families who started the war rich only to end up poor because of their lives on the run. Newspapers like the *New Era* recognized the condition of the displaced people in its midst when it noted that an August 1864 refugee train “was composed of a better class of people than have gone heretofore. . . . These refugees will for the most part become citizens of the new North-western States, adding to them

<sup>266</sup> “W.C. Braly to My Dear Ma,” January 9, 1863, Amanda Malvina Fitzallen McClellan Braly Papers, 1860-1865, Box 1-F2, Special Collections at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust notes in her description of displaced women in the East “the refugee experience itself usually consumed assets rather rapidly, leaving many of the most aristocratic southern women without the affluence that had defined their identities.” Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 43.

wealth and prosperity, and making for themselves homes where they can follow the industrial arts, agriculture, &c., in peace and quietude.”<sup>267</sup> The newspaper lamented the fact that, because of the war and the resulting displacement, it will lose some of its better citizens to the states in the North. The paper pondered the end of the war and Arkansas’s future with so many of its citizens displaced and, perhaps, some never to return.

This journey by rail was not without risks for displaced residents – especially in the winter months. Freight cars had no stoves or any other method of providing heat for its distressed passengers, who often stood for hours on their journey during the winter. Many people suffered on this journey with some losing their lives because of exposure to the elements. J.H. Leard’s account, reported in the *New Era* on February 25, 1865, noted the tragedy that displaced people risked on this journey: “. . . four persons, two adults, widows, and two of our orphan children, had perished with the cold.”<sup>268</sup> Leard, who served as a Union Chaplain and Agent for Refugees, also detailed the passing of mothers who left behind orphan children, further complicating the situation for individuals trying to help. With many Unionists living in the Ozarks of northwestern Arkansas, making one’s way to Fort Smith and boarding a train to any point west proved the most effective way to seek refuge, but it was not without its hazards. For many who inhabited the region, however, this was their only option. “To remain we saw no help,” Leard noted, “to go was to suffer.”<sup>269</sup>

In addition to the internal dangers of utilizing the railroad to seek refuge – factors like the cold and lack of food, there were external dangers as well. Many citizens, displaced because of guerrilla attacks in their communities, were victimized again while on the trains relocating them to safety. Irregular fighters took advantage of any opportunity to wreak havoc on civilians and this

<sup>267</sup> “The Refugee Train,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, August 13, 1864.

<sup>268</sup> “[From Springfield (ILL) Journal.] Refugees from Arkansas – Their Trip – Shameful Treatment by the Central Railroad,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, February 25, 1865.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

included attacking trains. “Dispatches from St. Louis report the burning of a train and brutal massacre of some 80 men and women[,]” read an account published nationally in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, “Union refugees from Jacksonville [Arkansas] – at Salem, Ark., by a band of 300 guerrillas.”<sup>270</sup> These rail attacks by guerrillas, who some soldiers simply called *Rebs*, left many people with nowhere to hide notes Union soldier Christian Isely in October 1864 “[I]eaving the poor downtrotten [sic] & chasticed [sic] Widows & Orphans clothless [sic] & foodless out on the bleak Prairie exposed to hunger & cold about 1000 in number.”<sup>271</sup> Many people in the region boarded these trains with the hope that they would leave their troubles behind. Repeatedly, guerrilla bands attacked these trains to not only take whatever supplies might be on the train, but to also terrorize soldiers and civilians alike. While the Federal army offered protection of these trains, they were not always successful leaving many people to seek refuge on foot.

While a number of Unionists made their way north, Confederate sympathizers also fled their communities. Many displaced Confederates from Arkansas tended to move west if they felt threatened. If Rolla, St. Louis, and places further north and east served as a refuge for Unionists, Texas was certainly a hotbed for Confederate sympathizers. Those sympathizers who lived in pockets of Arkansas and Missouri where they were outnumbered by Unionists made their way to Texas to bide their time until the Confederacy was victorious and they could return to their homes. Uprooted Arkansans Mrs. George H. Goddard wrote to friends in Camden, which the Confederacy held for much of the war, telling them about her experiences in Wood County, Texas, during 1864. Goddard spoke very positively of Texas as a place for displaced Confederates, for her “Texas has

<sup>270</sup> “Arkansas,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, June 18, 1864, 194.

<sup>271</sup> “Christian H. Isely to Marie Elizabeth Dubach Isely,” October 24, 1864, Wichita State University, [Missouri Digital Heritage].

proved a refuge for the oppressed.”<sup>272</sup> Displaced Missourians and Arkansans made their way to Texas because of family connections or because of its remoteness and relative safety from molesting armies or guerrilla fighters. Texas, however, was not for everyone, as many would make their way back east to Arkansas and Missouri.

### **Final Throes: General Sterling Price’s 1864 Invasion of Missouri**

After being convinced by Missouri guerilla fighters that the state’s pro-Confederate citizens would rise up if given the opportunity, Confederate General and former Missouri governor and state legislator Sterling Price agreed to take advantage of this potential support in the form of a raid in the state.<sup>273</sup> Beginning in the fall of 1864, Price organized a force of approximately 12,000 cavalry from the region and moved from Arkansas into Missouri. Price’s men, along with vast numbers of guerillas, including famed fighters “Bloody Bill” Anderson as well as Frank and Jessie James, moved north and disrupted rail and wagon traffic and even wreaked havoc on steamship traffic on the Mississippi. Price and his men moved towards St. Louis, hoping to inflict chaos on this Union stronghold. Price and his forces enjoyed reasonable success until Ewing pushed him back on September 27 at Pilot Knob, located in the southeastern part of the state. The Union victory here earned the battle the nickname the “Thermopylae of the West.”<sup>274</sup>

Military engagements like the one at Pilot Knob always tested one’s loyalty. Arkansas and Missouri civilians’ allegiances mattered because of each state’s divided wartime loyalties, as it created hardships for many people, sending them on the run. Depending on which army approached a given community, one might be inclined to flee or remain in their homes based on

<sup>272</sup> “Camden Refugees in Texas,” n.d., 1864, Camden, Arkansas, Civil War Record Book, 42, Special Collections of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

<sup>273</sup> Price left his job as state legislator to go and fight in the Mexican-American War.

<sup>274</sup> Pilot Knob has been referred to as the “Thermopylae of the West” because of the Union army’s victory, despite how greatly its force there was outnumbered. See Nicole Etcheson, “Thermopylae of the West,” *The New York Times Opinionator*, September 29, 2014. See also Bryce A. Suderow and R. Scott House, *The Battle of Pilot Knob: Thunder in Arcadia Valley* (Cape Girardeau, MO: Southeast Missouri State University Press, 2014).

their individual loyalties. Early Confederate successes in the region left many Unionists in this region to go it alone, as the area was virtually empty of Union forces that could offer assistance. The many people that they encountered did not overlook the fact that citizens' devotion to the Union brought them hardship:

You little know the hardship of these loyal men of Southern Missouri have endured. When I have wandered by their ruined farms, and have seen their wives and children, shoeless, half-starved, eking out their existence in loneliness, I have bowed down in spirit before the heroic patriotism of these men and worshipped it. None of us have made sacrifices no man whose family has been in security, and beyond the reach of the terrible hazards of war, has made sacrifices compared to them. Honor them, reverence them, aid them. Do as much as you can to relieve them, and after all that, you can enjoy your quiet houses here, and will not discharge one-tenth of your gratitude to them.<sup>275</sup>

This unidentified Union soldier's account again details how individual allegiances affected the lives of these citizens. Newspapers often detailed displaced Unionists and Confederates, and other variations on a person's loyalty. For example, the *Daily Missouri Republican* noted that there were "a large amount of suffering among the Union refugees," or the Reverend Galusha Anderson's account that "there was a still larger number of rebel refugees."<sup>276</sup> Regional military actions and the resulting questions of loyalty raised by these battles caused an upheaval of citizens sending them in complete disorder across Missouri. Further destruction caused by the marching armies did little to help improve their situation.

Following the engagement at Pilot Knob, Price moved to the west, with even more guerrilla bands swelling his ranks, but Union militias were now in pursuit. By late October, Price's Confederate forces were outside of Kansas City when they were defeated again, pushing him south towards Arkansas and then Texas. This second phase of Price's Raid would be no more fruitful

<sup>275</sup> Thomas Ewing Family Papers, 1757-1941, Box 213, Pilot Knob Folder, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 6.

<sup>276</sup> *Daily Missouri Republican* [St. Louis], January 15, 1863; Galusha Anderson, *The Story of a Border City During the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1908), 252.

than the first. This proved to be the end of his raid into Missouri. Contemporary pro-Confederate observers labeled the raid a disaster because it destroyed so many guerrilla bands that had been active in the state as well as caused the deaths of many guerrilla leaders including “Bloody Bill” Anderson. This weakened the guerrilla movement in the West, making things easier for the Union army there. This raid was the last organized Confederate resistance in Missouri for the duration of the war.<sup>277</sup>

Because of any one or a combination of the factors discussed above – threats from guerrilla fighters, encroaching armies, hunger, forced out of their homes by military order - many displaced Southern whites endured a number of hardships in search of safety and protection. This was evident in so many descriptions of peoples’ condition. Once people made the decision to flee, they left their homes and communities in a very vulnerable condition. This condition often worsened as the war dragged on. A good number of people who witnessed displaced persons along the way including both soldiers and fellow citizens observed their ragged condition. Ozias Ruark, a soldier in the 8<sup>th</sup> Missouri (Union) Militia, noted their condition as they passed by his camp in southwestern Missouri in February of 1864. “He and I had many refugee families they are poor and needy almost naked some of the women and children barefooted.”<sup>278</sup> Ruark’s account demonstrates just how arduous one’s journey could be. People here were often in need of everything – clothes, food, money, and a home. Many left home with the clothes on their back and a few items that they carried with them because of the haste with which they departed. Some were lucky enough to have a horse or oxen-drawn wagon, enabling them to bring a few more supplies

<sup>277</sup> Mark A. Lause, *Price’s Lost Campaign: The 1864 Invasion of Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 786-788.

<sup>278</sup> “February 24, 1864,” Ozias Ruark Diary, Ozias Ruark Collection, State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center – Columbia [Missouri Digital Heritage].

for the unknown journey that lie ahead. Furthermore, these accounts indicate that many displaced people were not simply poor people who had nothing to begin when the war came. When that time came, citizens throughout the Trans-Mississippi West were displaced in search of some kind of safe haven to ride out the rest of the war. Others hoped that their local officials would protect them or offer some form of aid and, consequently, prevent them from having to leave their homes and communities.

### **Conclusion**

The large number of displaced people in the Trans-Mississippi West was the result of a variety of factors – factors military, humanitarian, and political. While these individual factors were each very different, the one thing that they all had in common was that individuals had no control over these factors and, as a result, forced them to flee. Raids by guerrilla forces throughout the region happened often and with very little warning, both striking panic into civilian populations and sending many of these people on the run. The destruction of all or parts of communities in this region left many civilians with no choice but to seek refuge. In addition to this guerrilla warfare, avoiding physical destruction from the many clashes between the armies was often a factor that sent people on the run. The presence of the armies or guerrilla fighters tested loyalties of displaced people, also playing a role in their decision to flee their communities. Destruction of crops and mills by these combatants left many people hungry and sent them in search of food and safety. Uprooted people made their way to a variety of places, both in Missouri and Arkansas, but they also went beyond the borders of these states to places like Kansas, Texas, and Illinois. To get to these places of refuge, displaced people used whatever form of transportation was available to them to find safety. While fleeing on foot was the most common method, people also utilized the railroads, wagon trains, and steamships to reach their destinations out of harm's way. The Civil

War forced the planter class to seek refuge for themselves and their families, but it also forced them to do the same for their slaves – the *raison d’etre*, in their eyes, for their rebellion. Through the process of relocating, displaced slave owners were able to put their slaves out of harm’s way to places of safekeeping, they hoped, until the war was over. The act of removing slaves to prevent them from escaping behind Union lines was important in preserving the Confederate cause while, at the same time, preserving the lives and the property of the slave owner.

### CHAPTER 3: THE ARMIES & THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH DISPLACED PEOPLE

*Dark are their destinies,  
Nameless their miseries,  
Count not their frailties,  
While they endure,  
When, with imploring hand  
They at your threshold stand,  
Speak to them kind and bland -  
God's lowly poor.<sup>1</sup>*

When reading the above poem, published in the Fort Smith *New Era* in March of 1865, one cannot help but wonder if the paper's editors were thinking about the plight of displaced people so prevalent in the region. Newspapers, government officials, and people who lived in the communities touched by the war certainly discussed these uprooted citizens. People in the region wondered how they would take care of them both during the war and after. As armies crisscrossed Arkansas and Missouri, they too encountered a number of displaced whites. What did these armies have to say about them? So often, when there is talk of war and the armies, historians say little about armies' impact on the people who they encountered. "Popular historians have created a body of work overwhelmingly focused on armies and generals that routinely neglects, or ignores altogether," notes historian Gary Gallagher, "the larger political and social implications of military campaigns."<sup>2</sup> This chapter looks at the different ways that the Union and Confederate armies interacted with displaced residents and who attempted to alleviate their suffering. The crisis met the Western armies head on and they had to devise ways to deal with these people to not only win the hearts and minds of Southern communities, but to reduce the burden on army resources.

<sup>1</sup> "God's Lowly Poor," March 4, 1865, Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*. The Irish newspaper the *Dublin Nation* originally published this poem and it was reprinted in the *New Era*.

<sup>2</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 121.

Displaced people needed food, shelter, clothing, and, most importantly, protection from roaming bands of guerrillas and the armies provided the best hope for aid and protection. The Union army proved to be their best bet when it came to aid. It was usually better equipped, increasingly numerous, and it proved to be the best at putting uprooted families and individuals in touch with various aid organizations that could help. “That the citizens could find such comfort in the proximity off the Yankee occupiers suggests how deeply they feared,” notes historian Stephen V. Ash, “and how thoroughly they repudiated, the mayhem of bandits.”<sup>3</sup> Compared to the Confederate army, the Federals did a better job – even with its own limitations - of aiding and protecting displaced Southern whites. A number of Southern whites and blacks came into Union lines as the army’s presence in Arkansas grew with each passing year of the war.

The Confederate army did very little to help or protect Southern citizens in the region. By 1863, the Yankees gradually pushed Confederates to the fringes of Arkansas and, with this, Southern troops became increasingly scarce in the region. With regard to Confederate military operations, the region was more diverse in that Native Americans fought for both sides, more cavalry units operated here, and Southern armies were often undermanned and undersupplied.<sup>4</sup> As Confederate soldiers encountered these people, many began to worry about their own families back home. For many white Southerners, that was what they were fighting for – home. With their families and homes in jeopardy, many simply deserted and went home to offer whatever protection they could. Because the war displaced a number of Confederate soldiers’ relatives, they made the choice to leave the ranks of the army to help their families. For these soldiers, this was a fundamental goal of the war – protecting one’s family.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 208.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 35.

Displaced citizens created a burden on the armies and military commanders did whatever they could to minimize the resulting drain on their resources. The increasing numbers of displaced men, women, and children – entire families sometimes - drained an army's resources needed to fight a war. The fact that there were still so many who remained displaced and destitute at the end of the war demonstrates both armies' inability to handle the problem. Despite their desire to reduce the encumbrance placed on it by these people, neither army was able to develop any kind of uniform, consistent policy towards them. This lack of an official policy was evident in each army's daily interactions with the region's displaced people. In her 1964 study of refugees, mostly people in the Eastern Theatre, historian Mary Elizabeth Massey wrote, "neither army ever adopted consistent policies in dealing with the people, and for this reason civilians never knew what to expect."<sup>5</sup> Through the Union army's distribution of rations to the dispossessed, its attempt to pay for their subsistence, and a few different plans to settle uprooted people on abandoned Confederate plantations, the army did what it could to help. The army also attempted to absorb some of the displaced males either through their enlistment in the ranks or as spies. The Federals' willingness to constantly push the issue to the margins, either doing the bare minimum to help them or pushing them onto benevolent aid societies or points beyond their lines, only served to amplify and prolong peoples' suffering. The Confederate army did even less for the uprooted Southern whites that it encountered given its difficulty providing food for its own troops.

### **Initial Expectations and Opinions: Displaced People and the Army**

As uprooted citizens encountered an army, one wonders – what did they expect? Displaced residents, to be sure, wanted protection from the cold and from hunger, but they also wanted protection from the depredations of the guerrilla fighters who constantly harassed them and

<sup>5</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 204.

wreaked havoc in their communities as well as protection from the armies. The local devastation wrought by the grind of war was an important factor that uprooted many people from their communities and drove them into the lines of the army. Because of the frequency with which many towns changed hands from secessionists to unionists and back, especially in Arkansas, combined with the divided loyalties of the region, some sort of army presence was required to protect the remains of so many of these communities. Historian Michael B. Dougan observed, “Civil government proved too weak to deal with the crisis. Martial law was invoked in and around Fort Smith and Little Rock on several occasions.”<sup>6</sup> Displaced people hoped that the army would compensate them in the absence of any constructive action by both state and local governments. As a result, these people made their way into army lines or forts in hope of that protection.

Complicating the Union army’s initial contact with displaced people were each group’s suspicions of each other. Union soldiers, who came from all over the North with a heavy concentration of Midwesterners, made all kinds of generalizations about the locals they encountered. In historian William Shea’s study of how these Midwesterners viewed Arkansas and the people who lived there, he reminds us that, “[f]ew Federals had anything complimentary to say about the Arkansans they met in the countryside.”<sup>7</sup> In short, soldiers often viewed even the most ordinary Arkansan as being beneath them. Reasons for this came from the fact that, as historian Carline Janney points out, “fighting transformed both sides’ disdain of the opposing section into a venomous hatred of the enemy and reinforced the perceived sectional differences.”<sup>8</sup> For the state’s displaced citizens, soldiers did not view them in any better light. Historian John F. Bradbury, Jr.

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<sup>6</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 112.

<sup>7</sup> William L. Shea, “A Semi-Savage State: The Image of Arkansas in the Civil War,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter, 1989): 314.

<sup>8</sup> Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 19.

points out how this still affects Civil War historians today: “It is no easier now for historians to judge their [displaced people] individual sympathies than it was for military officers of the time.”<sup>9</sup>

Despite the fact that the army viewed many people with suspicion, especially in the war’s early stages, there is ample evidence that the army helped these people in a variety of ways – despite these suspicions. Northern soldiers of many different backgrounds often shared their feelings on displaced people most commonly in letters home to loved ones. To be sure, soldiers’ opinions ran the gamut – some expressed dislike and viewed them with suspicion while others expressed sadness and genuinely felt horrible for these people and their unfortunate situation.

Union military commanders issued orders regarding first contact with displaced people, instructing the men in the ranks to view them with caution. “Deserters, refugees, and other persons coming in at any military post in the Division of West Mississippi,” begins one order, “. . . will be carefully examined by a discreet officer.”<sup>10</sup> The Federals were not exactly trusting of refugees the moment that they came into their lines or they sought protection in a Federal fort, perhaps fearing some of them as spies. Soldiers also viewed them with distrust and suspicion for a variety of reasons – especially early in the war. The fact that both armies used uprooted citizens as spies served as one source of distrust among soldiers. In addition, the fact that these people, given their desperate situation, may do or say anything for food, clothing, or shelter also caused soldiers to view them with an air of distrust.

Soldiers often felt that displaced people would do anything to get what they needed to get by – including taking advantage of Unionists or the families of Union soldiers. This might include one’s taking advantage of a situation or seizing every opportunity to procure food or shelter. “The

<sup>9</sup> John F. Bradbury, Jr., “Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy’: Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998): 236.

<sup>10</sup> “General Orders, Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Numbers 69,” June 10, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Part 4, (Red River Campaign), 291.

country is filled with refugee Missourians,” noted John Worthington, a Union soldier from Arkansas, “who are committing all kinds of mischief, plundering the families of soldiers who are serving in our regiment and the First Arkansas Infantry.”<sup>11</sup> For soldiers from the Arkansas and Missouri, it was personal. Such an account reveals the role of loyalty and communal ties in one’s view of displaced people. Here, this soldier viewed these people with contempt, as these same people may have been his neighbors seeking revenge on these soldiers for their loyalties.

Not all Northern soldiers, however, viewed displaced Southern whites in a negative light. In many instances, soldiers felt sorry for these uprooted people. Many watched people forced from their homes and perhaps thought of their own families. Illinois soldier Robert Carnahan noted this occurrence while at camp in Missouri late in 1861. “[T]he Roads are filled with moovers [sic] the town of Springfield has not this day over 30 families left they all follow the army it is a sad sight to see hundreds of families men women and children leave their [sic] home to follow the army for protection and as a general thing they are the best families of Mo.”<sup>12</sup> Carnahan viewed the scene with great sadness, he did not comment on their loyalties nor did he comment on what circumstances uprooted these people. He took the moment to reflect on what the war had done to these families – it had filled many with fear and uncertainty about their future, causing them to flee.

Like soldiers’ different suspicions and subsequent reactions to displaced people, civilians also reacted in a variety of ways when they encountered the army. Not everyone was happy to see the approaching Union soldiers, so some stayed and maybe kept to themselves while others left town. In short, it was very difficult for military men in charge to determine the intentions of

<sup>11</sup> “Numbers 2, Report of Captain John I. Worthington, First Arkansas Cavalry (Union),” January 8, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Part 1, (Little Rock), 781.

<sup>12</sup> “Robert Carnahan Letter to Mrs. Carnahan,” November 16, 1861, Robert Carnahan Letters, Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield Civil War Museum, Republic, Missouri, [Missouri Digital Heritage].

displaced people just as it was difficult for citizens to determine the intentions and actions of soldiers. One must remember, however, that there was a war to win and this would be the primary focus for soldiers from both sides. The nation tasked these men with winning a war and, therefore, displaced people were not an immediate priority.

For the Union army, aid towards the uprooted citizens was sometimes a part of winning their hearts and minds. Providing aid could go a long way in preventing them from joining the Confederate army or pushing them into the arms of a guerrilla band. The army often issued rations or partial rations in an attempt to alleviate peoples' suffering, if only temporarily. These rations might include some amount of salted beef or pork, hardtack, flour, salt, or beans and rations could be issued to displaced residents in varying amounts, depending on what was available at that time and place and who needed these rations, children were sometimes given half rations. The army also actively tried to alleviate potential health threats, especially in garrisoned towns in the region, in that they performed sanitation functions as well as controlling contagious diseases.<sup>13</sup> Given the high number of displaced persons, they consumed a great many rations and easily became a burden on the army if they stayed for any extended period of time or, having nowhere else to go, followed the army. The decision to issue rations to people was one that weighed heavily on many military commanders in the West. For example, one 1864 dispatch from W.D. Hubbard, a Union First Lieutenant and Acting Assistant Adjutant- General instructed a chaplain in the area to the following: "The general commanding directs that you will see that subsistence is furnished to all destitute refugees until they can be started to and transported to Rolla, Mo. Refugees, like other people must eat or starve. They need subsistence every day, and it is the policy of the Government to give every day to such as cannot obtain food for themselves. When we send them forward to Rolla our obligations do not cease

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 85-86.

until they are delivered at that post.”<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, commanders had to look out for their troops and make sure that they had enough supplies to make it through a given period. On the other hand, commanders desired to help these people without it becoming a burden on their army nor did they want to create any kind of long-term dependence among displaced residents.

Opinions of them grew more sympathetic as the war dragged on because, as historian John F. Bradbury, Jr. notes, “[t]here were fewer and fewer able-bodied men in the crowds, which were composed of the aged, the infirm or disabled, and women alone with multitudes of children.”<sup>15</sup> While soldiers’ opinions of uprooted citizens varied, it is safe to say that most viewed them with a sympathetic heart, as an unfortunate byproduct of the war. Issues surrounding a person’s loyalty certainly influenced one’s opinion of displaced residents, as the above examples indicate. As resistance faded with the Union presence there, many soldiers softened on their views on these people.

To be fair to the armies, it was very difficult to determine the number of people who would need their help. A variety of factors contributed to this difficulty including the fact that displaced people had no set pattern on when they left or where they sought refuge. Historians have offered a few estimates that quantify the situation. For example, Ash observes that “by early 1865 and estimated eighty thousand white refugees had come into Federal lines.”<sup>16</sup> Ascertaining an exact number of displaced people for the war on a national or even a regional basis would be quite difficult. For the armies, this meant that they were often unprepared to handle the large number of

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<sup>14</sup> “Headquarters District of Southwest Missouri,” May 2, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Part 3, (Louisiana and the Trans-Mississippi), 403.

<sup>15</sup> John F. Bradbury, Jr., “‘Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy’: Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998): 243.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 178. Ash uses estimates taken from a February 1865 report by the American Union Commission. These numbers are estimates made by the Commission for the entire war to that point.

people who came to their forts and into their lines. Because of this, armies did not have enough supplies and often sent uprooted citizens elsewhere, often to benevolent aid societies. This was a key factor in the Union army's failure to develop any kind of consistent policy with regard to displaced residents.

### **The Role of Loyalty and Assessments**

One's loyalty often determined if the army would offer aid or protection. With the region's divided loyalties came an air of suspicion and distrust between the army and local citizens. Because of the evolving hard war policy set forth by the Federals, aid was usually withheld from anyone who demonstrated any kind of Confederate sympathies. "But official policy was that indigent citizens living in hostile districts should not be provisioned," Ash reminds us, "unless they were Unionists, but instead 'should be sent South to feed upon the enemy.'"<sup>17</sup> There were a few reasons for this policy. The most important reason was that Union officials feared that by giving aid to able-bodied displaced citizens; it might prevent them from aiding the Union cause. As a result, military officials hoped that withholding rations might drive them into the ranks of the army, increasing their numbers in the region.<sup>18</sup>

Civilians in Arkansas and Missouri fled their homes because they feared retribution – even death – from guerrilla bands and armies for their loyalty. "If the advent of directed destruction and confiscation of civilian property and, however infrequent," observes historian Christopher Phillips, "the killing of civilians judged disloyal by military personnel is the point at which conciliatory warfare gave way to hard war, it was reached not in the seceded states in the war's last years but

<sup>17</sup> Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 102-103.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 76.

rather in the Border States early in the conflict.”<sup>19</sup> The evolving hard war policy stemmed from the searching out of loyal or disloyal citizens in conquered areas. Hard war began in Missouri and Arkansas long before Sherman’s March to the Sea late in the war, often as a response to guerrilla warfare in the region creating a large number of displaced people.<sup>20</sup>

Unionist families in the region especially relied on the army. Loyalists in Arkansas faced endured the same difficulties as Confederate Arkansans – food shortages, the scarcity of clothing, salt shortages (for the preservation of meats), and high prices – but they faced the difficulties of being victimized by their Confederate neighbors for their Unionist sentiments.<sup>21</sup> Historian Robert Mackey details the plight of these citizens when he writes, “[h]owever victimized the bulk of the population and the refugees were, their travails pale in comparison with the terrorizing of the avowed Unionists.”<sup>22</sup> The Federal command in the West, however, was woefully unprepared when it came to dealing with these people. While Unionists were especially dependent on the army, all displaced people, regardless of their loyalties, needed the army in some way. The burden of displaced residents increasingly fell on the back of the army as it took more and more territory in Arkansas with each passing year of the war. “No family known to entertain Union feelings,” put bluntly by the *New Era*, “is safe out of the reach of U.S. troops.”<sup>23</sup> One’s loyalty could put them in danger in the face of the enemy or it could save that person’s life in the face of certain death.

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher Phillips, “Lincoln’s Grasp of War: Hard War and the Politics of Neutrality and Slavery in the Western Border States, 1861-1862,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* Vol. 5, No. 2 (June, 2013), 185.

<sup>20</sup> Mark K. Christ and Patrick G. Williams, eds., *I Do Wish This Cruel War Was Over: First Person Accounts of Civil War Arkansas from the Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2014), xi.

<sup>21</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 106-108.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 42.

<sup>23</sup> “Prospect of the Farmers – Bush-Whacking,” November 14, 1863, Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*.

Loyalty oaths or one's actions that demonstrated loyalty were preconditions for any uprooted citizen to receive help or protection from the army. By the war's midpoint, the Union army put piecemeal policies in place to deal with the issuing of rations/supplies to displaced people. For example, in Missouri, loyalty became a condition for receiving any subsistence from the army with Special Orders, No. 270, issued in October of 1863:

Hereafter all issues of subsistence stores to suffering and destitute refugees, &c., will be confined strictly to loyal persons, and such only as can prove, by reliable witnesses, that they are, and have been, *loyal to the Government of the United States* since the breaking out of the present rebellion, and that they are, at the time the issue is made, in actual want and in danger of starvation if not temporarily relieved. In all cases when, "after careful examination," it shall be deemed advisable to issue subsistence to indigent loyal refugees, the issue will never exceed half rations of meat, bread, beans, and hominy.<sup>24</sup>

These conditions of loyalty, like all of these early orders issued by the different commands in Arkansas and Missouri, varied from time and place and served, at least for all practical purposes, to be nothing more than suggestions.

This informal military policy of requiring one's loyalty as a precondition for aid from the Union army was in effect not only in the field, but at federal military installations as well. Later in the war, outside Federal military posts like Fort Smith, the army cut rations in half for people in need because so many needed help – but this was still at the discretion of the officer in charge at that particular post. Because of displaced people's drain on the army's resources, loyalty became an important factor in the distribution of aid. For example, another directive regarding the issuing of rations to needy individuals, issued by Assistant Adjutant General Frederic Speed while in New Orleans in December 1864, detailed when they would be issued rations, with citizens' loyalties an

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<sup>24</sup> "Special Orders, Headquarters Department of the Missouri, No. 270," October 3, 1863, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Part 2, (Little Rock), 600. [Italics added]

underlying factor. “The only reason for issuing rations to refugees are these,” Speed began in his letter:

First. Because it sometimes is the case that the refugees cannot be examined the day they arrive, and have to be retained for that purpose; but the cases should be very few that require detention for that purpose more than one day. Second. There may be a few cases of absolute indigence; for instance, helpless women and children, who it would be charitable to allow to remain for a time for the want of proper accommodations elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

Speed’s directive continues suggesting that citizens in contact with the dispossessed to direct them to some kind of aid society, if possible, and reminds them to issue rations to only Unionists – raising questions about the dangers of the Union or the Confederate army helping these displaced people. This demonstrates how directives like Special Orders, No. 270 were local in nature, as it appears that it had little impact on how the army issued rations in its operations further south.

The Federals’ use of loyalty as a qualification for aid was not always a factor on whether or not people received aid. While displaced Confederates received initial rations to prevent starvation on the army’s watch, they were to “be returned from whence they came.”<sup>26</sup> This further underlines the fact that there was no unified policy concerning displaced Southern whites and, because of this, numerous *suggestions* sprang from the different military commands in the region. The fact that the Union army gave minimum rations to citizens who were determined to be disloyal indicates that, for people looking for help, loyalty was important but not necessary to receive aid from the army.

As the Federals encountered large numbers of uprooted citizens, they immediately realized the cost of providing aid to many people in the region. In an effort to raise funds to help displaced

<sup>25</sup> “Frederic Speed to Provost-Marshal Parish of New Orleans,” December 3, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 41, Part 4, (Price’s Missouri Expedition), 753. It is worth noting that that act of giving aid to these loyal individuals is in line with Lincoln’s decision to treat the Confederacy as a rebellion and not as an independent nation. These people, loyalists, were United States citizens and they enjoyed certain benefits and protections befitting their status.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

people who came, either into Federal lines or nearby communities, the army attempted to place a share of the burden on disloyal citizens in Missouri through a series of assessments – a tax placed on these citizens by the military. An assessor sent by the Union army would determine the value of disloyal citizens' property and then affix a tax comparable to the value of that property. General Henry Halleck's board of assessors, which included two officers and a number of loyal citizens, oversaw all of this. The board was also in charge of collecting the money owed by these disloyal citizens. The army used the revenue thus generated from these assessments to help needy and displaced people in and around that community. While it is difficult to determine exactly how much money came from the assessments, they did indeed help the army in its care of these people.<sup>27</sup>

Collecting money from disloyal citizens benefitted the Union army with regard to its problem in Missouri in two ways. First, officials were able to raise funds to help displaced residents, while at the same time lessening the burden that these people exerted on the army. Therefore, in many ways, this was a public relations win for the Federals as they were aiding them at the expense of disloyal Missourians. Second, these assessments served as a punishment for the disloyal citizens who remained within the reach of the Federals, especially in St. Louis. The army also hoped that these taxes would discourage guerilla activity, though there is no evidence that this occurred. For loyal citizens, they took a measure of satisfaction given the pain that so many disloyal citizens had caused them since the war began. The Federals made their actions against disloyal citizens public through circulars or special orders handed down from military officials, often published in local newspapers.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 174-175.

<sup>28</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 174-177.

Assessments in Missouri began at the end of 1861. With so many Missourians displaced following the war's early battles in the region, military leaders sought ways to both alleviate their suffering as well as lessen the burden on the army and the Federal government. General Orders, No. 24, for example, issued from the Headquarters of the Department of the Missouri by Halleck, served as one of the first assessments of its kind in Missouri. Issued on December 12, 1861, this order detailed how this tax, aimed at the disloyal citizens of St. Louis, would work in six sections. First, Halleck's orders laid out the situation with regard to displaced residents and pointed the finger at disloyal citizens who, in many instances, caused these citizens to flee in the first place. "Those in arms with the enemy who have property in this city [St. Louis]," and "those who have furnished pecuniary or other aid to the enemy, or the persons in the enemy's service," and "those who have verbally, in writing, or by publication, given encouragement to insurgents and rebels."<sup>29</sup> Next, the order created a board of assessors who determined the assessed amounts. Third, the board of assessors notified assessed citizens of the amount and the collection date. The fourth part of this order allowed for what translated as an appeal process for citizens assessed to prove their loyalty if they felt that they were wrongly accused, but there was a 10 percent fine on people who did not affirm their loyalty. Fifth, the order detailed the distribution of supplies and it reiterated the purpose of the assessment, promising to use it to aid displaced people. Finally, General Orders, No. 24 stated that the army would punish citizens who resisted the order with arrest and possible trial before a military commission or if their refusal could result in the seizure and sale of their property.<sup>30</sup> Halleck's orders, and others like it, made it clear that disloyal citizens would pay both

<sup>29</sup> "General Orders, No. 24," December, 23, 1861, Rolla [Missouri] *Express*. These assessments continued until March 1862 when Halleck dissolved the board.

<sup>30</sup> General Halleck did order property seized and sold when a round of assessments in January 1862 were not paid. The board assessed fines of \$16,340.00 and collected \$10,913.45 – mostly from the auction of seized property. See Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 175.

a literal and figurative price for their disloyalty.<sup>31</sup> In some instances, these assessments allowed disloyal citizens to make charitable contributions in cash, food, clothing, etc. to benevolent aid societies to satisfy the assessment imposed on them. This occurred periodically until the president suspended these assessments in early 1863.

Disloyal citizens were not pleased with these assessments and they complained publically and, in some instances, complained to Washington – though a few years would pass before the government addressed their complaints. The dissatisfaction among disloyal citizens – at least individuals accused of being disloyal by Union military commanders - was evident in the fact that many never paid their assessed amounts. For example, twenty-four St. Louisians, including the prominent doctor William M. McPheeters, wrote an open letter to Halleck in protest of the order on December 26, 1861: “We cannot, however, give to you authority in the premises even such recognition as might be implied from our voluntary payment of the sums required of us. We have, therefore, concluded respectfully to protest and remonstrate against it, and to decline paying the same.”<sup>32</sup> In addition to such written protests, actions (or lack of action) of the state’s secessionist citizens spoke just as loudly. This form of taxation eventually expanded from Halleck’s initial policy in St. Louis to the rest of the state. For example, assessments in Schuyler County, Missouri, were estimated at \$314,700.00, however not one cent was collected. An assessment in Lewis County, Missouri, was valued at \$54,287.47 and, again, the army assessors collected nothing from these disloyal citizens. This appears to be case in most of the assessments in Missouri, though this does not mean that assessors never collected money from individuals accused of being disloyal. In

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<sup>31</sup> Gerteis notes that Halleck had three classes of disloyalty. The first were those who were in Confederate service. The second were citizens who gave any kind of direct aid to the Confederacy. The third class were people who openly (in print or in speech) supported the Confederacy. Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 175.

<sup>32</sup> Cynthia DeHaven Pitcock and Bill J. Gurley, eds., *I Acted From Principle: The Civil War Diary of Dr. William M. McPheeters, Confederate Surgeon in the Trans-Mississippi* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 15.

Chariton County, Missouri, for example, officials assessed \$82,000.00 on the disloyal citizens and the assessor assigned here collected \$34,231.38.<sup>33</sup> There were instances where the Federals collected money, though it was not the norm, officials continued to levy assessments on these citizens in Arkansas and Missouri through 1862, even expanding the scope of how the government would use assessment revenue.

Confederate silence when it came to protecting its displaced citizens should be noted. The Confederate government never launched any kind of relief campaign for those citizens suffering because of the war.<sup>34</sup> There were examples of a similar assessment policy by Confederate officials in the region. To be sure, the increasing Federal presence and control of the area by 1863 would have dashed any effort by authorities to do so. While the Federal government did what it could to raise funds for its own displaced and uprooted citizens, the Confederate government stuck to its mantra of protection of the home. McCurry has noted this fact: “Confederate citizens of all sorts readily subscribed to the view that the Civil War was a defensive war waged for the protection of hearth, home, and womanhood. State officials subscribed to it, too, or at least they said they did. Citizens thus not unreasonably expected that military deployment would be shaped by, or at least accommodate, those social goals.”<sup>35</sup>

Building upon the General Orders, No. 24 precedent, Special Orders, No. 60, issued on December 2, 1862, by the Union Headquarters of the Central District of Missouri hoped to dig a little deeper in the pockets of disloyal individuals:

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<sup>33</sup> These assessment figures were taken from W. Wayne Williams, “An Experiment in Counterinsurgency: The Assessment of Confederate Sympathizers in Missouri,” *The Missouri Historical Review* Vol. 35, No. 3, (Aug., 1969): 371. See also Dennis K. Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens’ Rights in Civil War Missouri: Balancing Freedom and Security* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2011), 63-92.

<sup>34</sup> Elna C. Green, *This Business of Relief: Confronting Poverty in a Southern City, 1740-1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 72.

<sup>35</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 94-95.

The sum of \$10,000 is hereby levied upon the disloyal inhabitants of Johnson County [Missouri], whereof the sum of \$2,500 will be applied to subsist the enrolled militia whilst engaged in active service, and the remaining \$7,500 is appropriated to the relief of the destitute families of the soldiers engaged in actual service, and to relieve the temporarily destitute refugees who have been driven from their homes by rebels or guerrillas, and of the citizens who have become destitute in consequence of the lawless acts of disloyalists.<sup>36</sup>

These orders placed blame for the displacement of so many people on the shoulders of people who either helped guerrilla fighters or chose to look the other way while various guerrillas perpetrated various acts of destruction in their communities. The potential cash generated by this assessment not only went to aid uprooted Missourians, as “most rural Missourians had become refugees, inside or outside the state[,]” but to help pay for militia units to protect these communities as guerrilla activity continued to plague the army in the region.<sup>37</sup> As these additional examples show, it appears that these assessments not only varied with time and place, but they also expanded in scope as the war went on and the crisis intensified.

General Orders, No. 24, however, was not the only military-ordered assessment issued in the region as these taxes were enacted in other parts of the region. Other measures that communicated assessments in other Missouri communities may have had different wording, but they had the same goal as General Orders, No. 24 – help uprooted *loyal* citizens at the expense of *disloyal* citizens and Confederates in Missouri and Arkansas. For example, an 1863 circular appeared to follow the directive included in that order: “The provost-marshal of the District of Eastern Arkansas is therefore instructed to levy assessments upon such citizens [disloyal citizens], and collect and disburse the same, for the use and benefit of loyal refugees within our lines.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> “Special Orders, Headquarters Central District of Missouri, Numbers 60,” December 2, 1862, U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Vols. (Washington Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 1, Vol. 22, Part 1, (Little Rock), 806. Henceforth, *O.R.*

<sup>37</sup> Jay Winik, *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 162-163.

<sup>38</sup> “Circular, Headquarters of Eastern Arkansas,” April 8, 1863, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Part 2, (Little Rock), 825.

Until Washington said otherwise, military commanders throughout the region used taxes as a tool to assist displaced residents but also to relieve their burden on the army. Assessments served as a divisive issue among Missourians and have the potential to aggravate its Border State status.

Assessments in Missouri would end in early 1863 because of these complaints. Citizens there questioned the legality of these assessments and others wondered if it was really worth upsetting the state's conservative citizens. Not to mention the fact that many thought that the assessments were futile. President Lincoln, not wanting to upset the delicate balance between the federal government and a Border State, instructed his Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to put a stop to the assessments in Missouri.<sup>39</sup> As a result, on January 20, 1863, Stanton communicated the president's wishes to military leaders in Missouri: "The order suspending for the present any further action upon assessments for damages was not designed to be limited to Saint Louis, but was meant to include all such assessments in the State of Missouri. You will, therefore, suspend them until further instructions."<sup>40</sup> Union commanders in Missouri speedily communicated Lincoln's order to other commanders in the region and the assessments officially stopped shortly after.

Ultimately, the assessments had little to no impact because Federal officials collected such small amounts as many expected. "Not only did the assessments fail to check bushwhacking," historian W. Wayne Williams observes, "the also exacerbated the politics of Missouri."<sup>41</sup> For Lincoln and his cabinet, these assessments were more trouble than they were worth. For military

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<sup>39</sup> Throughout much of 1862 and 1863, President Lincoln did not want to commit to any actions that might upset the Border States (Missouri, Delaware, Kentucky, and Maryland). Lincoln's halting of these assessments are part of his desire to tread lightly when it came to the Border States as he did with his rebuke of General John C. Frémont in Missouri in August 1861. For more on the Border States and their delicate status, see Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America's Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 37-40.

<sup>40</sup> "Edwin M. Stanton to Major-General Curtis," January 20, 1863, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Part 2, (Little Rock), 64.

<sup>41</sup> W. Wayne Williams, "An Experiment in Counterinsurgency: The Assessment of Confederate Sympathizers in Missouri," *The Missouri Historical Review* Vol. 35, No. 3, (Aug., 1969): 372.

officials, they failed in their attempt to relieve displaced people at the expense of Missouri's disloyal. While the military officials attempted to alleviate their suffering by shifting the burden of care on disloyal citizens there, the impact of these assessments only confirmed citizens' misgivings about the policy.

### **Confederate Worries: Displaced Families**

After observing wandering Southern whites, soldiers wondered about their own families. While, for instance, the Arkansas state government attempted to provide for the families of Confederate soldiers in times of hardship, these efforts were often inefficient.<sup>42</sup> This brought many questions to soldiers' minds as they wrote their letters home. Had the army or irregulars forced one's family to flee? Had these men deprived their families of all of life's necessities? Soldier William Wakefield Garner of Quitman, Arkansas, who served as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in the Home Guard Company of Mounted Cavalry, wrote home sharing those fears. "If I could only be home to see you and our dear little children. . . .[.]" remarked Garner, "but . . . not knowing or having any chance to know whether they are sick or well, have plenty or are destitute, whether they have a home or robbed or burnt down and many other things the mind will naturally picture out, I almost come to the conclusion that I am one of the most miserable men that lives."<sup>43</sup> For many Confederates, they wondered if events caused their own families to flee. Thoughts of their families' condition weighed heavily on a number of soldiers. This caused some to desert the army altogether or join guerrilla or bandit fighters in order to protect their homes. This was a fear among commanders across the Confederacy if their soldiers' families were not cared for. Writing from

<sup>42</sup> See William Frank Zornow, "State Aid for Indigent Soldiers and Their Families in Arkansas, 1861-1865," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer, 1955): 97-102.

<sup>43</sup> "William Wakefield Garner to wife," November 23, 1863, in D.D. McBrien, ed. and William Wakefield Garner, "Letters of an Arkansas Confederate Soldier," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 2, No. 3 (Sep., 1943): 278-279.

East Tennessee in the war's final months, soldier John Stanfield reminded Jefferson Davis that "CSA soldiers' families are left destitute; fears 'this army will break off into garilla [sic] bands if something more is not done.'"<sup>44</sup> Other soldiers heard about former neighbors forced from their communities because of approaching armies. "I saw an old man a few days ago that left his family last November[.]" wrote Frances Gilliam in an 1864 letter to her husband Robert. Robert C. Gilliam served in the Confederate army. "He says his property would have sold for \$3000 when he left and if he had it he would give every dollar of it if he had his family here. He says he knows he could make a living for them. He says he has seen so many from there that tell him how the famllys [sic] are treated. I am willing to stay here as long as the army is here. I don't think that I can stay if it crosses the river."<sup>45</sup> The Gilliams, who lived in Paraclifta, located in southern Arkansas, saw their friends and neighbors come and go. Robert, a plantation owner and businessman, very much worried about what would become of his property in southern Arkansas. Hearing reports from home, like the one above from his wife, only exacerbated those fears for many soldiers fighting on the front lines.

As these men witnessed town after town damaged or destroyed by the armies, soldiers and their families worried not so much about the regular armies, but more about the irregular warfare that took place there. "Citizens demanded the return of military units to their home counties," notes historian Stephanie McCurry, "the protection of their settlements from marauding Union troops and undisciplined Confederate cavalry. . . ."<sup>46</sup> For example, Confederate Lieutenant George

<sup>44</sup> "From John Stanfield to Jefferson Davis," November 7, 1864, in Lynda Laswell Christ, Mary Seaton Dix, and Kenneth H. Williams, eds. *The Papers of Jefferson Davis: September 1864-May 1865, Volume 11* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 148-149.

<sup>45</sup> "F.I. Gilliam to My Dear Husband," February 21, 1864, in James J. Hudson, ed. and Robert C. Gilliam, "From Paraclifta to Marks' Mill: The Civil War Correspondence of Lieutenant Robert C. Gilliam," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 17, No. 3 (Autumn, 1958): 290.

<sup>46</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 137.

Taylor, Company H, wrote to Rebecca Stirman Davidson about the devastation brought about in her hometown of Fayetteville, Arkansas. Davidson had left town in 1862 after Confederate troops set it ablaze. A few years later, the Federals banished Davidson from her hometown when they accused her of aiding the enemy. Taylor wrote her about the condition of Fayetteville in 1862:

Fayetteville presented indeed a sad spectacle when we pressed through on the 20<sup>th</sup>, I could not but contrast the beautiful quiet little town of last May when we were so heartily welcomed. Tho then devastation and waste and ruin manifest all around. Heaven help a country where an army must linger, be a friend or foe. What citizens now left in Fayetteville seemed perfectly panic-stricken – seemed to be utterly regardless of anything like protection of property. Stores all along Main Street were thrown open to the Missouri and Arkansas soldiers.<sup>47</sup>

By late 1862, the Federals used banishment as official policy against disloyal citizens in the region, usually the wives of prominent Confederate generals and political figures.<sup>48</sup> Because of the guerrilla activity in northwest Arkansas, Taylor opined that some kind of regular army was required to save the town. Confederates had become more worried about the protection of their homes and families than they had the larger war effort.

Confederate soldiers from the region often wondered about the impact of the war on their communities and officers used these incidents to motivate its troops. As Confederate soldiers saw community after community in various parts of the South with its citizens displaced or serving in the army and homes and businesses destroyed, they often thought of their own homes. Lieutenant General Richard Taylor, son of President Zachary Taylor, tried to use this destruction to his advantage in a published plea to the people of western Louisiana in the spring of 1864. “Along 100 miles of his path the flying foe, with more than savage barbarity, burned every house and

<sup>47</sup> “George Taylor to Miss Becca,” March 3, 1862, Rebecca Stirman Davidson Letters and Papers, 1860-1958, Box 1: File 4, [MC541], Special Collections at the the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

<sup>48</sup> See Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 178-185; LeeAnn Whites, “‘Corresponding with the Enemy’: Mobilizing the Relational Field of Battle in St. Louis,” in LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long, eds., *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 103-116..

village within his reach. You extinguished the burning ruins in his base blood, and were nerved afresh to vengeance by the cries of women and children, left without shelter or food.”<sup>49</sup> While it is difficult to determine if this ploy actually worked in keeping men focused on the larger war effort, it does demonstrate how aware Southern commanders were of men worrying about home. Southern civilians and soldiers away at the battlefield had to worry about so much more as they worried about their families on the homefront.

While Confederate commanders were unable to do anything of substance to keep men from worrying about their homes, local and state governments did what they could when it came to helping soldiers’ families made destitute or displaced by the war. By improving these families’ situations, even if only a little, the government hoped to ease soldiers’ minds and keep Confederate troops at the front, knowing that their families were cared for. For example, the Arkansas state legislature “appropriated \$1,200,000 to help refugees from the northwestern part of the state.”<sup>50</sup> In addition to the state legislature, local governments did what they could for the troops as well. Moneyhon notes, “the Hempstead County Court enacted a one-half of 1 percent property tax for the relief of the families of volunteers and accepted payment in food and other essential supplies.”<sup>51</sup> Responding to the lackluster support from Richmond to keep men in the ranks, state and local governments did what they could to achieve that goal. Historians have noted, however, that these efforts did very little in accomplishing their goal of reducing the number of Confederates who deserted their units.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> “General Orders of Lieutenant-General Richard Taylor to the Soldiers of the Army of Western Louisiana, May 23, 1864,” in Gary D. Joiner, general ed., *Little to Eat and Thin Mud to Drink: Letters, Diaries, and Memoirs from the Red River Campaigns, 1863-1864* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 125. This order was originally published in the *Washington [AR] Telegraph*.

<sup>50</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 119.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> See Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 193-195; Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate*

The destruction experienced by so many Southern communities at the hands of guerrilla fighters was so terrible that it pulled soldiers, especially Confederates, from the ranks so that they could check on their families and their homes. Many of the accounts read by soldiers concerning Bushwhackers and Jayhawkers could certainly cause a soldier worry knowing what their friends, family, and neighbors had experienced. For example, Confederate soldier Dandridge McRae relayed a message from Confederate General Thomas C. Hindman about just how real the threat from these “Kansas Jayhawkers and hired Dutch cut-throats,” really was. “These bloody ruffians have invaded your country,” McRae wrote in an undated letter, “stolen and destroyed your property, murdered your women, driven your children from their homes and defiled the graves of your kindred.”<sup>53</sup> Hearing such reports caused many men, especially men in the Confederate army, to return home in an attempt to protect their family and their homes from these irregular combatants.

Southern soldiers’ desire to return home was especially high later in the war when things were not going so well for the Confederacy. For example, Elias Davidson noted a fellow soldier’s situation in 1864: “Luke Holmes has been in from Arkansas. He has gone back after his family. He say that the[y] have lots of bushwhackers there. The[y] are makin[g] up componies [sic] of militia there and from what he sees the[y] are killing each other every day.”<sup>54</sup> While fighting for

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*South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 107-108, 118-125; Jennifer Lynn Gross, “‘And for the Widow and the Orphan’: Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance,” in Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> “Letter from Dandridge McRae,” n.d., Dandridge McRae Papers, 1860-1898, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock. “Dutch” was a corrupted form of *Deutsch*, a term used to refer to the loyal, Republican German immigrant population of Missouri.

<sup>54</sup> “Letter from Elias Davison to James H. Mitchell in Cedar County, MO,” January 21, 1864, [MS11-87] Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Little Rock. While fears of what was happening at home was a driving factor in causing many Confederate soldiers to desert, historian David Herbert Donald has argued that an underlying factor for many issues in the Confederate army was discipline. See David Herbert Donald, “The Confederate as Fighting Man,” *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 1959): 178-193.

the Confederacy was important for these men, their family and their homes came first. For many men, that was what the war was about – family and the home.<sup>55</sup> Threats to the home front could certainly weigh heavily on the minds of soldiers from Arkansas or Missouri fighting a war very far away from the one that was happening in their very own communities.<sup>56</sup>

### **Displaced People and the Army: Interactions and Policy**

Displaced Southern whites who sought protection, food, or clothing from the Union army only served to slow it down, thus creating a burden. Nineteenth century warfare required armies to move as freely as possible so that they could gain any tactical or geographic advantage as quickly as possible. The best example of this burden on the Federal army and it occurred in the East and it involved Sherman’s March to the Sea. As Sherman moved forward from Atlanta beginning in late 1864, more and more displaced African Americans joined his army, slowing the army down considerably. The burden that these freedom seekers put on Sherman’s army caused him to issue his Special Field Orders, No. 15, which, in short, provided forty acres and a mule for freedpeople following his army. This, in effect, lessened the drag on Sherman’s army, freeing his army to continue its campaign.

The crisis of displaced whites coming into Union camps was so severe during the war’s final months that it could take a great many rations to subsist them for even a short period. This was especially true among displaced persons encountered by the Union army. In western Arkansas for example, the *New Era* noted in the war’s final months that, “nearly as many rations are issued to refugees at this point, Van Buren and Fayetteville as to the troops.”<sup>57</sup> Such accounts demonstrate

<sup>55</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 94-95.

<sup>56</sup> For more on Arkansas soldiers, see Carl H. Moneyhon, “Why They Fought: Arkansans Go to War, 1861) in Mark K. Christ, ed., *The Die is Cast: Arkansas Goes to War, 1861* (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2010), 53-74.

<sup>57</sup> “The Refugees,” March 18, 1865, Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*.

just how heavy of a burden these people became on the army and, because this burden was so great, loyalty played an important role in the distribution of aid to people, as only sworn Unionists would receive rations from the army. While the army determined the number of rations for its soldiers with known numbers, it did not have this information, as it encountered displaced people. This meant that aid for these people varied based on each situation and circumstance and sometimes meant that the only aid they received was whatever soldiers had on them at the time of the encounter. This might have been a few spare rations, maybe an extra blanket. Often, the army directed displaced people to the next military installation where supplies were potentially more plentiful.

With each year of the war, the number of displaced persons mounted and the army had to take action. More and more people appeared at Federal military installations in Arkansas from Pine Bluff and Lewisburg to Helena and De Valls Bluff. For example, C.T. Christensen, a Lieutenant Colonel and Assistant Adjutant-General complained in March 1865 that “[t]he retention of refugees at the South will be a serious embarrassment to the military service as well as a heavy burden upon the Army appropriations. The cost of transportation to points where they can obtain employment or be otherwise provided for will be less than the value of the rations that must of necessity be issued to them if they are retained.”<sup>58</sup> Uprooted citizens not only slowed the army’s movements, but they also consumed vital army supplies intended for its soldiers. Here, the army would not be so bold as to issue any kind of military directive allotting tracts of land or army supplies for displaced persons in need of the army’s help. Simply moving them out of the war appeared to be the best and most cost effective way to remove this burden from the army in the region.

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<sup>58</sup> “C.T. Christensen to J.W. Sprague,” March 15, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1, (Powder River Expedition), 1180.

It was simply cheaper for the Union army to pay displaced peoples' transportation costs to points beyond the army where they could receive aid. This policy was better for the army when compared to allowing them to linger around military bases or following the army hoping for rations and other aid. Supplies were critical in the West, more so than in the East, as the armies located here were so far away from supply depots, making it more difficult to move supplies to these soldiers and, if too many civilians consumed their supplies, it could take a considerable amount of time to before the quartermaster replenished their storerooms. Army officials attempted to deal with the problem through a variety of ways including assessments and the issuing of rations to relieve the suffering of displaced people – if only temporarily – this, however, was not enough. It would not be enough until the military brass developed some kind of uniform policy towards displaced people. Uniform policy or not, people came to expect some kind of help from the army.

Both armies sought to use uprooted citizens to their advantage and having an advanced set of eyes to track the enemy's movements could be valuable. Displaced persons, in many instances, had traversed the countryside for many weeks or months. They knew the lay of the land and they were familiar with residents who might have valuable information about the position of the enemy. While the use of displaced people as spies by the Union army are plentiful, there are not a lot of sources that indicate if and how many displaced people the Confederate army recruited for the war. This is not to say that it did not happen, but it does indicate that it did not happen as often as it did in the Union army. The Federals recruited and enticed many displaced residents into the army, especially in areas where Union sentiment was strong, places like Arkansas where the Ozark Mountains in the northwestern part of the state was the home to many Mountain Federals. After the army pushed Confederate troops out of Missouri and northern Arkansas in the months leading up to their victory at Pea Ridge in March of 1862, located in north-central Arkansas, made

recruitment easier.<sup>59</sup> When in the enemy's territory, a spy proved to quite valuable. Spies detailed positions and movements of the opposing army and, often, displaced people were willing to take up the task of spying. Because of this, locals might have been privy to the opposing army's movements or have their collective ear to whatever news might have spread throughout the community, which proved to be helpful to the army.<sup>60</sup>

Most importantly, the recruitment of the region's uprooted citizens as spies provided an opportunity to settle scores in their communities. Spying was a game of trying to gain information on the enemy, while at the same time planting all kinds of misinformation to cover an army's path. Deserters, locals, escaped slaves, and displaced citizens were all used as sources of information with some being more reliable than others. These displaced people who served as informants did not reveal their affiliations or previous affiliations. Were they Unionists? Dissatisfied Confederates? Ex-Confederates? "Refugees," notes former National Security Agency officer Edwin C. Fishel, "looking for a welcome, were generous with their talk, but on average they had far less information than soldiers."<sup>61</sup> Throughout both local and national publications as well as published personal accounts after the war, there were instances of spies aiding the Union army. "Refugees and spies report to me that Price's division is very much demoralized," details a communication between army officers, "and that the men deserted in great numbers while crossing Red River."<sup>62</sup> For these officers, displaced people proved indispensable to their operations in many

<sup>59</sup> Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 73-87.

<sup>60</sup> For information on spies during the Civil War, see William B. Feis, *Grant's Secret Service: The Intelligence War From Belmont to Appomattox* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Edwin C. Fishel, *The Secret War for Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996); Donald E. Markle, *Spies and Spy Masters of the Civil War* (New York: Hippocrene, 1994); Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict & Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 60-61.

<sup>61</sup> Edwin C. Fishel, *The Secret War for Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 5.

<sup>62</sup> "Fred K. Steele to N. P. Banks," March 7, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Part 2, (Red River Campaign), 518-519.

parts of the Western Theatre. While using them as spies could sometimes work against the army, as they could work for both sides or be captured, it allowed them to utilize these divided loyalties in their favor. “Captain Benter reports that the enemy called his name,” noted one Union General Fitz Henry Warren, “and appeared to know that he would be out there, and that refugees report that our affairs in Indianola are known in the interior.”<sup>63</sup> Displaced residents could have concealed themselves very easily and they would have been able to move about the countryside without arousing any suspicion from the Confederate army. If the enemy did take notice of these people and become suspicious, one could blend in very easily to his surroundings. Their motivations for aiding the army in this way are not clear, perhaps they were returning a favor or perhaps they were attempting to demonstrate their loyalty with their efforts, or perhaps they were looking to get even with their disloyal neighbors for whatever reason.

Being a spy was an exciting endeavor and various wartime publications detailed stories of these spies. One account, published in an 1864 novel with title *Thrilling Stories of the Great Rebellion* detailed the experience of displaced Arkansan, De Witt C. Hopkins written by Charles S. Greene. Greene, “late of the United States Army,” hoped to add some detail to the individual wartime experience. Hopkins, who served as a Union general’s ‘guide’, “determined to revisit his home, and if possible put him in such an attitude that he could remain there until other opportunities should be presented to give information to the Federal army.”<sup>64</sup> In Greene’s account, Hopkins was able to report near the Arkansas-Missouri border various Confederate movements enduring narrow escapes with the enemy along the way – even going undercover in the Confederate army as a

<sup>63</sup> “N.J.T. Dana to Brigadier General Fitz Henry Warren,” February 23, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Part 2, (Red River Campaign), 403.

<sup>64</sup> Charles S. Greene, “Adventures of an Arkansas Refugee,” in *Thrilling Stories of the Great Rebellion: Comprising Heroic Adventures and Hairbreadth Escapes of Soldiers, Scouts, Spies, and Refugees; Daring Exploits of Smugglers, Guerrillas, Desperadoes, and Others; Tales of Loyal and Disloyal Women, Stories of the Negro, etc.*, etc. (Philadelphia: John H. Potter, and Co., 1864), 230.

double agent. Greene's story paints a positive picture of the Union spy. "Courage on the battlefield, questionable oftentimes, as advancing columns approach each other, is thoroughly roused by a few volleys, but the cool, deliberate daring of the spy – the resolution that braves reproach, ignominy and death, belongs to men of other stamp."<sup>65</sup> Hopkins faced further danger, at one point Confederate officials had him arrested, tried, and nearly hung, but he escaped death through a technicality. Confederates then almost killed Hopkins as revenge for the murder of a Confederate sympathizer, only to escape again. Hopkins would move from Union spy to soldier fighting for the army at Pea Ridge and eventually made his way up to the rank of captain.

While Hopkins's story is thrilling as written by Greene, what does it say about displaced people acting as spies? First, it is difficult to determine the accuracy of Hopkins's tale recounted here because this is a work of fiction. Was this what really happened or was this story simply sensationalized to sell a few books? Perhaps the publishers hoped to use Hopkins's tale as a demonstration of so many citizens' loyalty to Union. In addition, with his decision to join the army and fight at Pea Ridge as well as his escaping death so many times, the story demonstrates Hopkins's bravery and commitment to the Union. While being a spy went a long way to prove one's loyalty, there was no greater demonstration of loyalty to the Federal cause than joining the army.

Both the Union and Confederate armies utilized the service of displaced people in the region. Only Tennessee had more Union recruits than Arkansas among the Confederate states, Arkansas having more than eight thousand white volunteers for the Federal army, though most volunteers were not spies.<sup>66</sup> In some instances, displaced people would build upon their service as

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>66</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, "The Williams Clan: Mountain Farmers and Union Fighters in North Central Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 287.

a spy and then take the next step by joining the army. Joseph H. Trego, a Lieutenant in the 5<sup>th</sup> Kansas (Union) Cavalry reported in an early letter home to his brother that “many a spy has come in representing himself as a refugee and in some cases have gone so far as to enlist in the army.”<sup>67</sup> The service of displaced people in the Federal army was not required to receive aid, but it did help reinforce their loyalty in the eyes of the army.

The reasons that citizens chose to join the Federals, outside of staunch Unionists living in the region, were not always clear. Perhaps they were simply tired of being on the run or being hungry; maybe this was the best way to guarantee a steady meal and shelter or they joined out of revenge against the Confederate army or guerrilla bands that harassed or destroyed their communities. It was also possible that the Federals pressured or refused subsistence to these people if they did not join. Whatever their reasons for joining the army, officials capitalized on these men’s situation and used them to bolster Union regiments or create new units late in the war.

Some military officials felt that displaced residents should be *forced* to join the ranks of the Union army. Army officials refused to provide handouts to displaced whites who they encountered; instead, they offered service in the Union army as a means to earn a subsistence. Media outlets assured Northerners that uprooted citizens were not forced into service and men who served did so of their own free will. In a description of a sketch detailing the plight of the dispossessed, *Harper’s Weekly* noted that “[t]hese refugees, whether they come from Richmond or from the Southwest, are invariably provided for in every possible way, and are not in any case compelled to enter our armies.”<sup>68</sup> It was not, however, always the practice by army officials in the field. Historian Richard Current details how uprooted citizens were compelled to join the ranks of

<sup>67</sup> “Joseph H. Trego to Thomas Trego,” October 9, 1861, Joseph H. Trego Letter, Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield [Republic, MO], [Missouri Digital Heritage].

<sup>68</sup> “Union Refugees,” November 5, 1864, *Harper’s Weekly*, 717.

the army when he details the actions of Missouri General Egbert B. Brown. Current notes that if these men were slow to join, Brown both refused rations to able-bodied men and “sent and expedition into Arkansas to fetch recruits. As a result of his efforts, men were enlisted faster than they could be equipped.”<sup>69</sup> General Brown did what was in his power to ensure that he bolstered his fighting force while, at the same time, removed an opportunity for his enemy to do so. In addition, Brown decreased the number of displaced people around his army. In this instance, it is the proverbial win-win situation for the Federals and for General Brown. Brown was not alone in his efforts to recruit displaced residents into the ranks as other officials did the same in their attempt to recruit them into their units. Other army officials used more standard recruitment tactics.

Regardless of their methods, Union officials were able to persuade a number of displaced men to join Western units of the army. Numbers of recruits for local regiments were across the board. For example, the Missouri Adjutant General John B. Gray reported to the Secretary of War Henry Stanton that Missouri raised 1,727 men into service for Missouri “composed principally of refugees from Arkansas.”<sup>70</sup> In other instances, the number of displaced men recruited could be rather small. Reports made to the Missouri Senate for 1865 detailed three uprooted citizens from Franklin County, Missouri, who officials organized into provisional companies.<sup>71</sup> Reasons for these men joining the ranks, even late in the war, varied from man to man – just as their reasons for fleeing during the war varied. Displaced Arkansans and Missourians provided needed troops for Union regiments late in the war.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Oxford University Press, 1992), 76.

<sup>70</sup> 1865 [Missouri] *Senate Journal*, Regular Session, Appendix Adjutant General Report.

<sup>71</sup> “Annual Report of the Adjutant General of Missouri,” Appendix to the Senate Journal of the General Assembly, Session of the Twenty-Third General Assembly, Volume I (1865), 632.

Historian Gary D. Joiner points out the difficulty in fully understanding how many uprooted men made their way into the Confederate ranks when he wrote, “Trans-Mississippi accounts, especially Confederate letters, are very rare. . . .”<sup>72</sup> There are few accounts that offer evidence of frequency and numbers of displaced men recruited by the army in the region. This is not to say that it did not happen. General Theophilus Holmes, for example, wrote President Jefferson Davis in August of 1862, telling him that there were some uprooted white Southerners who wanted to join the army. “Regts in this state almost new and undisciplined and probably five thousand men without arms of any kind, besides these there are six or seven thousand men in the Indian Country and a great number of refugee Missourians on the border seeking to be mustered in the service, to command and instruct this army at least six additional Brigadier Genls. are necessary.”<sup>73</sup> While instances such as this are few and typically limited to 1861 and 1862, there is evidence that Confederates brought displaced men into their ranks. However, it does not appear that the army was able to recruit them in any kind of significant numbers.

By 1863, Confederate armies were still desperate to fill their ranks. The increasing numbers of men lost to battles, disease, and desertion weakened the army’s strength as a fighting force. While the Confederate draft “raised a larger portion of its troops by drafting than did the north,” it did not push the number of men into the Southern ranks needed to win the war.<sup>74</sup> Confederate General John Marmaduke, a Missourian, was able to incorporate displaced men into his command in his home state. “Marmaduke’s Cavalry consists principally of refugee bushwhackers from Missouri,” noted the *Daily Missouri Republican*, “and is variously reported at from 5,000 to

<sup>72</sup> Gary D. Joiner, general ed., *Little to Eat and Thin Mud to Drink: Letters, Diaries, and Memoirs from the Red River Campaigns, 1863-1864* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), xx.

<sup>73</sup> “Letter from Theophilus Holmes to Jefferson Davis,” August 26, 1862, in Lynda Laswell Christ, Mary Seaton Dix, and Kenneth H. Williams, eds. *The Papers of Jefferson Davis: 1862, Volume 8* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 361.

<sup>74</sup> James M. McPherson, “American Victory, American Defeat,” in Gabor S. Boritt, ed., *Why the Confederacy Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 25.

8,000.”<sup>75</sup> Perhaps Marmaduke, as a Missourian, was able to play to individual state loyalties to recruit these uprooted Missourians for service or, like their Unionist counterparts, sought revenge against the Union army for deprivations committed against their homes or families. Though his methods were unusual, the general demonstrated that it was possible to recruit displaced men for the Southern cause. Accounts of such recruitment are much more difficult to come by when compared to Union attempts to do the same, however, it does show that some displaced men still believed in fighting for the Confederacy.

Reasons for this Confederate failure to recruit higher numbers of uprooted Southern whites are many and include the fact that many soldiers deserted the Confederate army to check on their homes or families. Other Confederate soldiers simply lost interest in the cause as the war moved into 1864 and 1865 and victory seemed less likely, especially in Missouri and Arkansas. One can also read into the fact that they army had to press citizens into service against their will, alienating a number of Southern whites. This caused some people to leave, as they did not wish to fight for the Confederacy because of either their loyalties or their desire to decline participation in the war. There are accounts, especially in Arkansas, after the Federals gained a solid hold on the northern and central parts of the state in 1863, where Confederate troops not only stopped fighting, “but became Unionists and joined the Northern Army.”<sup>76</sup> For whatever reason – weak ties to the Confederate States, the need to survive, caring for loved ones or maybe they were coaxed into service - these men, at least in this instance, joined the Union army.

As more and more people poured into Union lines, the army had to devise other means of helping them. If the army’s rations on hand were too small to supply them, commanders at these

<sup>75</sup> “The War in Western Arkansas,” January 3, 1863, *Daily Missouri Republican* [St. Louis].

<sup>76</sup> Robert F. Smith, “The Confederate Attempt to Counteract Reunion Propaganda in Arkansas: 1863-1865,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1957): 55.

posts might turn them away or send them to the next closest military post. No standard military policy existed that dealt with displaced people coming into army lines. Looking through the *Official Records*, one will find numerous mentions of Union officers both concerned with the situation that they faced as well as how they handled it. Military officials' reactions to the large numbers of people varied from place to place. "If they [displaced people] remain here we are obliged to feed them, or they must starve. It is absolutely necessary to remove them to points where supplies are more plentiful than here."<sup>77</sup> This response demonstrates that the Federal army wished to help, but was unable to do so because of a simple lack of supplies. The Federals were cognizant of the fact that if they continued to feed and supply these uprooted citizens, they would remain near the army and drain valuable resources. What the army failed to consider was not that these people desired to stay near these military posts necessarily, but that they could not go back to their communities – for a variety of reasons. Therefore, when they were short or low on rations, army officials quietly underrepresented the amount of rations they had on hand to push civilians in need on to someone or somewhere else.

Later in the war, the Union army considered other alternatives to help displaced people including transporting them to points where aid could be more centralized and, therefore, more efficient. Doing this also allowed the army to help these people while lessening their burden on the army for relief. The army assisted them, as they did in the above account, by providing transportation to other places where people could receive aid – perhaps from one of the many benevolent aid societies like the Western Sanitary Commission headquartered in St. Louis. Other accounts demonstrate that the army was able to help displaced people and did – even if the help was temporary. They made the plight of displaced persons the plight of the army and made it clear

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<sup>77</sup> "John M. Thayer to Major General S.R. Curtis," June 11, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Part 4, (Red River Campaign), 317.

that officials would provide for them. Again, this policy was not an across the board policy, limited in time and scope to situation observed by officials.

The Union army struggled with establishing a consistent policy with regard to displaced people until the war's latter stages, when their numbers were at their highest. It was not until January 1864 that the War Department set a standard policy of ration distribution for displaced people. Washington communicated this order to commanders in the field. "Refugees," according to General Orders No. 30 from the War Department, were to receive:

10 oz. of pork or bacon, or 1 lb. of fresh beef; 1 lb. of corn meal five times a week, and 1 lb. of flour or soft bread or 12 oz. of hard bread twice a week; and to every 100 rations, 10 lbs. beans, peas, or hominy, 8 lbs. of sugar, 2 quarts of vinegar, 8 oz. of candles, 2 lbs. of soap, 2 lbs. of salt, and 15 lbs. of potatoes when practicable. To children under fourteen years of age, half rations will be issued; and to women and children, roasted rye coffee, at the rate of 10 lbs., or tea, at the rate of 15 oz. to every 100 rations.<sup>78</sup>

Though the amount of supplies allowed to the uprooted citizens in this instance does not appear to be great, the issuance of rations and other supplies over a sustained period could become rather expensive for the army and, because of this, they could not subsist these people long term.

In other instances, officials grew tired of these people receiving what they termed *handouts* and suggested that they take on some form of employment as a means of *earning* their subsistence. Union officials hoped that by using the influx of displaced persons as a cheap labor force they could both reduce the number of dependents as well as reduce the army's burden of caring for them. For example, General Odon Guitar suggested that people who received aid help to construct a rail line extension from Rolla, Missouri fifteen miles west to the Big Piney River in May of 1864. "The inauguration of this work will afford labor to hundreds who are now subsisting upon the bounty of the Government," Guitar proposed, "thus relieving the country from this unnatural tax

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<sup>78</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 7.

upon its resources, and these suffering and unfortunate people from a degrading dependence entailed upon them by their patriotism and devotion to the Government.”<sup>79</sup> While this project never saw the light of day, it does offer a glimpse into the opinions of some officials with regard to the subsistence of so many people. Other proposed labor ventures included the manufacture of uniforms for prisoners of war, but like Guitar’s plan, it was nothing more than a proposal.<sup>80</sup> One cannot blame these military officials for offering creative options for handling their problem, as the army brass did not offer any solutions of their own. The problem was one that they had not planned for and, therefore, it required some creative solutions to reduce the number of people dependent on the army as well as minimize the burden of these people on the army.

By the spring of 1864, the war in the West was very much going the Union army’s way. With the fall of Vicksburg the summer before giving the army full control of the Mississippi, giving way to the Union occupation of Little Rock, the Federals pushed through the region, strengthening its grip. The spring of that year, the Union army attempted to complete their conquest of the region with the Red River Campaign. General Nathaniel P. Banks, often labeled as a political general, would lead military and naval forces up the Red River from New Orleans, meeting up with General Frederick Steele, who would move his forces south from Little Rock. The goal of the campaign was to capture Shreveport – the headquarters of the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi, defeat Confederate Lieutenant General Richard Taylor, capture thousands of bales of cotton from the many plantations in the area, and organize pro-Union governments in the region. The Red River Campaign, if successful, could be the gateway for an invasion of Texas. In the end, the campaign was a Union failure in that it lost to a force smaller in number. Battles at Mansfield

<sup>79</sup> “O. Guitar to Major O.D. Greene, May 6, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Part 3, (Red River Campaign), 484.

<sup>80</sup> John F. Bradbury, Jr., “‘Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy’: Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998): 246-247.

(April 8) and Pleasant Hill (April 9) forced the Union army to fall back, drained a vast amount of Union resources, and cost Banks his job. There would be no more major Union offensives in the state for the rest of the war, leaving Confederate forces holding the southwestern part of the state.<sup>81</sup>

Because of this steady stream of displaced civilians resulting from the Red River Campaign, different commanders began to develop a clearer policy towards them, while others distanced themselves from them. The closest the Federals came to a clear policy came with the attempted creation of a refugee bureau within the army's organization. This attempt to organize a refugee bureau came in a general order issued by Assistant Adjutant-General J.W. Barnes by command of Major-General Dodge in the Department of Missouri in December 1864 – General Order, No. 238. In that order, he wrote that “[f]or the purpose of better providing for the wants and of improving the condition *of the large number of refugees in this department*, and to organize in the different districts a uniform system for their care, a refugee bureau is hereby established.”<sup>82</sup> The army assigned the responsibility for displaced people to army chaplains, who often wrote about the plight of these people.

Union army chaplains encountered displaced people often. These men proved to be the most sympathetic as chaplains often kept detailed accounts of their encounters with displaced people. “Refugees from Secessia come into camp nearly every day,” began Chaplain Rev. Francis Springer in a July 1863 journal entry, “generally in small companies either of men or of families consisting of women & children. In the latter case they come in ox wagons, a small boy or woman being the teamster. Their wagons are usually loaded with bedclothes, wearing apparel, provisions,

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<sup>81</sup> William Riley Brooksher, *War Along the Bayous: The 1864 Red River Campaign in Louisiana* (Dulles, VA: Batsford-Brassey's, 2001); Gary D. Joiner, *One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign of 1864* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003); Gary D. Joiner, *Through the Howling Wilderness: The 1864 Red River Campaign and the Union Failure in the West* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> “General Order, Headquarters of the Missouri, No. 238,” December 27, 1864, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XLI, Part 4 (Price's Missouri Expedition), 944. [italics added]

a few cooking utensils, & such other articles of family convenience as they could pack on or tie to the wagon bed.”<sup>83</sup> Chaplains recorded a number of similar instances in their wartime journals. These men served as the point of contact for displaced people as they encountered the army, most often in the capacity of superintendent of refugees.<sup>84</sup> As a result, various military commanders believed that chaplains were the most qualified to help uprooted citizens. This process of having the chaplains in charge of uprooted citizens would continue under the organization of the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands created in March of 1865 lasting in dwindling capacity until 1872.

The Federal policy regarding displaced people did not always move forward in a linear pattern. Military orders might aid people in one part of the region, but not another. Often, orders that pertained to these citizens were ad hoc in nature. Like General Order, No. 238, other orders only affected uprooted citizens who fell under the command of the Department of the Missouri – not Arkansas. Had similar orders been implemented throughout the region, the plight of these residents may have been improved much sooner, therefore reducing their burden on the Union army. Emblematic of the Federal position was that with one-step forward like General Orders, No. 238, there were steps back. This was evident with the army continuing to distance itself from displaced people, even late in the war. For example, an army official writing from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, detailed how the army distanced itself from people who came into their lines:

. . .in relation to the protection or dispersion of refugee families, the major-general commanding instruct you that you will make such provision for them as may best suit your convenience so far as not inconsistent with the public interest. Their destitute condition demands that they be subsisted until they are able to raise crops. This you are authorized to do. . . . The officer detailed in authorized to have and use public means of transportation for their benefit; is also charged with procuring seeds, plowing their grounds, constructing cabins, &c. It is suggested that an

<sup>83</sup> William Furry, ed., *The Preacher's Tale: The Civil War Journal of Rev. Francis Springer, Chaplain, U.S. Army of the Frontier* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001), 52.

<sup>84</sup> The role of army chaplains with regard to refugees will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

abandoned plantation in the vicinity of your post should be appropriated for their use, and all who are unable to provide for themselves be required to remove to it. This removes them from contact with the troops, and is for this reason a precaution against demoralization.<sup>85</sup>

The army helped them by issuing the necessary supplies to farm abandoned Confederate plantations, but its ultimate goal was to remove them from their lines as much as possible. In many ways, this communication is a microcosm of the army's policy towards displaced residents. The army continued its practice of not having a standard policy in the form of colony farms.

### **Splintered Solutions: Union Officials Try to Solve the Crisis**

The lack of food production in the region created a tremendous burden on the remaining residents and made it difficult for uprooted residents to return. This was in addition to the Confederate government's tax-in-kind policies imposed on Southern farmers and the poor weather in the region for much of the war. As a result, the associated poor harvests led to food shortages in Arkansas.<sup>86</sup> The suspension of raising crops in the region took its toll on the locals as well, not just the army. The difficulty of a reliable food source in Arkansas caused many citizens to leave their communities in high numbers. After the fall of Vicksburg in the summer of 1863 and then the fall of Little Rock that fall, the Union army had a more sustained presence in the region, putting a greater burden on the few farmers who stuck things out to this point in the war. "This is deplorable, not so much on account of the expense of feeding them," noted the *New Era*, "as from the injury the community at large is receiving by the almost total suspension of farming operations."<sup>87</sup> With the army's sustained presence in the region after 1863, this only added to the food shortage and some officials sought a solution.

<sup>85</sup> "John Levering (Assistant Adjutant-General) to Brigadier-General Clayton," April 19, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 2 (Powder River Expedition), 135.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 73.

<sup>87</sup> "Prospect of the Farmers – Bush-Whacking," November 14, 1863, Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*.

By 1865, the war's destruction was evident in the many communities that were located in that path. Residents of Arkansas and Missouri, who chose not to flee the opposing armies or guerrilla forces and ride out the war in their communities, stripped the land of every possible resource. There are many accounts of the deplorable condition of the countryside along the Missouri-Arkansas border. One instance, reported in the *New Era* in July 1865, detailed that:

the destitution of Northern Arkansas and Southeast and Southwest Missouri . . . that the destitution of that part of the Department of Missouri is almost beyond belief. The men have been absent for years, and the servants having left, the inhabitants have been reduced to the verge of starvation. Many of them are now living on greens, slippery elm bark and roots. The elm tree have been stripped of their coats clear up to the branches.<sup>88</sup>

Much of southern Missouri and Arkansas lay in waste. There were few people around to raise crops and, even if there were, the land was not in the best condition to produce anything of substance. Historian Michael B. Dougan notes that food was especially difficult to procure in Arkansas in 1864 and 1865 and having the army around, often consuming agricultural goods and foodstuffs, made things more difficult. "The absence of a reliable grain supply crippled the Prairie Grove campaign," notes Dougan, "making impossible a sustained campaign in northwest Arkansas or into Missouri. After the fall of Little Rock and the subsequent loss of the Arkansas River valley, it became impossible to sustain the army on Arkansas foodstuffs."<sup>89</sup> The Union army needed residents to return to the region so that they could produce the necessary food to sustain its continued occupation of the region.

The Union army offered protection for displaced citizens who returned to their farms and plantations. It needed these people to raise crops and take an active role in their communities now under Federal occupation. For the army, what good was it to hold this area if no one was there and,

<sup>88</sup> Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, July 8, 1865.

<sup>89</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 106.

furthermore, how would the army remain if no citizens were available to raise crops? The bluecoats wanted citizens to return so badly that they even offered up animals for their use on these farms if they returned. In western Arkansas for example, the Federals used these tactics to encourage people to return to their homes once the Federals took control. On December 21, 1863, the commanding General John McNeil issued a circular that alerted citizens “to the vast advantages that must accrue to its citizens by a prompt return to their farms, workshops, and other legitimate avocations, of all who, from any cause, have abandoned their homes since the commencement of hostilities, and who may now desire to give assurance of their loyalty, and to hereafter maintain the integrity of the Federal Union.”<sup>90</sup> While the colony farms relieved the army’s burden of providing for displaced people who made their way to the army, there were still people who remained out of the army’s reach. With McNeil’s circular, the Federals hoped to reach out to displaced people who may have desired to return home but wondered if it was safe. In addition to these promises, the army promised to make the transition as easy as possible, provided one took an oath of loyalty of course, allowing them to return to the relative normalcy of their pre-war lives. This, however, was only part of the solution.

For some military officials, one potential solution to the problem in the region was the establishment of colony farms there in late 1864 into 1865.<sup>91</sup> Colonies were attempted or proposed in Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas. These operations were small-scale agricultural settlements farmed by men who also serve as soldiers enlisted to protect that farm from marauding guerrilla bands and Confederate troops. People were asked, and in some instances military officials demanded, that they be organized on to one of these colonies. Companies of fifty or more men

<sup>90</sup> “Commanding General’s Orders [circular],” January 2, 1864, Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*.

<sup>91</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 145.

usually operated colony farms, also called farm colonies or post colonies. Because of the high number of displaced persons, barren landscapes offered no prospect of food for these communities or the army – which needed this food for its soldiers. These farm colonies were located on confiscated or abandoned Confederate plantations in which displaced people raised crops for themselves and their families as well as the army.

The leading advocate for the creation of these colonies was Colonel Marcus La Rue Harrison. His experience with displaced whites dated back to 1862, when he organized many Arkansas Unionists into what became the First Arkansas Cavalry Regiment. His experimentation with the colonies began in May of 1864 where his plan was to “keep them near home to operate, reporting to me or other proper person by letter once or twice a month, and as large a number as may be kept raising crops.”<sup>92</sup> Colony farms had the potential to reduce the army’s burden of providing food and shelter for these people by enabling them to provide it for themselves by raising crops on abandoned Confederate plantations. These colonies also served as encouragement for other displaced citizens to return to their homes near the communities where these post colonies were located, as they would help to provide some stability for that community. The military chain of command received requests for the establishment of these colonies from various military officials. By late 1864 into early 1865, Harrison pushed for more colonies in Arkansas and had the support of the governor, Isaac Murphy. In early 1865, Harrison requested the organization of another colony with the following purpose:

In order to facilitate the return to their homes of citizens of Arkansas now in Southwest Missouri and hasten the restoration of law and order in our State, I have respectfully to request, upon the application to you of citizens of known and tried loyalty, requesting authority to organize colonies of militia at Springfield, Mo., that you issue authority to such persons you shall deem properly qualified to raise such

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<sup>92</sup> “M. La Rue Harrison to Brigadier General J.B. Sanborn,” May 17, 1864, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Part 3 (Red River Campaign), 642.

companies, with a view to their returning and again locating near their homes in this State.<sup>93</sup>

For Harrison, these colonies would transition displaced Southern whites to the postwar world. Farms would provide an opportunity to get these men back on their feet and be prosperous in the new landscape created by the war.

Colony farms were scattered throughout southern Missouri and were located in northwest and central Arkansas. Generally, most were in areas that were firmly under Federal control. Colonies dotted the countryside in the Arkansas counties of Washington, Benton, and Madison counties in northwest Arkansas. By late March 1865, Harrison reported that these three counties had “sixteen fresh colonies as agricultural settlements . . . they number and aggregate of about 1,200 men . . .”<sup>94</sup> The exact number of these colonies in Arkansas, as noted by historian Michael A. Hughes, was difficult to determine.<sup>95</sup> Colony farms could be very large in size and population. Harrison bragged about three Arkansas colonies indicating, “[n]ot less than 15,000 acres will be cultivated this summer by them.”<sup>96</sup> Based on the reports from different military officials, it is safe to say that, by early 1865 with the end of the war imminent, farms manned with displaced residents were plentiful throughout the region.

In addition to raising crops, most of these colony farmers served as soldiers, creating what Harrison called ‘fortifications’ at or near these farms. Hughes’s brief study of these colony farms deftly notes that Harrison “thought in terms, rather, of agricultural settlements made up of armed

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<sup>93</sup> “M. La Rue Harrison to Brigadier General J.B. Sanborn,” May 21, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 2 (Powder River Expedition), 529.

<sup>94</sup> “M. La Rue Harrison to Brigadier-General Sanborn,” March 29, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1 (Powder River Expedition), 1293.

<sup>95</sup> Michael A. Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military-Farm Colonies,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer, 1987): 181.

<sup>96</sup> “M. La Rue Harrison to Brigadier-General Sanborn,” March 29, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1 (Powder River Expedition), 1294.

farmers, perhaps not unlike Israeli kibbutzim.”<sup>97</sup> Harrison noted that the participants were very happy on these colonies and, because of that, would not consider joining any kind of guerrilla band taking up arms against the army. Harrison also hoped that these post colonies would serve as a barrier against guerrillas, especially in northern Arkansas and southern Missouri where guerrillas had been a problem for the army. As an added benefit, these colony farms would not only help individuals who participated, but the entire community, as all would benefit from the food produced on these colonies. Protection of these farms was a key factor in developing a relationship between them as well as strengthening their loyalty to the Union during Reconstruction.

One’s placement on these experimental farms was contingent, like we have seen with other forms of aid, on their loyalty. Brigadier General Cyrus Bussey beamed about Harrison’s colony project indicating, “the loyal people are preparing to cultivate the land in the vicinity of these places [in Arkansas].”<sup>98</sup> With their loyalty, they received protection from the army as well as an opportunity to be a part of these colonies. For example, one official order appropriated the Pulaski County, Arkansas, plantation of one James B. Johnston, a Confederate sympathizer, “for use and occupancy by destitute refugee families as a home, farm, or colony.”<sup>99</sup> This same order went further in that it offered protection to loyal families provided by Company F, Fourth Arkansas Cavalry Volunteers. Protection of displaced persons working on these colony farms was important if the army wanted them remain and cultivate the land. The cooperative effort between them also built trust between these still skittish white Southerners and the army. As one might expect, some

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<sup>97</sup> Michael A. Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military-Farm Colonies,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer, 1987): 180. *Kibbutz*, meaning ‘group’ in Hebrew, are collective communities in Israel, first established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, usually based on agriculture. These communities were first formed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>98</sup> “Cyrus Bussey to Colonel John Levering,” March 8, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1 (Powder River Expedition), 1120.

<sup>99</sup> “John Levering (Assistant Adjutant-General) to Brigadier-General Clayton,” April 19, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 2 (Powder River Expedition), 135-136.

people were not trusting of the army given their individual experiences in the past. Together, however, these colonies could help build or strengthen the one's loyalty. While loyalty was important to receive aid or for placement on a colony farm, it was not always necessary, especially given the circumstances surrounding many displaced Confederate soldiers.

Complicating things for the Federals was the fact that a number of displaced whites who made their way to Union lines and forts – and sometimes to the colony farms - were former Confederate soldiers. There were instances of citizens who remained to wander the region because they had deserted the Confederate army. One in particular incident near Fayetteville in early May of 1865 included a Confederate army major, named Cooper, who told an official “all his men except ten have surrendered to the colonies; that he is disgusted with the war, and will never fight again.”<sup>100</sup> With the war over and perhaps nowhere to go, these Confederates joined one of Harrison's colonies. Perhaps Harrison viewed the colonies as having the potential to ease the transition of his former foes back into the fold of the Union or, Harrison was perhaps using this as another opportunity to brag about the success of his colony project. For better or for worse, Harrison's bragging about his farms may have brought about some unwanted attention from his superiors.

These operations did not come about without debate from within the military command. Harrison's chief antagonist over these colonies was the general and career politician Cyrus Bussey. Initially, he was not against the formation of these colony farms for displaced people and was not against Harrison's efforts that began in early March of 1865, though this is not to say that he was enthusiastic about the whole project. Based on the back-and-forth letters written by the general to other officers, he was not thrilled at the fact that displaced civilians were growing in number near

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<sup>100</sup> “Cyrus Bussey to Lieutenant Colonel John Levering,” March 14, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1 (Powder River Expedition), 1167.

military posts. “I am very much embarrassed with the very large number of destitute people who are colonizing near the posts of this command.”<sup>101</sup> He wanted to be sure that the process for the formation of these colonies left little controversy and minimized any friction between the army and the citizens. He also certainly understood displaced residents’ dire situation by the early months of 1865 and wanted to do what he could to help their situation. General Bussey passionately wrote, “I am doing everything in my power for the suffering people in this country.”<sup>102</sup> He felt that these colonies would be beneficial to both the army and displaced people because, if things stayed as they were, the army would run out of food and be unable to provide for civilians who sought refuge at the fort in a few months. Therefore, at the start, Harrison’s immediate superior was on board with the colony plan.

As early as March 31, 1865, General Bussey demonstrated his skepticism of Harrison’s colony project when he reminded Harrison in an official communication that “[t]hese colonies must be organized by the people for their own protection, and no person will be compelled to join.”<sup>103</sup> At this point, the general was concerned that citizens were not taking part in these colonies of their own free will. A little over a month later on May 3, the general “directed Colonel Harrison to rescind his order” regarding these colonies but allowed the colonies to continue if the people organized in these colonies were happy with the arrangement.<sup>104</sup> Bussey reiterated his belief that the people were not the willing colony participants that Harrison made them out to be. So it appears in this instance that displaced people were forced into Harrison’s colony project and, as one might imagine, this was not a part of winning white Southerners hearts and minds nor did it improve the

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 1169.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> “Cyrus Bussey to Colonel John Levering,” March 31, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 1 (Powder River Expedition), 1302.

<sup>104</sup> “Cyrus Bussey to Colonel John Levering,” May 9, 1865, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Part 2 (Powder River Expedition), 305.

Yankee image in their minds. Nearly a week later, an angrier Bussey vented, “Permit me to state that these colonies are not formed by the people, but by Colonel Harrison,” began one of the general’s complaints about Harrison, “who has virtually driven the people from their homes to these colonies.”<sup>105</sup> He made it known that he did not approve of Harrison’s tactics in creating some of these colonies. Bussey’s back and forth opinions about Harrison and his colony farms once again muddied the waters of Federal policies. Harrison’s experiment appeared to offer an ideal situation to both the army and displaced people, but it only adds more evidence to the army’s failure to implement a uniform policy towards uprooted people.

While Harrison is probably the most successful with his colony project towards the end of the war, and despite his and Bussey’s disagreements over the whole project, it does not appear that these were the first proposed colony farms. One of the more interesting examples involves General Thomas Ewing, Jr. Before he issued General Orders No. 11, he toyed with the idea of solving his guerrilla problem with the post colonies later proposed by Harrison. Like Harrison, Ewing hoped that these Union farms would serve as barriers to potential raids from irregulars while at the same time putting displaced people to work. “I think that the families of several hundred of the worst of these men should be sent,” began Ewing in an August 3, 1863 letter, “with their clothes and bedding to some rebel district south, and would recommend the establishment of a colony of them on the Saint Francis or White Rivers, in Arkansas, to which a steamboat can carry them direct from Kansas City.”<sup>106</sup> Ewing thought about using colony farms to remove them from areas where his army operated, and thus removing potential guerrilla fighters away from his operations there. This had the potential to have gone a long way to solve his guerrilla problem with minimal disruption

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Ewing, Jr. to Lieutenant Colonel C.W. Marsh,” August 3, 1863, *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Part 2 (Little Rock), 368.

of the four counties in western Missouri. The above letter concerning post colonies predates his General Orders, No. 11 by nearly three weeks which creates the possibility that had his request for these colonies been approved, he may not have had to issue General Orders, No. 11 therefore eliminating the need to alienate Unionist citizens. Rather than remove everyone from the four western Missouri counties, thus uprooting more people, he would have had the ability to clear the area of only the worst offenders to his army and civil population. Though Ewing's proposed Missouri colony farm never took shape, it demonstrates just how viable the colony option was with regard to mitigating the problem for the army in the West.

The establishment of these farms caused division among Union officials and had a questionable effect on the large number of displaced persons descending upon the Union army. They did not lure every person back to their home. Because of the confusion surrounding the official policy concerning colony farms, there were pleas at the local level for them to return home. These pleas "assured amnesty for all past political offences on renewing their allegiance to the Union," noted an editorial in the *Little Rock Daily Gazette*, "[t]hey will be restored to their rights and property, and protected in them."<sup>107</sup> As the end of the war neared, the army and various local officials wanted these people to return home and be productive members of their communities. Part of the army's desire to end Southern whites' displacement was that it would hasten a return to normalcy for those communities now under Federal control; the other part had to do with raising crops for the coming year.

### **Conclusion**

With the end of the war, came the end of the Union army's handling of the displacement crisis. Not because they solved the problem, but because these people were passed off to the newly

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<sup>107</sup> *Little Rock Daily Gazette*, May 11, 1865.

created Freedmen's Bureau after the war ended. For uprooted citizens, the end of the war did not mean the end of their life on the run as many continued to wander the region through the early years of Reconstruction. Had the Federals not failed in implementing a direct and consistent policy with regard to displaced whites in the region, the crisis could have been mitigated and displaced whites could have returned home much sooner or might not have left their homes at all. Federal policies towards uprooted citizens during the early years of the war were enacted in piecemeal fashion and varied from place to place. In addition, these varied policies were self-serving in that they focused on reducing or eliminating the burden of providing for displaced residents. Displaced men redeemed themselves in the eyes of some of these military men by acting as spies or, joining their ranks and enlisting in the army. This was the ultimate demonstration of loyalty – a precondition for the army's subsistence of destitute and displaced residents in many instances. The Confederate army also saw displaced men come into their ranks, but the instances of this happening were not as frequent and those who did join came nowhere close to replacing men lost to casualties and desertion. There was no direct order 'from the top' instructing various military commanders on how to handle the particular situation that they encountered. Herein lies the difficulty in having an across the board policy – the situation encountered by the army varied from place to place. Variations in how the army issued rations to uprooted citizens demonstrates this point. Because of these variations, potential solutions to the problem like assessments or colony farms were not effective in any way. As a result, civilian organizations were asked – and in some instances were forced – to step in to help alleviate the suffering of these people. Where these people were left wanting by the army, benevolent aid societies in the West stepped up to fill the gap created by the Federals.

## CHAPTER 4: BENEVOLENT AID SOCIETIES & DISPLACED PEOPLE

*“The historian of this war will devote a very important chapter to the influence of the war in developing the philanthropy of the nation.”<sup>1</sup>*

- Rev. J.P. Thompson, February 12, 1865

Benevolent aid and local aid societies played a critical role in assisting both the Union army and, after the war, the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands in aiding both displaced whites and freedmen in the Trans-Mississippi West. These societies also helped whites scattered about independent of the army or other governmental organizations. Because the army was not fully prepared to handle the crisis, benevolent aid societies stepped in to pick up the slack left by the army until the Freedmen’s Bureau assumed care for these people at the war’s end. These aid societies, in addition to their duties helping sick and wounded troops, they assisted the army by providing supplies and caring for displaced people throughout the region. While some aid societies were able to help more uprooted citizens than others, both regional and national organizations stepped in to help where the armies could not. This nineteenth century philanthropic mission, born out of war, eased the burden by displaced whites. To pay for their efforts, these organizations hosted large-scale fundraising events that enticed like-minded citizens to help in their charitable mission.

The Western Sanitary Commission (WSC) provided the fullest response to the crisis in Missouri and Arkansas. The Commission proved to be the most flexible in its wartime operations with regard to displaced residents in the region. This organization provided food, clothing, shelter, and they displayed the Protestant impulse to reform white Southerners during Reconstruction. It

<sup>1</sup> “Speech of Rev. Dr. Thompson,” *Speeches of Hon. W. Dennison, Postmaster-General, Rev. J.P. Thompson, D.D., President of the Commission, Col. N.G. Taylor, of East Tennessee, Hon. J.R. Doolittle, U.S. Senate, Gen. J.A. Garfield, M.C. in the House of Representatives, Washington, Feb. 12, 1865* (New York: Sanford, Harroun, & Co., 1865), 5.

evolved in such a way that allowed it to not only ease the burden these people put on the army, but ease the suffering of them as well. It provided food, clothing, and shelter in the form of refugee homes, education, and transportation for the large number of people who made it into their care and sought political solutions to the problem the region.

While the WSC provided the fullest response in the region, other national organization also became involved in an attempt to alleviate the suffering of displaced people in the region. Numerous aid societies did their part to bring attention to the situation in Arkansas and Missouri, while still maintaining a national outlook on helping those forced from their homes and communities and made destitute. This national outlook, however, caused these organizations to lose their focus on the plight of people in the Trans-Mississippi region, minimizing their impact there. With their headquarters often located somewhere on the East Coast, usually in New York City, their gaze often remained focused on locals needed their help as well as people in trouble on the other side of the Mississippi River, in western Tennessee and western Kentucky.

Because of the WSC's organization, its headquarters in St. Louis, its ability to work with other, smaller aid organizations, and its outstanding ability to raise much-needed funds to help displaced residents in the region, it proved to be the most adequate aid agency. Through fundraising efforts like the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair of 1864, the Commission raised an enormous sum of money to help uprooted residents. It was through its efforts coordinating the Sanitary Fair that the Commission was able to utilize the efforts of the St. Louis Ladies' Union Aid Society, allowing it to do all of the little things right when it came to helping people. People made their way from Arkansas and southwestern Missouri to Rolla and Springfield and then directed by the army to the WSC in St. Louis. The combination of these factors made the

Commission the best-suited organization to handle the increasing number of uprooted people in the region.

### **The Rise and Expansion of Benevolent Aid Societies**

In the most general of terms, benevolent aid societies were organizations that acted on a charitable and often religious impulse to assist in the war effort. From the time of Puritan leaders like John Winthrop to founding father Benjamin Franklin, nineteenth century philanthropic efforts were cultivated in the American colonies. Rooted in the teachings of George Whitefield, Winthrop, and other influential figures from the Great Awakening, the charitable impulse in American society filled a void that the newly created republican government could not fill. “The practice of philanthropy – that segment of social activity that encompasses the giving of time and money for public benefit – was pervasive,” notes historian Kathleen D. McCarthy, “encompassing citizens of different economic strata, racial backgrounds, and religious beliefs.”<sup>2</sup> During the early republic and antebellum periods, aid and relief societies were gender-based. Women, excluded from the public sphere at this time, took the lead when it came to helping needy people. Often rooted in the church and religious teachings, often with an evangelical tilt, aid efforts in the United States allowed women to take leadership roles and effect social change in a time when men often denied them positions of power or any kind of political voice. American philanthropy followed this course until 1861. With the Civil War came a change in the course of the American philanthropic movement when it shifted from being gender-based to being class-based after the war.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 202. Previous works on the history of American philanthropy include Robert H. Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Alfred L. Castle, *A Century of Philanthropy: A History of the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 2004), 6-10. Historian Merle Curti identifies five periods in the history of American philanthropy. These periods include (1) the age of Franklin, (2) the period from 1815 to 1860, (3) 1860 to the 1880s, (4) the late 1880s to the Great Depression, and (5) the period since the Great Depression. See Merle Curti, “The

The Crimean War (1853-1856), according to various aid organizations, was the turning point for American philanthropists as there is little mention of their involvement in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). By the time of the Civil War, these societies often used and advocated more modern medical techniques learned from the experiences of the British and the French in the Crimean War. These modern techniques included open-air hospitals – for proper ventilation – and, proper daily maintenance, and a field ambulance service. Aid societies also offered recommendations to the War Department based on what they had seen in the field. Quite simply, these organizations wanted to centralize relief efforts for the army and the army’s Medical Department.

Civil War era sanitary commissions were usually affiliated with the United States Sanitary Commission. The United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) had outposts in New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, and other communities throughout the North.<sup>4</sup> These organizations tended to focus on their own religious and philanthropic missions rather than politics. They proved to be very important in the explanation for the Federals’ victory as they helped to compensate where the Federal government lacked in taking care of its soldiers after they left the field. “One current of postwar thought argued that the war had been won not just on the battlefield but also on the home front,” historian James Marten reminds us, “rather than emphasizing only the bravery of soldiers, many observers highlighted the superior character of all Americans and gave equal credit to the efforts of home front volunteers and organizations such as the U.S. Sanitary Commission and the U.S. Christian Commission.”<sup>5</sup> These organizations filled a void created by modern war.

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History of American Philanthropy as a Field of Research,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 62, No. 2 (Jan., 1957): 360-361.

<sup>4</sup> Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 176. President Lincoln created the USSC on June 9, 1861.

<sup>5</sup> James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 249.

Examples of these organizations include the Western Sanitary Commission, the United States Sanitary Commission, Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission, the United States Christian Commission, the American Missionary Association, the American Union Commission, the St. Louis Ladies' Union Aid Society, and the Ohio Refugee Relief Commission to name only a few. Some were national, some regional, and others local in character. "From the beginning of hostilities," observes historian Robert Bremner, "the needs of destitute people in occupied portions of the Confederacy, refugees and escaped or abandoned slaves demanded the attention of Northern military commanders, civilian officials, and agents of the major relief commissions."<sup>6</sup> Bremner's assessment held true in the West as the crisis became increasingly urgent with each passing year of the war forcing aid societies to move beyond their original intent of helping wounded soldiers.

Volunteers filled the ranks of these benevolent aid societies, usually coming from urban areas and often from the Northern upper classes, doing their part for the soldiers and, later, displaced people. Many members of these aid societies were simply continuing their antebellum reform efforts, especially abolitionists.<sup>7</sup> Early in the war, their work included providing bandages and medicines to wounded soldiers as well as establishing soldiers' homes, giving wounded and dying soldiers a place where they could recuperate or die in peace. In addition, these same volunteers played a role in the burial and transport of dead soldiers so that they could experience "the good death."<sup>8</sup> Both men and women served within the ranks of these organizations with men occupying the administrative roles and women serving the immediate needs for the troops and displaced people. Many of the women who volunteered served as nurses and some, like Dorthea

<sup>6</sup> Robert H. Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 91.

<sup>7</sup> See Lorien Foote, *Seeking the One Great Remedy: Francis George Shaw and Nineteenth-Century Reform* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> See Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 87-89, 110-117.

Dix, hoped to incorporate those new medical techniques to minimize the spread of disease and infection among injured soldiers.<sup>9</sup>

Because the war was a sanguinary conflict in the extreme, concerned citizens created both sanitary and Christian organizations to deal with the crisis. While there were differences and similarities between each type of organization in both appearance and operation, their overriding goal was helping the soldiers when the army or the government could not, as it was unprepared for such a large number of casualties. The biggest difference was that the Christian Commission tended to soldiers' moral and spiritual needs while the Sanitarians tended to their physical and material needs. "While the Christian Commission was motivated by humanitarian sympathy and religious benevolence," historian Drew Gilpin Faust points out, "the Sanitarians regarded such an approach as unduly sentimental, lacking the hard-headed realism and the order and discipline necessary to a modern age and a modern war."<sup>10</sup> Both groups, despite their different approaches and views of each other, each played a key role in the Union victory.

Chief among the sanitary organizations was the USSC and the WSC. The creation of sanitary commissions in England and France and Florence Nightingale's nursing corps during the Crimean War inspired a number of philanthropic-minded people, mostly women, to create a similar organization in the United States once war began.<sup>11</sup> Following a well-researched inquiry

<sup>9</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas), 220.

<sup>10</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2009), 110. See also James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 480-485; John Keegan, *The American Civil War: A Military History* (New York: Random House, 2009), 80; Phillip Shaw Paludan, *A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 353-355; Quentin Maxwell, *Lincoln's Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the U.S. Sanitary Commission* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956). Generally speaking, the chief difference between Christian and sanitary organizations was that Christian organizations were church-based. As historian John Keegan observes, the U.S. Christian Commission (the primary Christian organization) "was a potent force for observance and revivalism throughout the Union army and provided for much material as well as spiritual comfort to the troops."

<sup>11</sup> For more on the evolution of Civil War nursing, see Marilyn M. Culpepper, *Trials and Triumphs: Women of the American Civil War* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 315-354.

into the needs of the army and a good amount of public campaigning, Commission organizers pushed the Federal government to support their endeavor for such an organization. Finally, on June 13, 1861, President Lincoln in more of a bow to public pressure rather than a belief in its possibilities, established the USSC. “Lincoln’s Fifth Wheel,” as it became known, hoped to aid the Union Medical Department in its efforts caring for Union troops.<sup>12</sup> Similar to the modern-day Red Cross in how it functioned, the USSC hoped to streamline efforts to care for wounded Union troops on a national level. “Efficiency, organization, expertise, and order were their governing watchwords, layered on top of female expectations about the proper ways to care for the sick; and the medical department of the Union Army was in sad need of these contributions.”<sup>13</sup> Based on the accounts of its origins, displaced whites were not a part of the USSC’s original scope.<sup>14</sup>

For the most part, the USSC ignored the plight of displaced whites in Missouri and Arkansas making the creation of the WSC that much more important. For example, there are no mentions of displaced whites in an 1863 report about the USSC’s operations in the Valley of the Mississippi and only a brief mention in the 1864 report of the same name.<sup>15</sup> Because many East Coast elites operated it, with Frederick Law Olmsted as its General Secretary, the USSC neglected

<sup>12</sup> This “Fifth Wheel” is in reference to the understanding that the Union wagon had four wheels: the quartermaster’s services, transportation services, the commissary services, and medical/surgical care. The USSC would be a backup for the Union army wagon. See Quentin Maxwell, *Lincoln’s Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the U.S. Sanitary Commission* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956), vi.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy: The Health Crisis of the American Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 105. See also John S. Haller, *Battlefield Medicine: A History of the Military Ambulance from the Napoleonic Wars through World War I* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 24-26; Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 35-53; Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 193-197.

<sup>14</sup> “The United States Sanitary Commission. A Sketch of Its Purposes and Its Work. Compiled from Documents and Private Papers; The Sanitary Commission Bulletin; The Sanitary Reporter; Sanitary Commission Documents; Medical Papers of the Sanitary Commission,” *The North American Review* Vol. 98, No. 202 (Jan., 1864): 153-194.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. J.S. Newberry (Secretary of the Western Department of the USSC), “Report on the Operations of the U.S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi,” September 1, 1863, Library of Congress Digital Archive; Dr. J.S. Newberry (Secretary of the Western Department of the USSC), “Report on the Operations of the U.S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi,” October 22, 1864, Library of Congress Digital Archive, 7. In the second report, there is a brief mention of displaced blacks and whites in Kansas and that the USSC agent presented refugees’ claims in New York and will try to give them more attention in the future.

many of the wants and needs unique to the West. A search through the records of the Sanitary Commission yields little about the organization's work when it came to aiding people displaced by war in the East or the West. Much of this neglect came about because of its center of operations – New York City.

### **The Creation of the Western Sanitary Commission**

With the start of the war, St. Louis citizens began to see a number of wounded soldiers migrate to their city from the various battlefields in Missouri and Arkansas, especially after the battle of Wilson's Creek. "In the days ahead the number of wounded swelled to nearly 1,000 after the men injured at Wilson's Creek made their painful journey by wagon for more than 100 miles to the railhead of the southwest branch of the Pacific Railroad at Rolla," notes historian Louis Gerteis, "and then by train to St. Louis."<sup>16</sup> St. Louis citizens, including Adaline and John Couzins, took many of these soldiers to the city's hospitals and various charitable organizations, but this would not be enough. The Sanitary Commission operated hospitals in St. Louis, Jefferson City, Ironton, Benton Barracks, and Springfield – all in Missouri.<sup>17</sup> Injured soldiers who could not be cared for right away lingered in the streets, where it sometimes it took weeks to receive care. In St. Louis, both its citizens and facilities were unable to cope with the steady stream of wounded soldiers.

Prominent citizens took it upon themselves to create an organization that would help these wounded troops and their families who made their way to St. Louis looking for care and treatment. The WSC also helped soldiers' families if they died in battle or were unable to provide for their families. "In many cases a husband had been killed or drafted into Confederate service," as

<sup>16</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 205.

<sup>17</sup> William Furry, ed., *The Preacher's Tale: The Civil War Journal of Rev. Francis Springer, U.S. Army of the Frontier* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001), 156, n11.

historian William Parrish reminds us, “leaving a wife and small children to fend for themselves.”<sup>18</sup> St. Louisian Jessie Benton Frémont, the wife of General James Frémont and daughter of famed Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton, lobbied in Washington D.C. she pled for much needed assistance back home. While in Washington D.C., Jessie Benton Frémont had the ear of Dorthea Dix, a well-known philanthropist and advisor to President Lincoln, and Dix agreed to come to St. Louis to evaluate the situation on the ground to see what could be done to alleviate the suffering in St. Louis.<sup>19</sup>

Before the two women returned to St. Louis, Unitarian minister and prominent St. Louisian William Greenleaf Eliot had already devised a plan to help meet the growing crisis in his city.<sup>20</sup> The Unitarian Church viewed philanthropy through the lens of self-reliance, encouraging its members to perform charitable work in their communities in their path to individual salvation. This message came from the work of the popular transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and his essay *Self Reliance* (1841).<sup>21</sup> Eliot’s plan for a philanthropic organization to assist the army in the West, based on these religious principles, became the Western Sanitary Commission. It became official when Frémont issued Special Orders, No. 159 on September 5, 1861, creating the WSC. Frémont based his order on Eliot’s framework verbatim.<sup>22</sup> In addition to Eliot, James E. Yeatman - an industrialist, banker, and philanthropist and ally of Eliot - became a commissioner for the

<sup>18</sup> William E. Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” *Civil War History* Vol. 36, No. 1 (March 1990): 24.

<sup>19</sup> Sally Denton, *Passion and Principle: John and Jessie Frémont, the Couple Whose Power, Politics, and Love Shaped Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), 308-309; Judith Geisberg, “Ms. Dix Comes to Washington,” *The New York Times*, April 27, 2011. Jessie would later work for the Fremont Relief Society, which would eventually merged with the St. Louis LUAS.

<sup>20</sup> Eliot, along with James Yeatman, founded Washington University in St. Louis in 1853.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Patrick Bender, “Old Boss Devil: Sectionalism, Charity, and the Rivalry Between the Western Sanitary Commission and the United States Sanitary Commission During the Civil War,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arkansas – Fayetteville), 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> Unlike the USSC, which disbanded at the war’s end, the WSC continued its philanthropic efforts for two decades after the end of the Civil War. The organization did not formally disband until William Greenleaf Eliot died in 1886. William E. Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” *Civil War History* Vol. 36, No. 1 (March 1990): 34; Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 225.

organization along with the local physician Dr. John B. Johnson, entrepreneur Carlos S. Greely, and local grocer George Partridge.<sup>23</sup> Many of these men worked together in the St. Louis Provident Association before the war, so they were not new to philanthropy. Yeatman, a former slave owner turned abolitionist, moved to St. Louis at the start of the war and led the WSC. He guided the organization in its efforts to help wounded soldiers and later, displaced people who trickled into the Gateway City seeking help from the organization.<sup>24</sup>

With each passing year of the war, the WSC became increasingly important in the region, not just for its care of wounded soldiers, but also for its aid for people across the region. As Parrish observed, “. . . the Western Sanitary Commission played a central role in helping to alleviate suffering by troops and refugees in the Mississippi Valley and the Trans-Mississippi Theatre during the Civil War. . . .”<sup>25</sup> Besides assisting people in St. Louis, it helped people in places like Rolla, Springfield, Cape Girardeau, and Pilot Knob, Missouri; Helena and Little Rock, Arkansas; Leavenworth and Fort Scott, Kansas; and places as far away as Vicksburg, Mississippi. At the inception of the WSC, however, the USSC did not want cooperation, but subordination of its Western counterpart.

With the creation of the WSC, a rivalry emerged between it and its eastern counterpart, with Olmsted playing a key role in that rivalry.<sup>26</sup> With the USSC highly centralized, mostly because of Olmsted’s efforts, it wanted to have control of relief efforts in the west in addition to

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<sup>23</sup> With the creation of the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands in 1865, Lincoln offered the Commissioner position to Yeatman, but he declined the president’s offer. See William E. Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” *Civil War History* Vol. 36, No. 1 (March, 1990): 19.

<sup>24</sup> Adam Arenson, *Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 138-144.

<sup>25</sup> William E. Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” *Civil War History* Vol. 36, No. 1 (March, 1990): 17.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the USSC’s attempts to shut down its Western counterpart, see Robert H. Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 46-51; W.S. Rosecrans, “Annual Report of the Western Sanitary Commission for the Years Ending July, 1862, and July, 1863; Circular of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, to Be Held in St. Louis, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1864,” *The North American Review* Vol. 98, No. 203 (Apr., 1864): 526-529.

its established duties in the east. Leaders of the USSC wanted the WSC to operate as a ‘branch’ of the USSC.<sup>27</sup> It could tend to the needs of the army in the Western Theatre, but it would fall under the umbrella of operations of the USSC. Both Yeatman and Eliot argued on behalf of their organization’s independence that the situation in the West was different and the WSC, as a local organization, was better equipped to handle it. Olmsted and the USSC shot back that they felt what the WSC was doing was an example of sectionalism. They worried that having a separate relief organization in the West would upset the national cooperation for relief efforts. The WSC continued to deal with these debates, even after the war’s first year. “In a few years it will be forgotten that the Western Sanitary Commission had a separate existence,” noted an 1863 WSC report, “and whatever it may have done will fall into the general result, to swell the grand total of patriotic zeal.”<sup>28</sup> While the WSC hoped that both organizations could just move forward and focus on the war effort, this would not be the case. Also contributing to the rivalry were disagreements about how the W.S.C operated and organized.

The rivalry continued in the public eye until the fall of 1863, when Olmsted stepped down as head of the USSC. While disagreements continued, each organization did their best to try to stay out of each other’s way and the WSC would not become a branch of the USSC.<sup>29</sup> The WSC clearly wanted to work with the USSC towards the same goal of helping the troops and winning the war. In a discussion of its origins within the context of this rivalry, a WSC annual report for 1862-1863 stated, “the most hateful of all jealousies and controversies are those among

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<sup>27</sup> W.S. Rosecrans, “Annual Report of the Western Sanitary Commission for the Years Ending July, 1862, and July, 1863; Circular of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, to Be Held in St. Louis, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1864,” *The North American Review* Vol. 98, No. 203 (Apr., 1864): 529.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 525.

<sup>29</sup> For more on the rivalry between the WSC and the USSC, see Robert Patrick Bender, “Old Boss Devil: Sectionalism, Charity, and the Rivalry between the Western Sanitary Commission and the United States Sanitary Commission during the Civil War,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arkansas – Fayetteville), 80-99; Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 206-208.

philanthropic or charitable associations, and their possibility should be avoided at almost any inconvenience or loss.”<sup>30</sup> The WSC hoped that all philanthropic organizations could just focus on the immediate task and move forward with their respective relief efforts.

The WSC encountered uprooted people who were desperate for help. Many police stations held these people in places like St. Louis, but these police stations could not hold them and they turned many over to these aid societies. The army sent a great number of them to these aid societies, as it was incapable of providing for so many destitute and hungry people while others sought out the help of these organizations in places like St. Louis. Headquartered in St. Louis, the WSC saw the dire situation of these people first hand. “They often arrived in families, consisting of from four to eight or more, ill-clad, partially diseased children, with a sick mother, having no husband, or both parents being in poor health, without means to pay for a night’s lodging, or a mean of victuals.”<sup>31</sup> With these arrivals happening more and more frequently, the dispossessed came to depend upon organizations like the WSC. While these organizations’ original function was to care for the wounded and provide for soldiers serving in the war, their functions expanded to include displaced whites and freedmen with each year of the war.

The earliest examples of aid for displaced people from benevolent aid societies came as soon as the army passed them on to these societies when they could no longer care for them. The Union army lacked any kind of uniform policy towards these people and, because of this, relief from the army was sporadic and oftentimes, lacking. Often, people in need received the minimum amount of supplies from the army, usually in the form of rations, or the army simply forwarded

<sup>30</sup> W.S. Rosecrans, “Annual Report of the Western Sanitary Commission for the Years Ending July, 1862, and July, 1863; Circular of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, to Be Held in St. Louis, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1864,” *The North American Review* Vol. 98, No. 203 (Apr., 1864): 524.

<sup>31</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission from May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1865* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1866), 53-54.

them to another military installation more equipped to handle the large numbers of Southern whites coming into their lines. The army, however, could not provide everything that so many men, women, and children needed to survive. It could provide protection but it could not always provide clothing, food, education, and shelter for any extended period. For the army, the objective was to remove as many civilians from their lines as possible, reduce this burden so that the army could move freely, and not have them drain their often-limited resources. Because of the army's inconsistent policy towards uprooted people in the region, they came to rely upon the different benevolent aid societies. In many instances, the army guided needy individuals to the care of these organizations, as they were better suited to provide for these people. In the army's view, this helped both the army and the increasing number of displaced persons.

People in the region needed an organization like the WSC. As the flow of people increased into the second and third years of the war and the Union army was unable to handle them, they made their way either on their own or under the direction of the army to the WSC expecting help. Displaced men, women, and children came to St. Louis from the western and central parts of Missouri, northern Arkansas, and sometimes as far away as Texas. The WSC pleaded for help from citizens as early as the winter of 1861, when it noted in a report that: "Donations of money, clothing for men, women and children, and provisions of every kind are earnestly solicited, to be sent immediately to the office of the Sanitary Commission, corner of Fifth and Chestnut streets. The members of the commission will take charge of the same, and use them to the best advantages for the refugees, under the order of Major General Halleck."<sup>32</sup> Because the army expected aid to be temporary, its role with regard to displaced residents was crucial, as they were better equipped for the long term, though no one knew exactly what 'long term' meant. While Frémont's original

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<sup>32</sup> "An Appeal to the Charitable for the Refugees from Southwest Missouri," *Daily Missouri Republican* [St. Louis], December 5, 1861.

order that established the organization said nothing specifically about aid for them as a part of its operations, the WSC eventually expanded its operations to meet the challenge posed by these people. With each passing year of the war, uprooted whites inundated St. Louis coming from locations across the region. Because of this, the WSC moved to include them under the umbrella of its operations.

People poured into St. Louis from the start of the war, but it is not until the WSC's 1864 reports, which included a special report concerning displaced Unionists, that evidence first appears of the organization's operations concerning assistance in the region.<sup>33</sup> This is not to say that the organization did not offer aid to people before this date, but 1864 appears to be when the crisis hit a breaking point for the organization. The Commission made this clear when they posed a question in their annual pamphlets. Care for these people was important and, the WSC argued, that their welfare was the responsibility of any citizen who supported the Union:

Who will care for the poor white refugee, equally the victim of a barbarous civilization with the oppressed slave, more helpless and sorrowing, and whom none seems to pity? Who will give of his abundance to help take care of the poor orphans of these people, and to aid in fitting them for the better civilization of which they must hereafter form a part? Who will help the poor widows and their children who come to us in penury, in destitution and in rags, whose husbands have been murdered by friends who roam the sparsely settled regions of the south-west in guerrilla bands, and perpetrate their cruelties with impunity, burning widows' houses over their heads, and driving them and their little ones from their miserable homes, to seek the Federal lines, and cast themselves upon the charities of the North?<sup>34</sup>

The answer to this question was most assuredly the WSC. Because it was a fluid organization, it was better able to provide for the large number of people than the army could. To help the

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<sup>33</sup> Like many of its sister organizations, the WSC published annual reports that detailed the organization's activities, expenditures, and donations received for a given year. These reports served as a means of transparency to the Northern public who served as the organizations primary source of donations.

<sup>34</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 43-44.

increasing number of uprooted whites from Arkansas and Missouri, it provided aid in a variety of different ways, demonstrating the ways in which it could handle change. This aid was both direct and indirect.

The WSC served people indirectly in that they could help prevent situations where the displaced could be taken advantage. There were individual accounts who took advantage of the crisis and attempted to pass themselves off as a person in need of help, making a few dollars in the process. While these accounts were not the norm, they certainly raised the alarm for aid societies, as they did not want such accounts to turn off potential donors or volunteers. These imposters, like a man named J.C. Hall who “said that he was a loyal refugee from Mississippi, whose story had warmly interested several in the city[,]” told his tale to the congregation of a New York church.<sup>35</sup> His story had all of the elements of any good account from a displaced person – Confederate troops robbed this loyal man right in front of his family, had a child murdered by these troops right before his eyes, and made a narrow escape to the North. The congregation, having heard so many similar tales of woe, offered to help Mr. Hall. From here, the church took up donations for Mr. Hall and his wife – his likely accomplice - who “made a handsome sum,” and a kind citizen even offered to put him up until he was back on his feet.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, citizens discovered Mr. Hall for the imposter that he was and prosecuted him for his swindling ways. The fact that this incident appeared in a St. Louis newspaper reveals that many citizens were on the lookout for imposters like Mr. Hall, often casting suspicious eyes on the real people in need. This, as one could imagine, only made the experiences of displaced people even more difficult to endure.

<sup>35</sup> “A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing – A Pretend Refugee from the South,” *Daily Missouri Republican* [St. Louis], April 12, 1862.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Benevolent aid societies, like the WSC, served as a buffer of sorts for these vulnerable individuals. Swindlers might try to give desperate people incorrect information as a means to profit from their circumstances. For example, in another case of fraud, a man claiming that the displaced man needed to pay a wharfage swindled “a poor Arkansas refugee,” who had recently landed on the levee with his oxen and wagon, out of 14 dollars.<sup>37</sup> The man refused to pay at first, but upon the threat of arrest, in addition to not wanting to be bothered, he handed over the money to the man. Accounts like this serve as cautionary tales to both individuals and organizations who wanted to help needy people and the uprooted whites themselves. As in any time of crisis, some individuals want to take advantage of the situation for their benefit. The situation in Missouri and Arkansas was no different as swindlers often exploited displaced people. Left to the streets of St. Louis or the wandering, lonely roads of the countryside, people were vulnerable to fraud. The WSC shielded them from various swindles, though it is difficult to quantify exactly how many. Fraud cases, like this, also contributed to the suspicion cast on displaced whites by aid workers and donors. This form of protection classifies as indirect aid, which the WSC was happy to do, but their strength lay in giving direct aid to the people who made into their care.

One way that the WSC directly aided people was by providing transportation. First, it looked to see if any friends or family might take them in and, if these relatives were able to provide help, it transported them to where they could care for them. The WSC explored this option because, as a charity organization, they had to look to cut costs in order to help as many people as possible. To send uprooted whites to friends and family in the North, the WSC covered transportation costs for those who were able to take advantage of family help. In the end, providing transportation costs was much cheaper than clothing, food, and shelter a displaced family or individual for an extended

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<sup>37</sup> “A Heartless Swindle,” *Daily Missouri Republican* [St. Louis], April 16, 1864. A *wharfage* is a fee for the loading and unloading of goods.

period. Many times, railroads offered a discounted rate for needy people and, in some instances, free passes. These free passes helped to drive down costs for the Sanitary Commission. The North Missouri Railroad, the Pacific Railroad, the Saint Louis, Alton, and Chicago Railroad, and the Iron Mountain Railroad, for example, all provided free passes to many persons in need under the care of the WSC. The numbers of people helped by the WSC are worth noting. For example, with regard to these numbers, in its 1864 *Report on White Union Refugees of the South*, the WSC recorded:

The whole number of refugees for whom transportation has been obtained from the Government, and from the railroads, and steamboats, by the Commission, to assist them to reach their friends, or places of employment, in the Western free States, from Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1863 to Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1864, is 202 men, 493 women, and 682 children, making a total of 1377 persons, besides many young children under four years of age, who passed without any fare being charged.<sup>38</sup>

Uprooted whites did not necessarily have to make it all the way to St. Louis to receive help from the WSC and the railroads. Even before they reached the WSC's St. Louis headquarters, leaders hoped to accelerate the transportation of these people to the care of friends or family or finding them some form of employment.<sup>39</sup> Care for dispossessed whites who did not have family or friends offering a place of refuge, left many of these citizens to remain at St. Louis and depend on material assistance from the WSC for extended periods. This was in addition to the men, women, and children who continued to stream into the city.

People entered St. Louis with only the clothes on their back and whatever few belongings that they could carry. Displaced people needed all kinds of things to make life bearable and benevolent aid societies helped fulfill those needs. So many people did not have time to gather any

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<sup>38</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

kind of personal belongings nor did they were unable to transport these items when they fled their homes and communities. Because of this, many did not bring proper clothing for their journey. This is understandable, as many did not know how long or how far their displacement would be. This proved to be especially difficult when facing the cold winters, which could sometimes reach “unparalleled severity.”<sup>40</sup> Recognizing the clothing needs of the many cold and freezing people, the WSC provided “thousands of coats, pantaloons, under-clothing, women’s dresses, shawls, shoes, comforters and other articles of bedding, to the more destitute.”<sup>41</sup> The Union army may have provided temporary relief in the form of rations, but one thing that it could not provide for these people on a large scale was clothing. Through the many donations received by the WSC, they were able to provide them with the necessary raiment. Other means of assistance supplied by the WSC included items like cooking stoves and what the organization deemed “necessary articles of furniture” were provided so that people could be self-sustaining, therefore not causing a drain on the organization’s or the government’s resources.<sup>42</sup>

### **Refugee Schools, Homes, and Orphanages**

The WSC dealt with the large number of displaced children by establishing school, homes, and orphanages. Many were orphans in need of help. In addition to material assistance like food and clothing, the WSC provided schools for children who were in St. Louis for any extended period. Historian Stephen V. Ash notes, “[p]ublic education provided another example of the Yankees’ Victorian social conscience at work.”<sup>43</sup> Schools established by the WSC were located in St. Louis, Missouri, down the Mississippi River to Vicksburg. While uprooted Unionist children

<sup>40</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 88.

elicited sympathy from many Northerners, so too did the children of displaced Confederates. “Yankee civilians often had some sympathy for the plight of Confederate children,” according to historian Lisa Tendrich Frank, “largely because of the gendered presumption that these civilians, especially the female ones, were helpless and had little understanding of politics or war.”<sup>44</sup> These schools, in some ways, served as a manifestation of that sympathy.

For uprooted children, the war was especially hard and perhaps, thought WSC members, schooling could serve as a way to take their minds off the war and other troubles that they had experienced in their displacement. As a result, the WSC organized a number of schools throughout the region. “It [WSC] has also established a school at Benton Barracks, for the children of refugees” began an organizational report on its schools, “under Miss Samantha Monroe as teacher, where 140 children have received instruction since last June [1864].”<sup>45</sup> Since many people remained at military posts that did not have any schools, schools established by the WSC allowed children to receive instruction while the organization helped their families back to their feet. These schools also maintained an *uplifting* purpose with regard to these destitute people as well as an opportunity to remake these children, especially Southern children, in the Northern image.

In war-torn areas like Vicksburg, Mississippi, the WSC assisted with the establishment of a Free School for Refugees. The Commission described some of the pupils here as lazy – because they could sometimes be found sleeping on benches or in corners of the school. The organization attempted to combat this kind of behavior among this class of people. A class that the WSC referred

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<sup>44</sup> Lisa Tendrich Frank, “Children On the March: Confederate Girls and Sherman’s Home Front Campaign,” in James Marten, ed., *Children and Youth During the Civil War Era* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 115. See also Anya Jabour, *Topsy-Turvy: How the Civil War Turned the World Upside Down for Southern Children* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 9.

to as *poor white trash*.<sup>46</sup> A WSC agent, named Mr. N.M. Mann, used this term in one of his reports to the Commission about displaced Southern whites. Mann wrote, “The greatest distress prevails among the class known as ‘poor white trash,’ who knowing nothing, are responsible for nothing, but suffer all.”<sup>47</sup> WSC agents mention, on more than one occasion, that these displaced white Southern Unionists were, unlike African Americans, unable or unwilling to help themselves.<sup>48</sup> Certainly, issues of race and class were at play here. For Mr. Mann, these people were of a condition that was “even more deplorable than that of the negroes.”<sup>49</sup> Like the Union army following the Emancipation Proclamation or the army of nurses who treated wounded troops, aid societies were not above discriminatory practices towards African Americans.<sup>50</sup> While aid-minded Northerners viewed the institution of slavery as a national scourge, the fact that so many non-slaveholding Southern whites did nothing to end it was even more damning. Contact with the peculiar institution made many of these displaced whites arrogant and unwilling to help themselves.<sup>51</sup>

Despite their preconceived notions of Southern whites, the Commission took an active role in educating these Southern whites in the Northern tradition. For the WSC, “the work of educating and elevating the offspring of these poor people is deemed of the first importance, as they must

<sup>46</sup> David Brown, “A Vagabond’s Tale: Poor Whites, Herrenvolk Democracy, and the Value of Whiteness in the Late Antebellum South,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. LXXIX, No. 4 (November, 2013): 799-840.

<sup>47</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 34.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 34, 41.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> For discrimination towards African American nurses, see Nina Silber, *Daughters of Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 214-216; In a review of Judith Ann Giesberg’s work on the USSC, Jennifer Rebecca Harbour notes that African American women were routinely turned away from volunteering for groups like the USSC. See Jennifer Rebecca Harbour, Review of Giesberg, Judith Ann, *Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women’s Politics in Transition*, H-Minerva, H-Net Reviews, February 2001, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=4966> (accessed 11/03/2014).

<sup>51</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 41.

hereafter blend with the higher and better civilization of the Free States, or become the vagrants and pests of society.”<sup>52</sup> This statement, taken from one of the many individual reports sent by school representatives to the WSC, demonstrates its educational goals directed at people in its care. It is certainly telling as to what the WSC hoped to accomplish with the many schools that it operated and supported. Not only was the WSC supporting these schools for the sake of education for displaced residents, they also hoped that these schools would uplift, what it viewed as, the poor Southern people. The WSC’s views of poor Southern whites supports Ash’s assertion that such impressions “and the preconceptions they validated, strongly influenced northerners’ relations with southern civilians throughout the war, particularly their policy toward poor whites.”<sup>53</sup> Not to mention the staggering statistic that, according to the organization’s final report in 1866, “[o]f all the refugees who applied to the Commission for assistance, not more than *one-tenth* were able to read and write.”<sup>54</sup> The WSC and other aid societies vowed to help displaced people and their children; this included remaking them in the Northern image.

Benevolent aid societies made it clear that, with so many destitute whites in their care, they would do their best to remake the worst of these cases removing any Southern tendencies in order to create new citizens molded in the Northern image. They hoped to take advantage of what historian Emory M. Thomas described as a “heightened sense of class consciousness among yeoman and laboring classes of Confederate Southerners.”<sup>55</sup> That is they hoped to use situations created by the war to remake much of that section of poor, white, antebellum Southern society –

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen V. Ash, “Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865,” *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 57, No. 1, (Feb., 1991): 45.

<sup>54</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission from May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1865* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1866), 88. Italics in original. Recent scholarship by Beth Barton Schweiger details the ways in which the South was one of the more literate societies of that time, therefore, making the Civil War a battle between two of the most literate societies on earth. See Beth Barton Schweiger, “The Literate South: Reading Before Emancipation,” *The Journal of the Civil War* Vol. 3, No. 3 (September, 2013): 331-359.

<sup>55</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979), 233.

many uprooted by the war. As with the Union army's general position towards the dispossessed, the WSC did what it could to make them as self-sustaining and self-reliant as possible, minimizing their impact as much as possible. It demonstrated this by providing the aforementioned transportation in that it sent some people to places where they might find employment. Perhaps this was a means of operating in a utilitarian fashion – helping as many people as possible or doing the most good.

These attitudes expressed by benevolent aid societies and the American people in general were very much a reflection of the Victorian beliefs towards the poor and the charitable impulse. This was also a lesson in the Protestant work-ethic in that the organization did its best to simply help these people get back on their feet by providing life's bare necessities or employment, not provide extensive assistance. Historian Anne Rose reminds of this fact when she states, "The idea that steady labor secured social discipline was the point of the Protestant ethic most often cited by the Victorians."<sup>56</sup> The various aid societies' make this point with their educational programs for displaced whites once in their care and they take full advantage of reaching them through charity. This wartime charity expanded upon the ad hoc forms of charity and assistance already provided by the army. The Commission hoped to remake these destitute Southerners in the Northern image and they certainly had many opportunities to do given that so many people were in their schools and living in refugee homes.

Refugee homes proved to be an important component of the WSC's program to help uprooted people in the region. Initially, the Commission established these homes to provide a reception point for people who flooded into St. Louis in 1861 and 1862. These homes also served

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<sup>56</sup> Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 73. See also Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

as a place where the sickest people could recover before Commission agents arranged transportation so that they could be with friends or relatives. People who were unable to recover from their ailments died in these homes. “Over three thousand Refugees were received and aided here in the six months from February to July, 1865,” noted contemporary observers Linus Brockett and Mary C. Vaughn in their account of women, “and both children and adults were taught not only elementary studies but housework, cooking and laundry work; the women were paid moderate wages with which to clothe themselves and their children, and were taught some of the first lessons of a better civilization.”<sup>57</sup> In addition to the homes in St. Louis, the organization established other homes in Rolla, Pilot Knob, Springfield, and Cape Girardeau, Missouri, because of the high numbers of displaced people in these places. The Commission’s 1864 report on refugees detailed the construction of a large home intended to house two thousand people. Unfortunately, this building was never finished as it had been destroyed by fire in 1864 much to the dismay of the “poor refugees, and to many destitute soldiers’ wives and widows, for whom they were intended.”<sup>58</sup> Representatives of the Commission supervised the day-to-day operations of homes in these places. Refugee homes served as temporary living quarters for these people until the WSC sent them to the care of friends or family or until they found some form of employment.

Because of these children, there were a number of orphan homes created in St. Louis and other cities and towns in Missouri. For example, the WSC contributed to the establishment of a refugee and orphan home in Springfield, Missouri, run by a local philanthropist who would also serve a teacher for the children.<sup>59</sup> In many instances, the Commission sent these children to other

<sup>57</sup> L.P. Brockett and Mary C. Vaughn, *Woman’s Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism, and Patience* (Philadelphia: Zeigler, McCurdy, and Co., 1867), 715.

<sup>58</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission From May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1865* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1866), 6.

<sup>59</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission From May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1865* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1866), 118. There were similar homes established by the WSC

philanthropic organizations in the city. Late in 1863, it sent over forty of these children to the Church of the Messiah and the Protestant Orphan Asylum, both in St. Louis. Here, displaced children “were cared for; and if sick, retained till they were restored to health; instruction was given to them in the daily school, and homes provided for them, by indenture to suitable persons applying for them at these institutions.”<sup>60</sup> The WSC utilized the efforts of other, local philanthropic organizations in St. Louis to help them with the number of children who came into their care. These local organizations provided medical care, education, and employment for children on behalf of the Sanitary Commission. Unfortunately, the Commission’s records say nothing about the “indentures” mentioned above. Did these children have a say in these indentures? Was the organization paid for providing these children as indentures? If so, did the WSC use these fees to help offset the costs of caring for these people? Interesting questions to be sure, but the point made here is that the WSC was not afraid to utilize other organizations or individuals’ help.

The WSC and like-minded organizations wanted to help these displaced children. Some of these relief efforts for orphans were private endeavors. Many newspapers pleaded with the Missouri public to help stating that, in fact, it was their duty to do so. Like with the adults, benevolent aid societies hoped to remake these orphan children in the Northern image – or least in the image of Northern industriousness. In southwestern Missouri, a group of independent women was doing their best to help people who wandered in that part of the state. These women had every intention of finishing what they had started and not allowing people to be taken to the WSC in St. Louis. In a plea from a Mrs. J.S. Phelps, published in the *Missouri Republican*, she wished to help uprooted whites in the southwestern part of the state and reminded citizens that “[w]e have several

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for the orphans of freedpeople. See William E. Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” *Civil War History* Vol. 36, No. 1 (March, 1990): 32.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

reasons for wishing to keep these children, and raise them in Southwest Missouri.”<sup>61</sup> Here, the paper stated that the women there were prepared to help until the end of the war. Why keep them there and not send them to St. Louis where they could be better cared for? Phelps continued, “we wish to place these children on a farm, and teach them to earn their own living. Nothing is more injurious to children than to supply all their wants, without their making an effort for themselves. We see the bad effects even among the rich, and what will it be to the poor orphans, reared in your city orphan homes?”<sup>62</sup> Not only do these women want to remake these children into good Union citizens, but also a critique of the WSC Here, Mrs. Phelps insinuates that it was not properly remaking these displaced Southern whites in the proper way, only creating a dependent class of citizens. Phelps offers her idea as an experiment counter to the one performed by the WSC in St. Louis. “If the children are sent here to St. Louis you will have them to support, indirectly, by small contributions to fairs, and other ways.”<sup>63</sup> Mrs. Phelps and her fellow benefactors hoped to care for these children, removing the burden from St. Louis citizens. In addition, she hoped to produce loyal Missouri citizens.

Donations from local citizens and assessments imposed by Union officials on disloyal Missouri citizens initially funded these homes. After President Lincoln ended these assessments in 1863, the government paid for aid while the local quartermaster paid for the rent of a home for these displaced people. “By an arrangement with Generals Schofield and Rosecrans,” began the Commission’s account of these homes, “rations and fuel are allowed from the Government, and the rent is paid by the Quartermaster; but the incidental expenses of the home, and the charities in

<sup>61</sup> “One More Appeal to the Generous Citizens of St. Louis, for the Relief of Refugee Children Now Congregated in the Vicinity of Springfield,” in Silvana R. Siddali, *Missouri’s War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 153.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

clothing, money, &c., are provided by the Commission.”<sup>64</sup> These homes were vital as they often served as a point of transition. These homes ended people’s lives on the run, giving them a moment to weigh what their next step might be. For orphans, these homes provided them with an opportunity to find suitable homes and attend school. Most importantly for uprooted individuals, families, and orphans, these homes offered an opportunity to rebuild their lives.

While there were no explicit conditions placed on displaced people to receive transportation, clothing, or any form of relief from the WSC, one would think that loyalty was a factor in receiving this aid as it was with the army. There is no indication that loyalty was *required*, however, reading through the Commission’s reports in 1864 and 1865 indicate that loyalty was certainly *preferred*. Refugees “uniformly claim to be Union people,” a WSC observer noted at Pilot Knob, Missouri, “are willing enough to take the oath of allegiance, but do not really understand what is essential to loyalty, or the merits of the conflict in which we are engaged.”<sup>65</sup> White Southerners who were not in the antebellum elite, had loyalties that were much less firm. Historian Harold Hyman concluded “[a]t the other end of the scale of patriotic adhesion were the many thousands of Southerners who had never been wholehearted participants in rebellion or who had always been covert or dangerously open Unionists.”<sup>66</sup> The organization acted out of sincere Christian charity helping everyone in need, regardless of his or her loyalties – Union or Confederate. This observation continued “[n]evertheless they are human beings; and although in the lowest stage of civilization, they are thrown upon our charity and with their children must be

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<sup>64</sup> *The Western Sanitary Commission: A Sketch of Its Origins, Labors for the Sick and Wounded of the Western Armies, and Aid Given to Freedmen and Union Refugees, with Incidents of Hospital Life* (St. Louis: R.P. Studley & Co., 1864), 126.

<sup>65</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission from May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1865* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1866), 14.

<sup>66</sup> Harold M. Hyman, “Deceit in Dixie,” *Civil War History* Vol. 3, No. 1, (March, 1957): 68.

provided for, improved as much as possible, or be left to perish.”<sup>67</sup> In short, it was the WSC or no one for people in need of aid – these people could very likely die without its help. According to the many personal stories detailed by the WSC reports, there were not large numbers of displaced Confederates making their way into St. Louis. Because many white Southern yeoman had “property to protect, yeoman for the most part remained on their farms,” observes Ash, poor Southern whites with very little to lose or gain in the war, “sought their fortune with the Yankees.”<sup>68</sup> Uprooted Confederate sympathizers appear to have made their way further south, deeper into the Confederacy. For Southerners who decided to depend upon the WSC for aid, they would have to make some changes to how they lived their lives.

### **The Freedmen and Union Refugees’ Department and the St. Louis Ladies’ Aid Society**

As the problem became more acute by 1864, especially in St. Louis, the WSC created a special department so that they could better handle the needs of these displaced citizens who came into their care. On March 17, 1864, the organization created the Freedmen and Union Refugees’ Department (FURD), to better care for the uprooted whites and freedmen in the region. This also allowed the Commission to distribute goods to these people in a more efficient manner. Sanitary commissioners well aware of the fact that the flow of people into St. Louis would continue at least as long as the war. The creation of this department allowed the WSC to continue its assistance in a more organized manner. In the circular that announced the creation of the department, it reiterated the sacrifice for the Union made by these people. “For the ‘Union refugees,’ it would seem that no other plea can be needed,” the WSC circular reminded fellow Unionists, “than the

<sup>67</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 14.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen V. Ash, “Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865,” *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 57, No. 1, (Feb., 1991): 50.

simple statement that they have been deprived of all their property, and been driven from their homes, simply because they *would not be rebels*.”<sup>69</sup> In addition to better handling displaced whites and freedmen who came to the St. Louis for help, the WSC used the creation of this department to remind Northerners that they still needed donations to carry on with their work. The creation of the FURD indicates just how pressing the situation was. Furthermore, the Commission’s creation of the department demonstrates its ability to meet the crisis. The Commission, with the aid of generous donors as well as fellow organizations like the St. Louis LUAS, was better able to meet the demands of the crisis in Missouri. The army continued to send displaced people who it encountered in the region into St. Louis causing the organization to evolve and improve its aid mechanisms.

While the WSC mirrored policies of the Union army in that it pushed some people onto other organizations for help, as they did with displaced orphans, they did so for utilitarian purposes. The WSC sought to help as many people as they could. If this meant that the Commission utilized the help of other organizations, the WSC accepted this as a necessary, realistic view as they realized that they could not help every person who came into their care. The physical and financial burden placed upon the WSC with the constant flow of individuals and families into St. Louis was enormous and it could not do it without the help of another aid society located in the Gateway City – enter the St. Louis Ladies’ Union Aid Society.

Following the Camp Jackson incident in May 1861 when pro-Union forces captured a pro-secession militia at Camp Jackson just outside of St. Louis, a group of well-to-do women from the city decided to act. Their creation, the St. Louis Ladies’ Union Aid Society (LUAS), attended

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<sup>69</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, “Freedmen and Union Refugees’ Department of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair,” March 17, 1864, Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection, Portfolio 85, Folder 11. Italics in original.

wounded troops and, as the number of displaced people increased, helped people who made their way into the city in search of help. Organized on August 2, 1861, the Society was an all-female, patriotic organization that worked alongside the Commission to aid wounded soldiers and, later, displaced whites. These ladies' aid societies, remarked historian Nina Silber, "comprised an extensive network of women, both young and old, whose efforts sustained the largest military operation on American soil."<sup>70</sup> These women supported the war effort in the Trans-Mississippi West.

As with the other ladies' aid societies located throughout the United States, the LUAS rolled bandages for wounded soldiers, served as nurses in the many hospitals in and around St. Louis, as well as helping with other miscellaneous tasks within the WSC. This included the day-to-day operations of homes and schools for displaced people. These women packed and shipped supplies to the battlefield and recruited fellow women to serve as nurses. If the WSC was the machine, the Society was the angel in the machinery in that these women, for many soldiers and displaced people, served as the face of the organization's care. Historian Adam Arenson argues that women's efforts "were "essential to the Commission's success."<sup>71</sup> Women provided a caring face and gentle touch for the many in need that passed through the doors of the WSC. The LUAS also helped with the WSC's fundraising efforts throughout the war and played a vital role in the organization and its fundraising efforts. While the Society's initial concerns were the wounded Union soldier, these concerns broadened as the crisis worsened around St. Louis.

<sup>70</sup> Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 163. See also Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 193-197.

<sup>71</sup> Adam Arenson, *Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 142.

As the war progressed, the LUAS aided the large number of people who made their way to St. Louis. This increased aid by the Society is evident in the changes made to the society's preamble that moved beyond the inclusion of wounded soldiers to include all "who suffer at the cause of the Union, and also sick and wounded prisoners of war."<sup>72</sup> Like the WSC, the LUAS had to be malleable in its operations given the situation by the war's midpoint. Women from the LUAS would visit the Refugee Home to provide care, deliver supplies, and offer Biblical instruction for the dispossessed. In addition to its broadening of aiding those affected by the war, the LUAS accounted for nearly a third of the WSC's total fundraising dollars.<sup>73</sup> The LUAS's makeup was women from the St. Louis well-to-do class with Northern backgrounds. Women like Adeline Couzins and Anna Clapp served as leaders of LUAS and made it their patriotic duty to care for people in need. While the LUAS's efforts were an important component to the WSC's overall operations, it was not enough. To both raise awareness of the situation in the region as well as much-needed funds for the organization, the WSC held a large sanitary fair in 1864.<sup>74</sup>

### **The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair**

An important event that both brought attention to displaced whites in the region and raised money for the benefit of these people was the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair of 1864. The fair collected donations as well as much-needed supplies for people in need in Missouri and Arkansas and it was the only one of its kind west of the Mississippi River. Sanitary fairs were popular as a means of fundraising and they occurred all over the country in 1863 and 1864 in St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago. By 1864, relief agencies, including the WSC, were running

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Paula Coalier, "Beyond Sympathy: The St. Louis Ladies' Union Aid Society and the Civil War," *Gateway Heritage: Quarterly Journal of the Missouri Historical Society* Vol. 11, No. 1 (1990): 43.

<sup>73</sup> Katharine T. Corbett, *In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women's History* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1999), 85-86.

<sup>74</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 208-222.

out of funds and these sanitary fairs helped to refill the charity coffers. Sanitary fairs were a fundraising event intended to help citizens and soldiers in need, as well as serve as a welcomed distraction and morale boost for those who served on the homefront.

With a carnival-like atmosphere, sanitary fairs often contained art galleries, soda fountains, a bakery, and books to keep its patrons occupied for three weeks. The 1864 Sanitary Fair in St. Louis began on May 17, lasted through June 18, and went a long way in accomplishing its intended goals. The fair had a total of fifty-four booths showcasing a variety of wares including sewing machines, a floral center, fountains and gardeners, a New England kitchen, a German Kitchen, and a fine art department – to name a few. The main building, a point of pride for the WSC, measured 114 feet by 525 feet and lit by 3,000 gas jets supplied by over one mile of pipe. The building featured grand arches supported by pillars with the names of the prominent Union generals including the likes of Grant, Rosecrans, Sherman, Porter, Hancock, etc. inscribed on their surface.<sup>75</sup> In addition, prizes like a red, white, and blue quilt valued at \$125.00, a piano, a billiard table, a buggy, many bars of silver straight from Nevada), a few paintings, and a farm were raffled off to patrons. This 500 acre farm, named Smizer Farm and valued at approximately \$40,000.00, was donated by Captain L.P. Marin of the Davenport, Iowa, Quartermaster Department.<sup>76</sup> At the outset, these raffles very controversial as some citizens felt that they sanctioned gambling, but, despite these initial objections, the raffles went off without a hitch. Raffles were not the only part of the sanitary fair to drum up controversy. The sale of intoxicating liquors also generated controversy at the fair for the most obvious of reasons, though this too went off without any problems during the sanitary fair. Reverend Alpha Wright, who had recently attained the title of

<sup>75</sup> William Y. Thompson, "Sanitary Fairs of the Civil War," *Civil War History* Vol. 4, No. 1 (March, 1958): 62.

<sup>76</sup> Jasper W. Cross, "The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, St. Louis, 1864," *Missouri Historical Review* Vol. XLVI, No. 3 (April, 1952): 243.

Superintendent of Refugees in the Trans-Mississippi West, even paid the sanitary fair a visit. To visitors of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, it was quite the spectacle. Because it served as the longest fair in terms of duration, it provided hours of entertainment at the cost of helping wounded soldiers and displaced Southern whites.<sup>77</sup> The WSC utilized newspapers throughout the region to bring in visitors and money to the 1864 fair.

Published circulars in newspapers throughout the region brought attention to the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair and directed those interested to send supplies and financial donation items to various WSC offices as well as bring whatever donations they could to the fair.<sup>78</sup> The Commission published similar circulars in both national papers like *Harper's Weekly* as well as a wide array of local papers throughout the region. On the opening night of the fair, one of these newspapers helped to convey the excitement brought about by the fair. "This city is decidedly full to-night," began an editorial in the *Morning Herald* of St. Joseph, Missouri, "and has been

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<sup>77</sup> William Y. Thompson, "Sanitary Fairs of the Civil War," *Civil War History* Vol. 4, No. 1 (March, 1958): 61.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Patrick Bender, "'This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise': The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair of 1864 and the Practice of Civil War Philanthropy," *Missouri Historical Review* Vol. XCV, No. 2, (January, 2001): 117-139.

unusually lively to-day. The hotels are crowded, the streets are thronged, and everybody is apparently filled with patriotism and enthusiasm.”<sup>79</sup> In addition, newspapers ran circulars provided by the WSC that explained how important raising funds for soldiers and displaced people was and



Fig. 4.1: Members of the St. Louis Ladies' Union Aid Society at the 1864 Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair. Source: [http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/a-look-back-fair-held-here-in-raised-to-aid/article\\_74a9c008-6fed-5512-a0bd-3ad68f7d3d7a.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/a-look-back-fair-held-here-in-raised-to-aid/article_74a9c008-6fed-5512-a0bd-3ad68f7d3d7a.html)

encouraged citizens to attend the fair and give whatever donations that they could. Often accompanied by newspaper editorials encouraging citizens to attend the fair, newspapers throughout Missouri made clear the plight of the displaced whites and why the organization needed funds so badly. “In undertaking this great task, the undersigned rely, not only upon the people of St. Louis and of Missouri, but upon all their fellow-citizens throughout the ‘Union.’ It is not

<sup>79</sup> “Opening of the Great Fair – Negro Soldiers in the Procession – A Gala Day, Etc., Etc.,” *The Morning Herald* [St. Joseph, MO], May 22, 1864.

sectional work and they make no sectional appeal.”<sup>80</sup> While put on by the WSC, it hoped that help would not be limited to only people in the West. Organizers hoped that all like-minded individuals, North and South, would lend their support. The crisis must have appeared to be unrelenting by 1864 to many who served in the WSC. Wave upon wave of people streamed into the Commission’s St. Louis office in search of food, shelter, and clothing. “There are thousands of homeless whites,” read a circular for the Fair, “made so by the rebellion. These displaced Unionists are in great numbers, and in utter destitution, at different places within our army lines, especially in St. Louis.”<sup>81</sup> The St. Louis fair was very well advertised and went a long way in raising awareness of the plight of Union soldiers and displaced whites in the region, it also raised the status of the WSC given the fair’s success.

The sanitary fair focused a great deal of attention on displaced whites in the region. The WSC had to do something so that it could continue its efforts assisting people beyond 1864 and the Sanitary Fair played a key role in allowing these efforts. Receiving no help from the USSC or the American Union Commission (AUC), the WSC relied on the cash and supplies that came out of the fair. After the WSC calculated all of the fair’s expenses, the fair yielded \$554,591.00 in cash and material donations utilized by the Commission for its aid efforts.<sup>82</sup> While sanitary fairs helped raise funds – over half a million dollars - for the WSC’s operations, it was not nearly enough. The organization had increased its aid efforts in the region and hoped to continue these efforts as long as it could.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> “Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, Circular, St. Louis, MO.,” February 5, 1864, Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection, Portfolio 86, Folder 10c.

<sup>81</sup> “Freedmen’s and Union Refugees’ Department of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair Circular,” March 17, 1864, Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection, Portfolio 86, Folder 9.

<sup>82</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 44.

<sup>83</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission From May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1865* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1866), 13.

The WSC organized the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair in a way that framed the sufferings of both uprooted Southern whites and freedmen as a sacrifice made upon the altar of Union. It was the duty of patriotic Americans to support these people because they waved the flag of the United States in Confederate territory. Pleas for this support, however, were not without racial qualifications. The WSC was very careful to separate freedmen from displaced whites in their appeals to the Northern public. The sanitary fair sought to help displaced people and donors could specify whom they wanted their donation to help. “The Freedmen’s and Union Refugees’ Department of the Sanitary Fair, and donors will be careful to designate clearly, whether their contributions are ‘For Freedmen,’ or ‘For Refugees,’ or for both at the discretion of the Western Sanitary Commission.”<sup>84</sup> With the WSC, there was a continued effort to separate displaced Southern whites from displaced African Americans – not just in language but in financial donations as well. There is a variety of explanations for such an approach. Perhaps such a separation came from a fear that if the two groups were lumped together, donations to the WSC could suffer. Another explanation looks to the racial attitudes of the day. Whatever the reason, the organization hoped to maximize donations for these people – white or black – and felt that by allowing donors to identify whom they were helping might help them achieve this goal.

### **The American Union Commission and the Refugee Relief Commission of Ohio**

While the WSC operated mostly west of the Mississippi River, the AUC, like the USSC, had a national scope and quickly became influential on a national level. The AUC had offices in Chicago, Boston, Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville, Memphis, and Cairo (IL). While the Commission had influence in Washington, it did not have nearly the same impact on the region’s

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* The WSC was a part of a program to lease plantations to freedmen, complete with rules and regulations for doing so. There is no mention of leasing these plantations to displaced whites. See James E. Yeatman, “Report to the Western Sanitary Commission, in Regard to Leasing Abandoned Plantations, with Rules and Regulations Governing the Same,” St. Louis: Western Sanitary Commission, 1864.

displaced persons as the WSC. Founded in New York in 1864, the AUC sought relief on a national level. Because of its national character, the Commission was much more diverse in its organization, operating in North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Arkansas. The AUC helped in the areas of emigration - people who wished to migrate to the South - and education for the destitute and displaced residents. In addition to these areas, the AUC sought to aid displaced whites by raising funds and establishing refugee homes like the WSC. In a report of its origins, it noted that the organization was “enabled to provide permanently for from seventy-five to a hundred thousand refugees, and to relieve the country from the evils of a gigantic pauperism.”<sup>85</sup> Because the AUC was national in its character, it was very limited in its western operations. For example, in a pamphlet written about its origins and operations, the only two states mentioned that lie west of the Mississippi were Louisiana and Arkansas. This same pamphlet contains two accounts about the situation in Arkansas, one from J.H. Leard, the army chaplain in charge of helping people in Arkansas, and the state’s governor, Isaac Murphy.<sup>86</sup> These accounts published by the Commission, generally, were appeals to help the displaced and destitute people of their state with rather generic language.

The AUC was an organization designed to aid the displaced and received much attention from historians for this endeavor. However, the Commission receives too much credit for their help of displaced persons. Historians have made a variety of claims detailing the AUC’s wartime efforts.<sup>87</sup> Historian Ira V. Brown claimed that the AUC “was distinctive in that it offered relief to

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<sup>85</sup> American Union Commission, *The American Union Commission. Its Origin, Objects, and Operations* (New York: Sanford, Harroun, & Co., 1865), 2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16, 22.

<sup>87</sup> While Reverend Lyman Abbott and the AUC helped displaced Southern whites, historians have ascribed too much credit to Abbott and his organization for its efforts. Herman Belz has argued that the AUC was “the principle organization for aiding loyal white refugees.” Perhaps this was true for displaced residents in the East, but given the activity of the WSC in conjunction with the Union army in Missouri and Arkansas, it exceeded the work of the AUC by far. See Herman Belz, “The Freedmen’s Bureau Act of 1865 and the Principle of No Discrimination According to Color,” *Civil War History* 21, No. 3 (September, 1975): 200.

both black and white refugees.”<sup>88</sup> Perhaps this was ‘distinctive’ during Reconstruction, given that Brown’s article covers the years 1865-1869, but it is certainly not accurate in general. While the WSC did not use the term *black refugee*, instead choosing to use the word *contraband*, it did aid anyone who came in need of assistance. It is a slight distinction used by the WSC, perhaps to elicit more donations from Northerners or choosing to stick with the legal term for displaced African Americans given the fact that, until the Thirteenth Amendment, these people were legally *contraband* in a Border State like Missouri.<sup>89</sup>

Leaders of the AUC were proud of their wartime efforts. In a series of speeches from organization officials given in Washington City in early 1865, they trumpeted about their efforts towards wartime displacement – even if it focused their efforts on displaced whites east of the Mississippi. Speeches by Reverend L.P. Thompson (President of the organization from New York), Colonel N.G. Taylor (of East Tennessee), and Senator James R. Doolittle (from Wisconsin) praised the work of the Union army and detailed the plight of displaced people in the United States. In his speech, Reverend Thompson laid out “four distinct classes” who had “been thrown directly upon our hand for sympathy and aid.”<sup>90</sup> The first of these classes were the wounded soldiers, followed by African Americans, loyal Southerners, and displaced whites. “REFUGEES,” exclaimed Thompson, “who are stranded within our lines by the tides of war—home-less, friendless, penniless-driven out by their fears-driven out by threats-driven out by guerilla

<sup>88</sup> Ira V. Brown, “Lyman Abbott and Freedmen’s Aid, 1865-1869,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 15, No. 1 (Feb., 1949): 24.

<sup>89</sup> There were instances in which the WSC and its correspondents in the West used the term colored *refugee(s)*. See, for example, Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission of the White Union Refugees of the South: Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1864), 15, 26-27.

<sup>90</sup> “Speech of Rev. Dr. Thompson,” *Speeches of Hon. W. Dennison, Postmaster-General, Rev. J.P. Thompson, D.D., President of the Commission, Col. N.G. Taylor, of East Tennessee, Hon. J.R. Doolittle, U.S. Senate, Gen. J.A. Garfield, M.C. in the House of Representatives, Washington, Feb. 12, 1865* (New York: Sanford, Harroun, & Co., 1865), 5.

invasions—driven out by starvation—driven out by the advance of the rebel armies, and again by the order of our own commanders under military necessity.”<sup>91</sup> Here, Thompson very clearly explained the situation. Thompson continued his speech with hope that the AUC would provide some organization to the situation that the Federal military lacked. Given what we know about how the army operated in the region with regard to displaced whites, Thompson’s assessment is correct. The problem needed some kind of uniform policy and these benevolent aid societies provided at least some form of organization.

Where Thompson and the AUC, however, fall short is their focus on displaced residents in the East. Thompson gives a great many examples of their experiences there, like Georgia for example. While Thompson directly referenced the role of guerrilla attacks as a factor in one’s displacement, though he does not mention the displaced in Arkansas and Missouri specifically. In his speech, Thompson discussed the plight of displaced residents in Nashville, Vicksburg, and Memphis, but said nothing of people in Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, or Louisiana. Colonel Taylor, who also spoke, discussed displaced persons in East Tennessee, where he had recently served.<sup>92</sup> Did the AUC assume that the WSC had things in those states under control? Did a rivalry exist between the two organizations, similar to that between the USSC and its Western counterpart? Both Abbott’s records and these speeches do not indicate that this was the case. Therefore, the AUC and the WSC both came to embrace aiding displaced people; both appear to have a different geographic focus. This does not mean, however, that similarities did not exist between the two organizations with regard to helping displaced Southern whites.

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>92</sup> East Tennessee received one of the larger civilian relief operations in 1864. See Robert H. Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 95-96.

Like the WSC, the AUC was weary of, but determined to help the poorest of the poor while, at the same time, not creating a dependent class of people in the process. The AUC was careful to mention that displaced whites came from various sections of Southern society. Before the war, some were rich, some were quite poor, and many of them fell in between those two extremes. People who Thompson and the AUC hoped to uplift were people classified as poor white trash. “I wish to be distinctly understood that I am not characterizing Southern society, as a whole; by no means;” instructs Thompson, “but I am pointing your attention to a class now brought to the surface by the upheavings of war.”<sup>93</sup> Like the WSC, the AUC hoped to use the war and the crisis created by that war to remake the white Southerner in the Northern image. The AUC made this clear in its founding principles. Its “purpose is not to aid in restoring the old order of things which the war has swept away, but to cooperate with all who are now sincerely seeking the restoration of the Union, in re-establishing it upon the basis of universal freedom, education, industry, and Christian morality.”<sup>94</sup> Both organizations hoped to eliminate that group labeled as poor white trash and this was possible through the various forms of aid provided by the AUC and WSC. When it came to people in the region, however, there is no doubt that the organization best positioned to help was the WSC. The WSC and the AUC, however, were not alone in their wartime aid for displaced residents, as other organizations would enter the fray later in the war.

The Refugee Relief Commission of Ohio (RRCO) was a private organization that also helped people displaced in the West by late 1864.<sup>95</sup> While it did not provide as much help as the WSC or the AUC, the aid that this organization provided to displaced persons in Arkansas and

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>94</sup> American Union Commission, *The American Union Commission. Its Origin, Objects, and Operations* (New York: Sanford, Harroun, & Co., 1865), 4.

<sup>95</sup> Like the LUAS, the RRCO worked with a Ladies’ Executive Committee who helped to distribute much of the aid to displaced people in Cincinnati.

Missouri is worth noting. Organized in March of 1864 and headquartered in Cincinnati, the RRCO sought “to afford aid to refugees, whose homes have been destroyed by the effects of war, or who, from the necessity of obeying military orders, were obliged to seek aid and homes among strangers.”<sup>96</sup> Inspired by the number of people that came into Cincinnati along the Mississippi to the Ohio River connection, the RRCO’s mission was no different from any of the aforementioned aid societies who aided displaced white Southerners. The RRCO sent relief goods to places like Murfreesboro, Nashville, Cairo, and Little Rock. In addition to these supplies, the RRCO established a refugee home in Cincinnati to function like the one established by the WSC in St. Louis. Goods sent to these places included shoes, coats and jackets, calico, muslin, bonnets, and shawls – to name only a few of the items.

While the organizational records do not have a particular geographic focus, the efforts of the RRCO appears to focus on displaced whites coming from those states in that composed the Upper South – Tennessee, Arkansas, and Kentucky – especially those who came from East Tennessee who outnumbered people from the other states by nearly double. The focus here makes sense given that so many people from these states made their way to the Queen City, but there were also people from as far away as Louisiana and Mississippi. In addition, the RRCO sought to bring attention for uprooted whites in the West. For example, in a December 1864 circular, the RRCO asked loyal Unionists across the North for whatever aid that they could provide. Most importantly, the R.R.O.C. reiterates that this crisis is a national issue and wants to make everyone aware, especially people in the East. “We ask the pastors of churches to call the attention of their congregations to this subject; and particularly would we ask the *Eastern States* who have thus far been exempt from the din of battle, and the sufferings to which we allude, to help the border towns

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<sup>96</sup> George F. Davis (President) and John D. Caldwell (Secretary), *First Semi-Annual Report of the Refugee Relief Commission of Ohio* (Cincinnati: Times Steam Book and Job Printing Establishment, 1864), 3.

in bearing what should be a common burden.”<sup>97</sup> The leaders of the RRCO felt that many in the East had forgotten the plight of people in the West. By 1864, the crisis in the West had strained the many benevolent aid societies located there. These organizations needed the help of Northerners and Easterners if they were to improve the condition of the large numbers of displaced white Southerners.

According to the RRCO’s *First Semi-Annual Report* in 1864, most in need of help were women and children. Of the 435 people of people in the home in Cincinnati, 281 were female and 151 were under the age of 10 years old.<sup>98</sup> Like the AUC and the WSC, the RRCO was quick to judge individuals who came into their care. According to this same report, the RRCO did not view a great many of these people too favorably. While the AUC and the WSC labeled a portion of displaced people as *poor white trash* and hoped to rehabilitate them in the Northern image, the RRCO had a less than favorable opinion of these people. The RRCO wrote unfavorably about one-third of individuals who came into their care, expressed hope for another third, and completely understood the situation of the final third of people who needed help. The portions of people who help the most favorable view were women whose husbands died in service to the Union army. The other two-thirds, however, the RROC did not view them as favorably. For example, “[o]f these refugees about two-thirds are worthy people, though they are ignorant and have apparently always been poor; they are industrious and anxious to improve, and seem honest and simple-hearted.”<sup>99</sup> The RRCO, like the AUC and the WSC, hoped to elevate them to a higher status more in line with other white Northerners. The RRCO saw no hope for the final lot of people it encountered. “About

<sup>97</sup> “Ohio Refugee Relief Commission [printed circular],” December 20, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833-1916. Italics in the original.

<sup>98</sup> George F. Davis (President) and John D. Caldwell (Secretary), *First Semi-Annual Report of the Refugee Relief Commission of Ohio* (Cincinnati: Times Steam Book and Job Printing Establishment, 1864), 6.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

one-third are lazy and dirty, and so apathetic as to leave little hope for improvement in this generation; still they are not likely to swell the police reports of the North.”<sup>100</sup> Though the RRCO took these people in and gave them much-needed aid, they do not attempt to remake them in any way, shape, or form, and, in many cases, simply ship them elsewhere.

The RRCO, like other aid organizations, also helped by providing transportation to places located across the North. There is no indication in any of the RRCO’s documents as to why they chose this course of action. “A large majority of these refugees have, as will be seen” the RRCO described, “been assisted to places in the interior of this State, to Illinois, Indiana, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and to other New England States, and means have been furnished them for expenses when necessary.”<sup>101</sup> Again, the RRCO deserves credit for choosing not to simply dump them on the streets of Cincinnati, which would not have served either party’s interest. Transporting displaced residents northward appears to be a cost-saving measure for the RRCO, as it was for the Union army and the WSC, most preferred transportation northward to reunite with family and friends. “Seven out of ten ask to be sent to the country, to some friend they have known, and where they can find work adapted to their habits.”<sup>102</sup> Only a small percentage of people aided by the RRCO were from point further west like Missouri and Arkansas. Because of the higher percentage of people from the Upper South in the RRCO’s care, it would have been more likely that they would have family and friends in states like Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan.

### **Asking Washington for Help and the Transition to the Freedmen’s Bureau**

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Leaders of these benevolent aid societies could be very political and sought to have their organizations known to the Federal government in order to maximize support. For example, James Yeatman, the head of the WSC was politically active on behalf of his organization. He attended a variety of ceremonious events, like an April 1865 ceremony at Fort Sumter with President Lincoln, and he kept in regular contact with him. Yeatman wrote numerous letters to the president concerning his organization's affairs, but few concerned the plight of displaced whites. While there was a letter detailing the early wartime conditions in St. Louis, most were letters of support for Salmon Chase as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or letters of introduction for a variety of associates seeking an audience with the president. Yeatman did not use his relationship with the president to advocate for uprooted whites.

There were instances where leaders of aid organizations did write the president asking for help with regard to displaced Southern whites. For example, Edgar Conkling, a special agent for the RRCO, wrote to both Congress and the president of the United States seeking aid for these people. Conkling wrote Congress asking for farming equipment and seed for the coming growing season. Conkling felt that doing so would help keep noncombatants nearer to their homes therefore reducing the number of persons coming north as well as prevent the creation of a pauper class. "The beneficial moral effects of such a policy to the government," began Conkling in his January 1865 petition to Congress, "in begetting greater loyalty in the South, will vastly exceed its cost."<sup>103</sup> Perhaps Conkling wrote this petition so late in the war encouraging a national policy towards uprooted Southern whites. Such a national policy could ease the transition into Reconstruction. To ensure support of his petition to Congress, Conkling wrote Lincoln that same January asking him

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<sup>103</sup> "Refugee Relief Commission of Ohio to Congress [petition]," January 1865, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833-1916.

to convey his support for these people.<sup>104</sup> In the postscript of his petition, Conkling encouraged other organizations to sign and forward the petition as well as propose unity among the benevolent aid societies. Conkling pleaded with other like-minded organizations: “Would it not be well for all such organizations [who aid displaced Southern whites], outside the city of New York to become branches of the American Union Commission in New York, and thus make a united national effort to re-instate the South to a condition, self-supporting?”<sup>105</sup> While such a national union of aid societies never took hold, Conkling certainly sought to maximize the ability to aid uprooted whites in the South by combining the resources and talents of organizations like the AUC, RRCO, and the WSC.

In March of 1865, with the war in its final throes, the Federal government created the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees and Abandoned Lands. Congress tasked the Freedmen’s Bureau with assisting freedmen and displaced whites under the supervision of the War Department. With the creation of the Bureau, President Lincoln recognized the efforts of the WSC when he tendered an offer to make James Yeatman, commissioner of the Bureau. Lincoln’s Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton repeatedly asked the president in a series of letters in March 1865 if the head of the WSC might be interested in the post. “Gen. Sherman tells me he is well acquainted with James Yeatman,” Lincoln wrote Stanton about the potential appointment, “& that he thinks him almost the best man in country for anything that he will undertake[.]”<sup>106</sup> Yeatman’s supporters thought that he was best suited for head of the Bureau given his organizational experience with the WSC.

<sup>104</sup> “Edgar Conkling to Abraham Lincoln,” January 6, 1865, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833-1916.

<sup>105</sup> “Refugee Relief Commission of Ohio to Congress [petition],” January 1865, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833-1916.

<sup>106</sup> “Abraham Lincoln to Edwin M. Stanton,” March 28, 1865, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833-1916.

However, it was Yeatman's brother, Thomas H., who pushed for the appointment.<sup>107</sup> Yeatman, as General Sherman predicted, declined the president's offer leading creating a post-war opportunity for General Oliver O. Howard.

Even though Yeatman declined an opportunity to assist displaced whites into Reconstruction, he provided some information regarding the condition of people who the WSC encountered as well as some advice on how they should be handled moving forward. He understood the challenges faced by both freedmen and the government's task of creating a new social order in Reconstruction. He feared that the government would ignore those whites by focusing too much on the recently emancipated slaves of the South. Certainly, freedmen and women had the sympathies of many in the North and this was evident by the amount of assistance provided by the many charitable and religious institutions there. For Yeatman, this was evident in the fact that schools for freedmen were increasing in numbers throughout the West. Schools for displaced whites, however, were non-existent. This made no sense to him because, in his opinion, these uprooted whites were in worse shape than the freedpeople. These people were as "inferior, in many respects, to the recently emancipated negroes[,]" Mr. Yeatman advised, "[t]hey have all the false pride and arrogance engendered by the institutions of the South, without having been taught to labor, considering that it is degrading work, because 'niggers work.'"<sup>108</sup> For him and the WSC, it was an absolute necessity to change the habits of displaced people by eliminating their Southern tendencies. Because of their inability to work or find any kind of suitable employer, Yeatman advised that they could use a little help from the government. Now that the war was over, the government could give some of its extra horses, plows, and wagons to these whites so that they

<sup>107</sup> George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), 51.

<sup>108</sup> Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission From May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1865* (St. Louis: P. Studley and Co., 1866), 112.

may eke out some kind of existence. In addition, the government should also provide whatever clothing, furniture, and as much as six months food rations to get them started. If these people returned to their desolated homes and communities, Yeatman warned, they would “simply starve to death” as they had no means to provide for themselves.<sup>109</sup> He suggested that the government, in the form of the Freedmen’s Bureau, continue most of the policies of the WSC by giving them clothing, food, and the ability to work. The Bureau inherited a large number of people when it established operations in Arkansas in May of 1865 and would face challenges that it never expected.<sup>110</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Benevolent aid societies in the West played an important role in transitioning the care of displaced whites to the Freedmen’s Bureau. These organizations served as important caretakers, taking them from the care of the army and providing for them until they found permanent homes or employment, or until the Freedmen’s Bureau took over. Assisting the army with the care of these people until the war was over was vital in that it reduced their burden upon the army, allowing the army to focus on the Confederate army. Benevolent aid societies aided people with food, shelter, clothing, and most importantly, education. Through education, aid societies hoped to remake white Southerners in the Northern image. With very little help from the Federal government, these aid societies were able to raise funds from donors across the North to fund their endeavors. By 1864, with the crisis reaching critical mass in the region, the WSC organized the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair in an effort to raise more funds, proving that it led the way in the West. Through their efforts, the benevolent aid societies of the West were the caretakers of

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>110</sup> The Arkansas Freedmen’s Bureau Field Office was responsible for Arkansas and Missouri as well as parts of Kansas, Illinois, and Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Brigadier-General John W. Sprague was in charge until March 1867, headquartered in St. Louis.

uprooted whites. The W.S.C shared what it had learned in its dealings with these people in the form of its final report issued as 1865 ended. With the war over, a new organization was tasked with caring for these displaced whites – the Freedmen’s Bureau. One question remained with the surrender of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox on April 9, 1865: how would the Bureau aid these people and transition them back into their lives.

## CHAPTER 5: THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU ENCOUNTERS DISPLACED PEOPLE, 1865-1866

*“Then the word ‘refugee’ applies only to whites. I would inquire further it, under this law and under the operations of the Freedmen’s Bureau, all white men who were not rebels and who were as poor as the negroes are entitled to the same privileges and the same protection that negroes are?”<sup>1</sup>*

- *Kentucky Unionist Green Clay Smith asking about the status or displaced whites with the creation of the Freedmen’s Bureau, January 30, 1866*

With the end of the war, the United States attempted to be just that, united. The conclusion of the Civil War during the spring of 1865 forced Americans to face the human cost of that war and ask questions about what that sacrifice meant – the sacrifice of approximately 750,000 men. In addition to battlefield casualties, there were a significant number of civilian casualties caused by the war, some estimates near fifty thousand.<sup>2</sup> These casualty numbers combined with the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865, added urgency for Americans to make sense of that war. For people of the Civil War Era and the historians who have written about it, a number of questions should be asked. What did the war mean? Was it simply the end of slavery? Would new definitions of citizenship, the state, equality, or freedom arise? “The war’s staggering human cost demanded a new sense of national destiny,” reminds historian Drew Gilpin

<sup>1</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 1866, 516.

<sup>2</sup> For recent sources on the death toll of the Civil War, see Nicholas Marshall, “The Great Exaggeration: Death and the Civil War,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* Vol. 4, No. 1 (March, 2014): 3-27; Guy Gugliotta, “New Estimate Raises Civil War Death Toll,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 2012. The 618,222 casualty number is the standard for many historians still today, even though it was put together by two Union army veterans and amateur historians named William F. Fox and Thomas Leonard Livermore in 1900. David Hacker, a demographic historian, puts the Civil War death toll upwards of 750,000; The civilian casualty estimate comes from James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3, 177, n. 56; For more on the meanings of sacrifice, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2008); Frances M. Clarke, *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); George M. Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of Union* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1965).

Faust, “one designed to ensure that lives had been sacrificed for appropriately lofty ends.”<sup>3</sup> The reunification of the North and the South would force the people and the government to forge a path with the answers to these questions. First, the new president and the Congress would have to get on the same page.

During Reconstruction, Congress and President Andrew Johnson debated over what shape it would take. While President Lincoln started the process of reconstruction during the war, the new president and Radical Congress would have to evolve a national policy to both reunify the divided nation as well as make good on the sacrifice of so many during the war. The government implemented a variety of presidential and legislative acts in an effort to consecrate that sacrifice – the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and the Freedmen’s Bureau during Reconstruction. “While historians continue to pose fresh questions about Reconstruction,” notes historian Paul A. Cimballa, “they cannot escape the fact that the Freedmen’s Bureau remains at the center of much of the discussion about how Republicans tried to translate victory and emancipation in war into a new order in peace.”<sup>4</sup> Part of the reason for the Bureau’s centrality to any discussion about Reconstruction comes from the interference of the president. Johnson imposed his interpretation of the form that Reconstruction should take and, as a result, the agency would be the battleground for Johnson and the Radical Republicans’ disagreements over that very issue. For displaced whites in the war’s aftermath, the Bureau would be important in to alleviate their suffering and put their lives back to normal.

<sup>3</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2008), 268.

<sup>4</sup> Paul A. Cimballa, *The Freedmen’s Bureau: Reconstructing the American South after the Civil War* (Huntington, NY: Krieger Publishing Co., 2005), xi.

With Congress's establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau in early 1865 and the appointment of General Oliver Otis Howard as its head, it established a number of offices throughout the South. Agents descended upon offices in Missouri and Arkansas and immediately began working on a variety of issues. Their primary task was to reduce the number of displaced people in the region in addition to its duties of helping freedpeople. Displaced whites came to these officials in search of help – they wanted food, clothes, employment, and other necessities of life. Each group, initially, was suspicious of each other. A key link in its chain of providing aid were the Union army chaplains. They were a humanizing element in the bureaucratic machinery because they were most often the point of contact for so many displaced and destitute people. In addition, the Bureau, because it was so unprepared, tried to either transport displaced whites to places where they could be helped or, the agency simply left these people to seek aid from the state – especially displaced residents in Missouri. The agency provided what it could, but the overwhelming need forced it to rely on the continued support of benevolent aid societies at times as well as shifting the burden of care for displaced whites onto the states. This chapter is an analysis of early interactions between the Bureau and displaced people of the region.

### **Continued Help: Benevolent Aid Societies Assist the Freedmen's Bureau**

As soon as the war ended, the number of displaced whites in the region quickly overwhelmed the Bureau and it needed help. As uprooted people heard about the end of the war, many began making their way back to their communities in an attempt to start rebuilding their lives. Howard, understanding the impact that this would have on his agency, hoped to harness the charity of the benevolent aid associations across the newly reunited nation. A little over a month after Lee's surrender, Howard issued Circular No. 2 on May 19, 1865. Section II of this Circular laid out Howard's goals of cooperation with these aid societies. It began: "But it is not the intention

of the government that this bureau shall supersede the various benevolent organizations in the work of administering relief.”<sup>5</sup> Howard hoped that the Bureau would serve in a support role for these organizations. To secure this cooperation, he invited the continued support of these organizations. “I invite, therefore, the continuance and co-operation of such societies I trust they will still be generously supported by the people, and I request them to send me their names, lists of their principal officers, and a brief statement of their present work.”<sup>6</sup> With this order, the Bureau utilized benevolent aid organizations whenever they could to provide aid for both displaced whites and freedpeople.

The Bureau sometimes directed displaced whites towards whatever benevolent aid societies were active in the region. For example, Union army chaplain Hiram Stone noted the orders of one Captain G.E. Dayton: “During the month of May, the Refugees must be disposed of. The Government will not feed them except in extraordinary cases [sic]. They will therefore have to depend upon Public donation and Private Charity.”<sup>7</sup> Sprague was especially tough on the displaced and destitute, hoping that aid societies would continue their efforts into Reconstruction. “On assuming office Sprague called on all officers of the government, military commanders, and treasury agents for information relating to his problem,” observed historian Thomas Starling Staples, “and expressed a hope that benevolent associations would continue their work and relieve the government of the expense of educating and caring for the moral and social welfare of the refugees and freedmen.”<sup>8</sup> It is important to remember that, for better or for worse, the Bureau

<sup>5</sup> United States Congress, *Executive Documents Printed by Order of The House of Representatives, During the First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Congress, 1865-1866* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), 178.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> “Chaplain Hiram Stone to Captain G.E. Dodge,” July 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Starling Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923), 195. Staples was a part of the Dunning School of historians, yet this work remains one of the sole book-length works on the Reconstruction period in Arkansas.

handled issues on a state-to-state basis and, this instance, was simply Sprague's determination of the best way to handle the problem of displaced people in his district. Howard also hoped that aid agencies would continue their work, offering them the lead in areas where they were already in operation. "It is not the intention of the Government that the Bureau shall supersede the various benevolent organizations in the work of administering relief. This must still be afforded by the benevolence of the people through their voluntary societies, no government appropriations having been made for this purpose."<sup>9</sup> Howard built a working relationship with these aid societies to maximize the agency's available aid.

In some instances, benevolent aid societies took it upon themselves to aid the Bureau in providing for displaced whites. The American Union Commission (AUC), in a broadside published shortly after Appomattox, described how its services aided displaced and destitute people across the South and that the entire nation had to do what it could for these people. The AUC continued: "In its origin it had the sanction of President Lincoln; it now enjoys the cordial approbation of President Johnson; it receives from the War Department transportation and other facilities so far as is consistent with the public service; and in providing for refugees, it is in hearty co-operation with the Bureau for Refugees and Freedmen, who are still, as heretofore, dependent on voluntary contributions, through benevolent societies for needful assistance."<sup>10</sup> Working alongside the Bureau, the AUC and other like-minded organizations hoped to help displaced residents and integrate them back into the American nation. Given the demands placed upon the Bureau in the months following Appomattox by displaced Southern whites, it likely welcomed the support from these benevolent organizations.

<sup>9</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 220.

<sup>10</sup> American Union Commission, n.d. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M1027, Roll 7, NARA.

Providing aid for displaced whites came with a certain amount of societal baggage. The Bureau, like a predominant segment of American society, worried that if they kept providing food, medical aid, and shelter to these people, they would become a permanent class of dependents – wholly dependent on the Bureau and the government. Both the president and Howard believed this. To a certain degree, many volunteers in the benevolent aid societies believed this. Like the colony farms developed by Union officials in the war’s final months, continued perceptions about what displaced whites should have to do in order to receive aid transitioned from the army to the Bureau. This makes sense as so many former army officials staffed it. For example, John Moore, Captain of the 15<sup>th</sup> Missouri Cavalry wrote to Sprague from Cassville, Missouri, on July 20, 1865: “The greater portion of Refugees who are subsisted by the Government at this are situated on abandoned farms in the surrounding country and a majority of them have small crops planted which as soon as they have time to come to maturity will be able to subsist themselves.”<sup>11</sup> While they were waiting to see what would become of them, many displaced whites cultivated farms in the area, which the Bureau hoped would be enough to furnish them with food for the coming months. In a way, it was similar to the colony farms developed by M. LaRue Harrison during the war’s final months. The exception being that those who farmed the land were no longer in need of armed protection.

In some instances, the Bureau sought displaced whites for employment in the various offices in the region. Bureau offices often sent out requests searching for able-bodied men and women amongst displaced whites and freedpeople.<sup>12</sup> Howard worked with benevolent aid societies throughout the South in an effort to put many displaced whites to work. He also extended this offer

<sup>11</sup> “John Moore to Brig. Genl. Sprague,” July 20, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>12</sup> “O.O. Howard to Brig. Genl. Sprague,” June 20, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

to freedmen. Howard stated, “I stated that the demands for labor were sufficient to afford employment to most able-bodied refugees and freedmen; that assistant commissioners were to introduce a practical system of compensated labor.”<sup>13</sup> At first, this offer for employment appears to be a sincere offer of a job. A few lines later however, Howard revealed his real intentions. First, he wrote how the freedmen have to work hard to remove the prejudices of their former masters and he reminds them that they cannot simply remain idle post-emancipation. Howard also revealed his feelings regarding displaced whites who received aid from the Bureau. He notes that displaced whites must “strive to overcome a singular false pride which shows certain almost helpless refugees willing to be supported in idleness.”<sup>14</sup> There are a few explanations for such a statement from the head of the Bureau. Perhaps Howard held a prejudiced view towards Southern whites given their support of the Confederacy. Alternatively, Howard could have held a hardline view that these whites have to reestablish themselves immediately, with little help from the Bureau. Howard and other officials often noted how quickly freedpeople were able to establish themselves and, with this happening before their eyes, wanted to hold displaced whites to the same standard. Whatever the explanation, Howard felt that a number of displaced whites were not pulling their weight when it came to reestablishing themselves in the postwar settlement.

### **The War’s End and the Creation of the Freedmen’s Bureau**

The roots of the Freedmen’s Bureau are found in the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission, started in March 1863. As early as 1862, African American leaders, led by the likes of Frederick Douglass, began asking questions concerning freedpeople in the aftermath of the Civil War. Douglass feared the potential of a federal agency limiting the rights of freed slaves, while

<sup>13</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 220.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 220-221.

many radicals wanted something much more, some kind of permanent agency to provide oversight for freedpeople. This Commission, with members appointed by the Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, was tasked with finding ways to help freedpeople in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation. The work of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission played a key role in shaping what the Bureau would look like in its postwar form. The Commission concluded in its final report of May 15, 1864, that some kind of agency should be established to ease the transition from slavery to freedom for African Americans.

The Commission created an agency that fell somewhere in between what Douglass wanted and what the Radicals wanted. While many Northerners were uneasy with the proposition of a large government agency to provide oversight for the lives of ex-slaves, they recognized that something, if only temporary, had to be done. The Bureau was, according to scholar and activist W.E.B. DuBois, "one of the most singular and interesting of the attempts made by a great nation to grapple with vast problems of race and social condition."<sup>15</sup> From this report, Congress, led by Radical Republicans like Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and Zachariah Chandler of Michigan, constructed a Freedmen's Bureau Bill to aid freedpeople in the aftermath of the Civil War. By early 1865, with the end of the war in sight, the bill, excluding whites, was before Congress for approval.<sup>16</sup>

The Bureau, in its earliest form, was to distribute food, clothing, fuel, and other necessities to freedpeople, many of whom had fled their masters to seek freedom during the war or found themselves driven off farms and plantations after emancipation. This bill also included the

<sup>15</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *The Atlantic Monthly* Vol. 87, No. 519 (March, 1901): 354.

<sup>16</sup> Paul A. Cimballa, *The Freedmen's Bureau: Reconstructing the American South After the Civil War* (Huntington, NY: Krieger Publishing Co., 2005), 6-8; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 710; Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure: Postwar Reconstruction in the American South* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 30-57; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Ordeal of Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 86-90.

confiscation and redistribution of planters' lands to the freedpeople. Quite simply, it was to help freedpeople in their transition from slavery to freedom. This version of the bill, however, said nothing about aiding displaced Southern whites. A change in the language of the bill had to come before they could be included under the umbrella of the agency's operations.

Just before Congress was to vote on the bill in March 1865, a series of debates moved members of Congress to make changes to include either displaced or destitute Southern whites in the Bureau's efforts throughout the South, as they did not want to have the appearance of discriminating against color. These debates started as soon as 1863 and 1864 and came about because of differences in the Republican Party on the shape that this agency would take, with some party members wanting to include loyal whites alongside freedpeople. Some wanted the new agency to function as a guardianship for freedpeople while more conservative members of the party, like John P. Hale of New Hampshire and John B. Henderson of Missouri, felt that doing so would destroy freedpeople by simply replacing one master with another. It exposed rivalries between eastern and western Republicans and it allowed Democrats the opportunity to try to water down or destroy any kind of bill to assist freedpeople after the war. Representatives from the Midwestern states led the way when it came to the inclusion of displaced loyal whites in the Freedmen's Bureau bill, with Robert C. Schenck of Ohio leading the way. Historian Herman Belz has noted how Schenck pushed for the inclusion of loyal refugees within the agency's scope:

Schenck's plan was to create in the War department a bureau of refugees and freedmen, to continue during the rebellion and to have effect in rebel states and in loyal districts within the operation of the army. Notably brief in comparison to previous freedmen's proposals, the bill contained two substantive provisions. The first gave the bureau authority to supervise, manage, and control all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen, while the second authorized the President to

provide relief assistance to freedmen and refugees and assign to the bureau for their benefit the temporary use of abandoned lands.<sup>17</sup>

This last minute change to the bill to include displaced whites meant that they would fall under the umbrella of its operations and the Bureau would operate as a part of the War Department. Groups like the American Union Commission supported Schenck when he sought support for his version of the bill. The final Freedmen's Bureau Bill states that with regard to these people, "the Secretary of War may direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct."<sup>18</sup> Both the House and the Senate accepted the change and the revised bill passed and President Lincoln signed it on the same day.<sup>19</sup>

This change to include displaced Southern whites was evident in the agency's new name – the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. Like previous versions of the bill, it was to help both displaced whites and freedpeople in the aftermath of the war. The Bureau would settle disputes, provide transportation, and establish schools – to name only a few of the things that it would be tasked with during its operation. It was an example of a major expansion of Federal authority, setting into motion a gradual expansion of that authority over the coming decades.<sup>20</sup> Congress placed parameters on the duration of the agency's operations in that it would only operate for only one year, so Congress would have to renew the bill on a yearly basis.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Herman Belz, "The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865 and the Principle of No Discrimination According to Color," *Civil War History* 21 (1975): 209. In this article, Belz's argues that the Bureau's non-discrimination principle was a major step towards equality before the law for African Americans in the post-war period.

<sup>18</sup> *Freedmen's Bureau Bill*, March 3, 1865, Sec 2.

<sup>19</sup> George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), 48-49.

<sup>20</sup> Robert C. Lieberman, "The Freedmen's Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure," *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 410.

<sup>21</sup> See Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 68-70; Denise E. Wright, "'Objects of Humanity': The White Poor in Civil War and Reconstruction Georgia," in Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America's*

Before the Bureau could begin work in earnest, the Union army had to end the war by defeating all Confederate armies. While many Americans like to think that the Civil War ended with General Robert E. Lee's surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House in Virginia, many fail to realize that while Lee's army was the largest army, it was not the only army. Later that April, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston surrendered to General William T. Sherman in North Carolina and the armies gradually left the field in both the East and West. Small-scale skirmishes continued in Arkansas at Snake River and Monticello in late April. This is because, outside of Lee and Johnston's armies – the two major Confederate armies - commanders were on their own when it came to surrendering their armies and, if they did make that decision, what the terms of that surrender would be. Lieutenant General Richard Taylor, the last major Confederate commander left in the West, surrendered to Union Major General Edward Canby at Citronelle, Alabama, on May 4, 1865. With Taylor's surrender, Union troops made their way into all parts of the region, establishing Federal control throughout the entire South. These Union soldiers were there to protect citizens as well as build trust amongst citizens there with the hopes of getting them back to work on their farms and businesses.

With the Confederate armies surrendered, one fear remained, especially for General Sherman: guerrilla fighters in the region. Sporadic guerrilla warfare continued into the summer of 1865, so much so that “many community courts had ceased functioning” in the Trans-Mississippi West.<sup>22</sup> There were fears by many in the North that remnants of the Confederate armies would pursue a larger guerrilla war to achieve its goal of independence. This, however, did not come to

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*Continuing Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 107; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 710. Congress renewed the Freedmen's Bureau with the acts of July 16, 1866 (14 Stat. 173) and July 6, 1868 (15 Stat. 83). The Bureau's operations in the states ceased in January 1869 with the Congressional act of July 25, 1868 (15 Stat. 193). Congress terminated the operations of the entire Bureau on June 30, 1872, with the act of June 20, 1872 (17 Stat. 366).

<sup>22</sup> Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 301.

be and by the late spring of 1865, the Bureau was able to begin helping displaced whites and freedpeople in the South.

Once the agency began operations, a number of things stood in the way of providing relief. First was the language of the bill that created it in the first place. During the Bureau's early months, its efforts were constrained by a "lack of specificity" with regard to its functions as prescribed by the Bureau Bill, which made its task that much more difficult.<sup>23</sup> Second, defeated Confederates did not view the agency's presence in the South too favorably. Many conservative Southern whites, especially the former planter class, disliked the Bureau and the agents who represented it. Even though they had been defeated on the battlefield, they retained their commitment to their way of life and belief in small, limited government and states' rights. Resenting the expansion of federal power that would make it harder for them to return to the antebellum status quo and might embolden African Americans to resist their authority, these Southerners often harassed the Bureau, made the agency and its officials feel unwelcome and thus making it hard for agents to conduct their work. Many felt that the agency interfered in their return to normal in terms of black/white relations. These whites, who maintained their antebellum paternalistic structure, argued that they better understood African Americans. Therefore, these Southern whites should remain in charge when it came to the affairs of freedpeople. Historian Eric Foner has noted, "most Southern whites resented the Bureau as a symbol of Confederate defeat and a barrier to the authority reminiscent of slavery that planters hoped to impose upon freedmen."<sup>24</sup> These displeased Southern whites

<sup>23</sup> Paul A. Cimballa, *The Freedmen's Bureau: Reconstructing the American South after the Civil War* (Huntington, NY: Krieger Publishing Co., 2005), 8, Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 384-385.

<sup>24</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 168. See also David O. Stewart, *Impeached: The Trial of President Andrew Johnson and the Fight for Lincoln's Legacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 34-35.

would not get their way in that, despite its shaky start, the Bureau would find its way and operate in earnest throughout the region.

Operating as a part of the War Department, the Bureau provided a variety of services for both freedpeople and displaced whites.<sup>25</sup> With its posts spread throughout the South, the Bureau provided education, food and clothing to destitute and displaced citizens, legal and medical services, aided in the location of family members, and settled both freedpeople and displaced whites on the region's abandoned or confiscated plantations across the South. Foner succinctly summarizes the agency's duties to include "introducing a workable system of free labor in the South, establishing schools for freedpeople, providing aid to the destitute, aged, ill, and insane, adjudicating disputes among blacks between the races, and attempting to secure for blacks and white Unionists equal justice from the state and local governments established during Presidential Reconstruction."<sup>26</sup> In addition, it provided child welfare services, income maintenance, medical care, work projects, government housing, provisions for the elderly and sick, employment counseling, legal counseling, resettlement, and protective services. Through this list of services, it hoped to remake Southern society – black and white – as a part of its postwar mission. The Freedmen's Bureau, argues Victoria Olds, a former Associate Professor of the School of Social Work at Howard University – the school named in his honor, "was ahead of its time in its ability

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that Radical Republicans, led by the Secretary of the Treasury at the time, Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, during debate over the Freedmen's Bureau Bill, pushed to have the Bureau placed under the Treasury Department – not the War Department. Their reasoning was based on the fact that since the government would have to manage the employment of so many freedpeople on large numbers of abandoned and confiscated plantations, the Treasury Department would be most up to the task. The Treasury Department had offices all over the country, it had an expanded access to patronage because had operated a customs service, and it was the fastest growing civilian department. The push for locating the Bureau under the Treasury Department came with President Lincoln's nomination of Chase as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court in 1864. See Robert C. Lieberman, "The Freedmen's Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure," *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 412-413.

<sup>26</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 142-143.

to offer comprehensive family-centered services.”<sup>27</sup> In short, the Bureau had a monumental task in front of it and Howard accepted that challenge.

O.O. Howard came recommended to President Lincoln by the Secretary of War. Stanton, notes historian George R. Bentley, “selected a comparatively unknown major general of volunteers, a man who offered the same attributes as Stanton’s plan for Reconstruction: he would appeal to Lincoln; yet in all probability he could be fitted into the Radical scheme.”<sup>28</sup> While he was not the Lincoln administration’s first choice to lead the Bureau, that honor went to the head of the Western Sanitary Commission James E. Yeatman, but when he refused, Howard would be the man with which Congress pinned its hopes for the Bureau’s success.<sup>29</sup> Born in Maine, he was educated at Bowdoin College in Maine and then, later, at West Point where he served as a mathematics professor. He fought at First and Second Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and did a stint in the Western Theatre later in the war. Howard lost his right arm at Fair Oakes in June 1862 and many remembered him for insisting that his men attend temperance and prayer meetings. For these efforts, Howard earned the nickname *the Christian General*. Howard was a stern man and, as a moral crusader, held firm in his support for African American suffrage and land redistribution for freedpeople during Reconstruction.

A transition from slave to wage labor and civil rights for African Americans would prove to be a tough test. General Howard, because of his limited resources, used the services of his army

<sup>27</sup> Victoria Olds, “The Freedmen’s Bureau: A Nineteenth-Century Federal Welfare Agency,” *Social Casework* 44, (1963): 252.

<sup>28</sup> George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen’s Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1955), 52.

<sup>29</sup> There are various arguments about the degree with which Howard is to blame in the Bureau’s failure. One argument, by William S. McFeely, places blame squarely at the feet of Howard, while another, by John Cox and LaWanda Cox, blames subordinates for its failure. See William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: O.O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), and John Cox and LaWanda Cox, “O.O. Howard and the ‘Misrepresented Bureau,’” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Nov., 1953): 427-456. For a general biography of Howard, see John A. Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999).

personnel to fill the agency's ranks. This was at the suggestion of Stanton, who Howard recalled told him to "use my officers as I liked in the control of the new Bureau, I supposed I was to continue in command of the Army and the Department of the Tennessee, certainly till the final muster out."<sup>30</sup> Having Howard maintain many of his officers helped it function most effectively, with a number of civilians employed at the local level to achieve this task. Men who were antebellum lawyers, physicians, tailors, farmers, merchants, and bootmakers all filled staff positions at the Bureau in Arkansas.<sup>31</sup> Howard's officials, notes historian Paul Skeels Pierce, "were all military men, who, through active service had become more or less familiar with social, economic, and educational conditions in the south."<sup>32</sup> These military men would make a number of decisions that affected the lives of many displaced Southern whites in the region while it remained focused on their primary task of helping freedpeople.

### **The Bureau's Organization in Arkansas and Missouri**

The Bureau's operations in Arkansas and Missouri began in May 1865 with Brigadier General John W. Sprague in command at his St. Louis headquarters.<sup>33</sup> When he heard President Lincoln's 1861 call for troops, Sprague, a native New Yorker, raised a company of infantry and relocated to Cincinnati. From there, he worked his way up the ranks in various Ohio units eventually reaching the rank of Brigadier-General in 1864. He fought in battles throughout Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and he was with Sherman in his March to the Sea.

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<sup>30</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 210. Howard took command of the Army of Tennessee upon the death of General James B. McPherson in July 1864.

<sup>31</sup> Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen's Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 19.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Skeels Pierce, *The Freedmen's Bureau: A Chapter in Reconstruction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1904), 48.

<sup>33</sup> Sprague remained in command until October 1866 when he would be relieved by Brevet Major General Edward O.C. Ord. General Ord served until he was relieved by Brevet Major General Charles H. Smith in March 1867. Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen's Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 9-10.

Sprague operated as the Bureau's Assistant Commissioner for the Missouri-Arkansas District. Sprague was in charge of the agency in Missouri, Arkansas, Indian Territory, as well as parts of Kansas, around Fort Leavenworth and Fort Scott, and in Quincy and Cairo, Illinois. The Bureau's operation in Missouri received a great deal of support from the local, foreign-born German population many of whom served with the Union in the war and remained steadfastly loyal Republicans. As a result, the Bureau did not feel a need to maintain an office there.<sup>34</sup>

By September 1865, officials decided to move the agency's regional headquarters from St. Louis to Little Rock. The situation in Missouri was far less violent than what the Bureau faced in other Southern states and it had just revised its state constitution eliminating slavery, making it that much easier to shift their center of operations in the region to Arkansas.<sup>35</sup> For the most part, Missourians did not have any major objections to the Bureau's efforts and General Howard felt that Missouri's laws adequately protected freedpeople. As a result, he made the decision to end its activities there to better focus on the situation in Arkansas. On September 19, 1865, General Sprague received orders from General Howard and relocated his headquarters south to Little Rock. It would remain there until the Bureau's operation ended in 1872: "Maj. Genl. Howard wishes me [J.S. Fullerton] to instruct you to withdraw the operations of the Bureau from the State of Missouri as soon as you can do so safely. After leaving St. Louis it will be best for you to establish your

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<sup>34</sup> W.A. Low, "The Freedmen's Bureau in the Border States," in Richard O. Curry, ed., *Radicalism, Racism, and Party Realignment: The Border States during Reconstruction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 258-263; for more on how the German population of Missouri in the Civil War and Reconstruction, see Robert W. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri* (Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 2011), 121-156; Stephen D. Engle, "Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union, and the Construction of a Wartime Identity," in Susannah Ural, *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 11-55; Adam Arenson, *Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 107-143.

<sup>35</sup> See David R. March, "Charles D. Drake and the Constitutional Convention of 1865," *The Missouri Historical Review* Vol. 47, No. 2 (January, 1953): 110-123; Fred DeArmond, "Reconstruction in Missouri," *The Missouri Historical Review* Vol. 61, No. 3 (April, 1969): 364-377.

Head Quarters somewhere within the State of Arkansas.”<sup>36</sup> Nearly a month after this dispatch, Circular No. 13 from the Bureau made official notice that the state’s poor and displaced people should be cared for by the local government. It announced, “The issue of Rations by this Bureau in Missouri will cease on the 31<sup>st</sup> inst., the wealthy and prosperous State of Missouri is able and it is hoped willing to care for its own poor.”<sup>37</sup> Deconstructing this statement demonstrates how the agency’s lack of a national mission encouraged officials to leave displaced and destitute whites to the care of the state. In addition, in Missouri, that was exactly what happened.

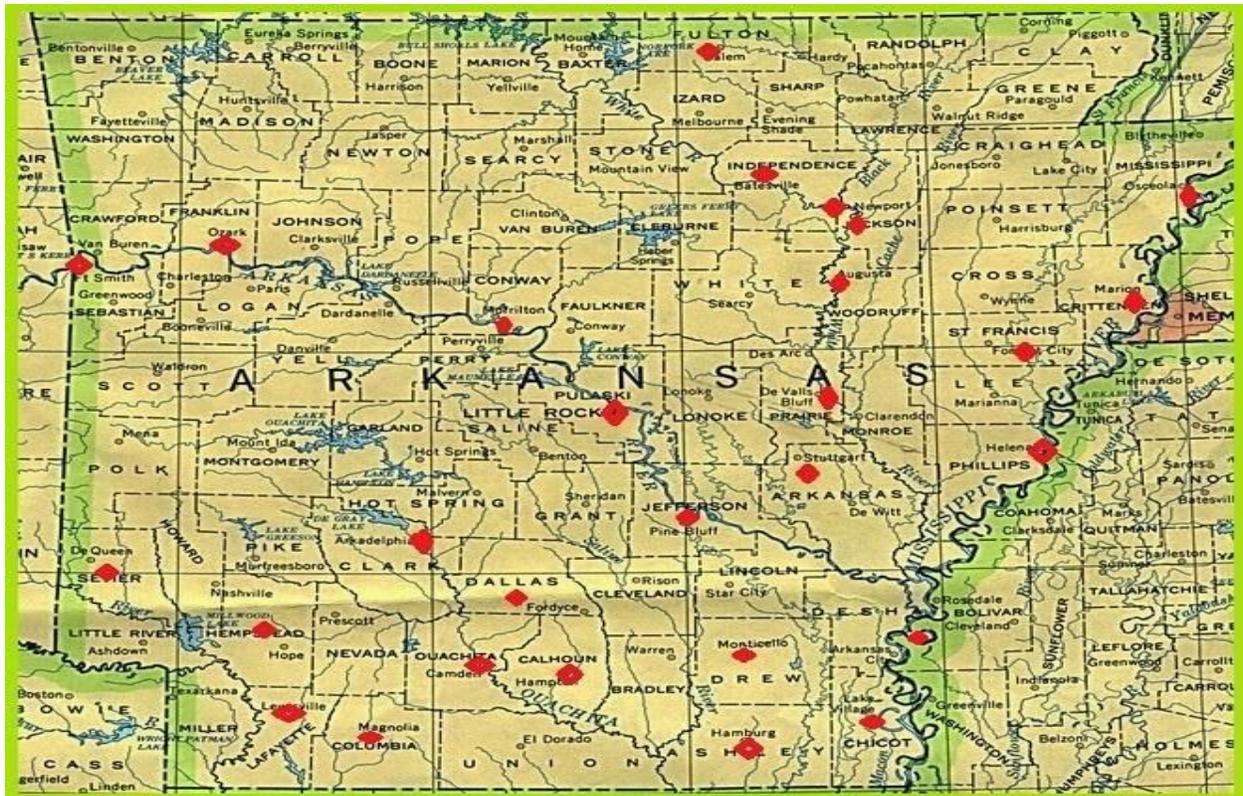
By October 31, 1865, the Freedmen’s Bureau had completed its move to Little Rock. With a number of offices scattered throughout the state (see Fig. 5.1), the Arkansas offices were organized much the same as the agency’s national headquarters in Washington D.C. Its staff often consisted of a Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Education, a Surgeon-in-Chief, a Chief Quartermaster, an Assistant Adjutant General, a Disbursing Officer, as well as a variety of subordinates scattered throughout the state. Historian Randy Finley notes that the Arkansas Bureau had 79 agents; this included 36 civilians and 43 army officers beginning in July of 1865.<sup>38</sup> Subordinates were often in charge of the smaller sub-districts in the region that had civilian

<sup>36</sup> “J.S. Fullerton to J.W. Sprague,” September 19, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. [Henceforth: NARA].

<sup>37</sup> “Circular No. 13,” October 12, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 21, NARA. A ration in the context of the Bureau is best described as enough food, often corn, to feed a person for one week. This term was hardly standardized across the Bureau and in reality, rations were whatever a local agent had on hand at any given time. See Denise E. Wright, “‘Objects of Humanity’: The White Poor in Civil War and Reconstruction Georgia,” in Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America’s Continuing Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 236 n. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 11. Finley notes the names of a few of the state’s agents, men like Henry Sweeny and Sebastian Geisreiter, but a number of these men left little behind to construct any kind of definitive biography. For a local study on Bureau agents, see J. Thomas May, “The Freedmen’s Bureau at the Local Level: A Study of a Louisiana Agent,” *The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter, 1968): 5-19; William L. Richter, “‘A Dear Little Job’: Second Lieutenant Hiram F. Willis, Freedmen’s Bureau Agent in Southwest Arkansas, 1866-1868,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 50, No. 2 (Summer, 1991): 158-200.

employees to help with more of the day-to-day activities of the different offices. Agency personnel operated in twenty-four different counties throughout Arkansas.<sup>39</sup>



**Arkansas Freedmen's Bureau Field Offices**

Fig. 5.1: Arkansas Freedmen's Bureau offices. Source: <http://www.argenweb.net/crawford/maps/images/arka>

In some instances, the Bureau retained military officers in a civilian capacity to assist with their operations. These men wrote and reported about the day-to-day efforts concerning freedpeople and displaced whites in the area, sending these reports up the chain of command. In turn, those at the top of the agency's command sent directives down to these lower-ranking

<sup>39</sup> The major field office in Arkansas were located in the following counties: Arkadelphia, Augusta, Batesville, Camden, Lewisburg, DeVal's Bluff, Fort Smith, Hamburg, Hampton, Helena, Jacksonport, Lake Village and Luna Landing, Lewisville, Little Rock, Madison, Magnolia, Marion, Monticello, Napoleon, Osceola, Ozark, Paraclyfta, Pine Bluff, Princeton, South Bend, Union, and Washington. Robert J. Plowman, "M979, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Introductory Remarks," NARA, 2.

personnel on how to handle the situation on the ground in Missouri and Arkansas.<sup>40</sup> These officials' first task included a determination of who would qualify for aid.

While the original Freedmen's Bureau Bill laid out the intended targets of the agency's resources, that did not stop officials in the field from requesting or offering clarification regarding displaced whites. During the summer of 1865, many agents realized that the task before them was to be much greater and more difficult than anticipated. Were some uprooted whites entitled to the agency's help while others were not? Because so many people were in need of help, combined with the fact that the Bureau had very limited resources, officials wanted a clear-cut definition of who would be eligible for aid to maximize the use of their resources. Sprague did the best that he could when he sought clarification on this very point. For example, Sprague made it clear as to whom the agency would help under the banner of the term *refugee* in his Circular No. 12, issued on September 11, 1865. "The term 'Refugees' as mentioned in the Act of Congress establishing the Bureau means those persons who fled from their homes on account of the war and are now absent therefrom. If rations are issued to other persons, even destitute citizens, not contemplated under the law the offer who issues the same may be rendered liable therefor."<sup>41</sup> Both agents and displaced people used this designation throughout the primary sources. This was not a decision made by Sprague, but one that came from the top – Howard. Sprague made sure that his officials understood who was to receive aid from their offices as well as who might be excluded from receiving aid and the consequences for giving aid to the *wrong* people. As agents dispersed

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> "Circular No. 12," September 11, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 21, NARA. Howard later wrote in his autobiography: "To these two classes, negroes and whites, were usually given the names of freedmen and refugees." Even with this clarification, Howard still would be rather loose with the term refugee in his autobiography, in that he did always mean displaced Southern whites. See Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 164.

throughout the West, they put out their feelers in an attempt to gauge the situation there and handle it in an efficient manner. Even with this preparation, officials were sometimes surprised with the magnitude of the situation in the region.

A number of Southern whites, not just displaced whites, needed the Bureau's help. In addition to the people left to wander the region, others, for a variety of reasons, needed the assistance. The language it used, with regard to displaced Southern whites, in official reports and communiques could sometimes be confusing. Officials noted instances of aid for *freedmen*, *destitute*, and *refugees* throughout its records sometimes *refugee freedmen* or *white refugees/destitute refugees*. It appears as though the agency did not often differentiate between destitute whites and displaced whites in Arkansas. "The Bureau ministered to the needs not only of freedmen and 'refugees,'" observes historians John Cox and LaWanda Cox, "but also to impoverished ex-Confederates under special congressional appropriations and by interpreting 'refugees' as 'liberally as possible to prevent starvation.'"<sup>42</sup> This is what makes ascertaining any kind of numbers or estimates of displaced whites difficult. Sifting through Bureau accounts of their situation does not illustrate all of the hardships faced by many poor whites at the end of the war. Historian J. Wayne Flynt has noted "[w]hen the Civil War ended in 1865, there were many more poor whites in the South than when it had begun five years earlier. Plantation owners and once affluent merchants stood in breadlines in some Southern cities. Only pride kept others from joining them. Hard times usually fell heaviest on the poor, and the lot of common whites worsened."<sup>43</sup> Many different poor people came to the Bureau in search of aid, including many displaced whites. Because the agency did not discriminate based on race, as detailed in the final bill passed by

<sup>42</sup> John Cox and LaWanda Cox, "O.O. Howard and the 'Misrepresented Bureau,'" *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Nov., 1953): 451.

<sup>43</sup> J. Wayne Flynt, *Dixie's Forgotten People: The South's Poor Whites* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 34.

Congress, and all impoverished persons were welcome to its aid, a number of destitute whites received help.

Displaced people might request help from the Freedmen's Bureau a few different ways. More often than not, displaced whites presented themselves at a local office or they wrote to the local superintendent explaining their situation and needs. Local newspapers published account of people in need. Officials would often detail these requests and the circumstances of these people to their superiors and other officials and note if they warranted any action by the Bureau. Other times, officials took note of their interactions with freedpeople and displaced whites in the communities they served and made suggestions for rations, transportation, etc. based on this contact.

Unfortunately, the agency's records do not offer much detail as to who these displaced people were as there is no indications of what their lives might have been like before the war came or what became of them after they contacted the Bureau for help. In the lists that detail transportation for displaced people, there were names of the head of household and accompanying family members. References were quite matter of fact as one would expect from a department ran by military officials. The Bureau often referred to these people in simple numbers and, usually, a corresponding amount of rations that displaced people needed. For example, in a letter dated June 19, 1865, General Sprague communicated to Howard "on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, there was only 236 colored people in Missouri who asked for assistance from Government, this includes Men, Women, & Children while there was 4452 White Refugees who were subsisted in whole or in part by Government."<sup>44</sup> Sometimes, agents described their situation and other times, as in this instance,

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<sup>44</sup> "J.W. Sprague to O.O. Howard," June 19, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

they were lumped in with descriptions of freedpeople who were also in need of aid. Even with this, the descriptions still offer very little as to who these people were.

### **Andrew Johnson, the Freedmen's Bureau, and Displaced Whites**

With the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, Vice President Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency. A North Carolinian by birth and a Tennessean by deeds, Johnson would be the man that would lead the nation as it began to rebuild the nation in the aftermath of Lincoln's death and civil war. Added to Lincoln's reelection ticket in 1864 because he had served as the Democratic military governor of Tennessee, Lincoln hoped he would provide for a more balanced ticket in the 1864 presidential election. Johnson proved to be a capable leader in Tennessee – he helped establish civil government in that state and supported emancipation.<sup>45</sup> Lincoln won reelection in 1864 guiding the nation out of civil war and, with the tragic event at Ford's Theatre; Johnson would be the man in the Executive Mansion as Reconstruction began.

When Johnson took office, many Americans waited to see whom the new president really was. Would he continue Lincoln's program of reconstruction begun in 1863, or would he pursue his own course? Andrew Johnson was a white southern Democrat who had long held similar views to most Southern whites, although he did not look kindly on the former planter class. When it came to aftermath of slavery, he feared any kind of black political power in the South or elsewhere. Here, he was in disagreement with Radical Republicans in Congress who supported civil rights for freedmen. Another area where he was in disagreement with the Radicals was the nature of readmission for Southern states that had seceded from the Union during the winter of 1860-1861.

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<sup>45</sup> Johnson's support for the emancipation of Tennessee's slaves should not be confused with any support for equal rights for African Americans. Paul H. Bergeron, *Andrew Johnson's Civil War and Reconstruction* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 41-64; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 624-626; Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1989), 84-192; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 44.

The new president held the view that the Southern states had never left the Union and, as a result, he believed that they should be able to reestablish their state governments and resume their role in the nation. While the Radicals vehemently disagreed, Johnson believed that the Federal government had no right to interfere in the affairs of those states – especially matters concerning freedpeople. It is in these disagreements that Congress and the president would be at odds for the next two years.<sup>46</sup>

From 1865 to 1867, Johnson forged a far different path than many expected. Lincoln, in the interest of quickly ‘binding the nation’s wounds,’ hoped to allow for the speedy readmission of the Southern states idealized in his 10 percent plan, a part of his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction issued in December of 1863.<sup>47</sup> Lincoln’s Wartime Reconstruction offered amnesty to most Confederate officials, but he did not extend the franchise nor any other civil rights to freedmen. Parts of Lincoln’s vision for the postwar nation were already in place in areas that had been under Union control, especially parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

Presidential Reconstruction, with Johnson at the helm, included “control of local affairs by the individual states, white supremacy, and the quick resumption of the South’s place within the Union.”<sup>48</sup> Johnson’s Reconstruction policies made it easy for conservative white Southerners to establish Black Codes throughout the former Confederacy, which limited the freedom of African

<sup>46</sup> David O. Stewart, *Impeached: The Trial of Andrew Johnson and the Fight for Lincoln’s Legacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 17-20. See also Eric L. McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>47</sup> This plan stated that when the number of loyal Southerners in a given state reached 10 percent of the votes cast in the 1860 election, they could then form new state governments. See Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 35-37; Donald G. Nieman, “Andrew Johnson, the Freedmen’s Bureau, and the Problem of Equal Rights, 1865-1866,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 44, No. 3 (Aug., 1978: 399-420; Steven W. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America’s Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 297-298; Rick Beard, “Lincoln’s Ten Percent Plan,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 216. See also Paul H. Bergeron, *Andrew Johnson’s Civil War and Reconstruction* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 65-180.

Americans. This included the president opposing the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Amendment – the latter necessitated by Johnson’s acquiescence to the Black Codes - as well as the Civil Rights Act of 1866.<sup>49</sup> These differences over the process of Reconstruction led to a number of disagreements between the president and the Republican-controlled Congress, though none would be more heated than the debates over the life of the Freedmen’s Bureau beginning in 1866. In addition, Johnson would complicate relief efforts when he issued a number of pardons because of his Amnesty Proclamation in May of 1865.<sup>50</sup> Before these debates began in earnest, however, Bureau agents had begun to fan out across the South.

As one might expect, agents’ attitudes towards displaced whites ran the gamut. Some views, like that of Howard, were practical with regard to the situation at hand. As Cox and Cox have noted, “The charges that the Bureau demoralized labor by ‘supporting men in idleness’ were largely partisan attempts to discredit the Bureau. At the very start of his administration, General Howard recognized and set about correcting the serious relief situation that had developed at various points where the army had been distributing rations. His early regulations regarding food rations enjoyed ‘great discrimination,’ and strict accountability, to ensure that rations would be issued only to the ‘absolutely necessitous and destitute.’”<sup>51</sup> Not everyone took such a realistic

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<sup>49</sup> For more information on the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, see Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); For more on the framing on the Fourteenth Amendment, see Michael Kent Curtis, *No State Shall Abridge: The Fourteenth Amendment and the Bill of Rights* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986); For information on the Civil Rights Act of 1866, see George A. Rutherglen, *Civil Rights in the Shadow of Slavery: The Constitution, Common Law, and the Civil Rights Act of 1866* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); For information on the constitutional implications of Reconstruction, see Michael Vorenberg, “Reconstruction as a Constitutional Crisis,” in Thomas J. Brown, *Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 141-171.

<sup>50</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

<sup>51</sup> John Cox and LaWanda Cox, “O.O. Howard and the ‘Misrepresented Bureau,’” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Nov., 1953): 451.

approach to the situation. Just like Union troops, both high and low-ranking officials offered their opinions of displaced whites, many of these opinions were not favorable.

In their description of aid to displaced people, the Bureau often revealed their Victorian attitudes towards dependency as well as allegations that aid generated need for these people.<sup>52</sup> Opinions of displaced whites often contained some kind of allusion to their lack of work ethic, which was common given that this was a commonly held view in the Victorian Era. According to Victorian attitudes, these people were poor and would continue to be poor until they picked themselves up by their bootstraps and got to work. Victorians tried to distance themselves from the poor, the urban poor or otherwise, whenever they could. For example, in a discussion about photographers during the Civil War and Reconstruction, historian Louise Stevenson noted how they very often ignored the poor in their work, which was an expression of Victorian values of the time. “Images of the poor might have raised disturbing questions: What if America contained too many people who would never have parlors? What would this democratic republic become if too many voters were not educated, thinking citizens who fulfilled their civic obligations? . . . Victorians put actual distance between themselves and the poor.”<sup>53</sup> Through order and regularity, Victorians hoped to achieve the common good and this could not be accomplished through idleness. Those who subscribed to these ideas knew no regional boundaries as these views outshined regional differences.<sup>54</sup>

As officials descended on the South and encountered Southern whites, many had already formed opinions about them. For example, Chaplain Hiram Stone offered his opinion of these

<sup>52</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African Americans Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 121-126.

<sup>53</sup> Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 15. Parlors were the setting for all events Victorian: Games, plays, music, conversation, and reading. It was, argues Stevenson, the ultimate setting for the expression of Victorian values.

<sup>54</sup> Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 73-74.

people in a July 1865 letter: “My experience has been that there is a large class of indolent and thriftless people who will act the vagrant so long as a morsel of Government Charity is to be had. Really I do not think there are many Refugees in this region who need suffer if they will neither work or return to their homes.”<sup>55</sup> Such an assessment of displaced people ignores the consequences wrought by the war in every way. Stone, as chaplain, would be more sympathetic to the plight of these people, one would think. Here, Stone put all of the blame for the situation on the people, ignoring a variety of outside forces that probably played a role in their situation by the summer of 1865.

As relief for these white Southerners continued into Reconstruction, some agents felt that this reliance on the continued charity of the agency was a continued dedication to the Southern cause.<sup>56</sup> Only months before, these people were the enemy. It is no surprise that these feelings lingered months after the war’s end. Other officials, from Howard all the way down the chain of command, did the same with their initial impressions of displaced people. These feelings, combined with contemporary views of the poor, formed a certain set of opinions directed at many of these poor Southern whites who came to the Bureau for aid. These opinions are in line with their contemporaries, given Northerners’ views of Southerners as well as their opinions of relief for the poor during the Victorian Era.

What other factors might have influenced officials’ attitudes towards displaced whites? Perhaps the magnitude of the situation surrounding displaced whites influenced the opinions of these officials who viewed them in such a negative light. “Refugees in large numbers,” Sprague

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<sup>55</sup> “Chaplain Hiram Stone to Captain G.E. Dodge,” July 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>56</sup> Sarah Anne Rubin, *Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Nation, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 151.

reported to Howard in June 1865, “and in most pitiable and destitute condition, have been flocking to our posts for subsistence – most of them are of the lowest type of humanity to be found in this country – they are *willing* mendicants and paupers; some are worthy people suffering the extremes of poverty and sickness.”<sup>57</sup> Sprague’s statement provides a window into his personal views on the situation. On the one hand, he talks about the large number of people and how many are in need. Sprague also felt that some of them were simply lazy or unwilling to alleviate their situation for themselves, relying on the government for subsistence. Officials did their best to assess the situation for themselves, though in time, they would hear from the people about their situation. As soon as the war ended, many uprooted whites in the region communicated their situation hoping to bring attention to their plight.

Many displaced people thought of the Bureau as, quite simply, the Federal government. This was not necessarily a bad thing, as the government meant *help* for these people. Given the ordeal that many displaced whites had just experienced, they felt as though the government was one of the few entities that could deal with the magnitude of their situation at the end of the war. The Bureau, historian Ira C. Colby reminds us, “implemented and coordinated four major programs throughout the reconstructed states: rations distribution, health care, educational programs, and a judicial system.”<sup>58</sup> Displaced whites could take advantage of any one of these services offered by the agency. While rations were important for many displaced whites in that they would satisfy an immediate need, they sometimes needed help resolving longer-term issues, often legal in nature.

<sup>57</sup> “J.W. Sprague to O.O. Howard,” June 17, 1865, in U.S. Congress, “Freedmen’s Bureau: Letter from the Secretary of War, in Answer to A Resolution of the House of March 8, Transmitting a Report, by the Commission of the Freedmen’s Bureau, of All Orders Issued by Him or Any Assistant Commissioner,” 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (Washington, D.C., 1866), 364. Italics in the original.

<sup>58</sup> Ira C. Colby, “The Freedmen’s Bureau: From Social Welfare to Segregation,” *Phylon* Vol. 46, No. 3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, 1985): 225.

One displaced Missourian, a woman named Mary S. wrote to the Superintendent of the Bureau in St. Louis for help in the form of rations for her and her child. Her husband, who was unnamed in the letter, enlisted in the Union army following the destruction of their home by guerrillas in 1862. Wartime guerrilla activity in western Missouri combined with General Ewing's General Orders No. 11 forced her to seek refuge in Henry County, Missouri, for the remainder of the Civil War. Until April 1865, she eked out a living on her husband's modest army pay. By April 1866, however, she had nothing left and was on the verge of starvation. With this, she was compelled to ask for help. "Reduced to poverty and worse after five years anxiety and disappointment I am at last obliged to address the Representatives of the U.S. Government for support and relief."<sup>59</sup> Mary hoped that by communicating her situation to the Freedmen's Bureau, it would be able to help provide food for her and her child as well as help resolve the matter of her husband's wartime pay.

While the primary focus of the Bureau was to provide much needed aid to freedpeople and displaced whites, it provided a variety of other services. People took advantage of these services in great numbers, especially once the dust of war had settled. Needy people might have viewed the agency as much more than a source of temporary aid in the form of food or clothing; they may view it as a point of contact with which their other disputes could be resolved. Individual accounts such as these are plentiful in the Bureau records. These accounts could be letters sent directly to a particular office or letters from officials detailing the many visits paid to these offices by displaced people. "Given the chaotic conditions in the postwar South, agents spent most of the time coping with day-to-day crises," reminds Foner, "and did so under adverse circumstances and with

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<sup>59</sup> "Mary S. to the Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau," April 12, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA. Her last name was illegible on this document.

resources unequal to the task.”<sup>60</sup> Sometimes, people contacted the Bureau collectively, often as a community, hoping for a response because of their numbers as there were instances where all or most of a community asked for help.

The crisis faced by the Bureau in both Missouri and Arkansas was daunting to say the least. Nevertheless, the agency did its best to protect those who needed it. With guerrillas marauding the countryside, people were still scared and sought help and protection. A Fort Smith *New Era* account, entitled “A Refugee Mother and Seven Children,” detailed the situation encountered by officials by the late spring of 1865:

We saw at the police station last night a middle aged woman surrounded by seven small children, the eldest eleven years old, and the youngest four years. Three of the young ones were born at one birth, and two of the others were twins. She came from Madison county, Arkansas. Her name is Mrs. Harp, and she said her husband had died of measles, while serving in the 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas (Union) cavalry. She was in destitute circumstances, having no money, no friends, and no roof to shelter her numerous and tender brood from the cold rain and the chill air. The whole family were barefooted; shoes and stockings being unknown to their little feet. They obtained lodgings last night in the calaboose, and we trust the benevolent people of the city will make some better provision for them today.<sup>61</sup>

Accounts like this were common throughout much of Arkansas and parts of Missouri at the war’s end. A woman, whose husband had died in service to the Union, confronted the reality that she would have to be the sole provider for her seven children.

At the start of the agency’s operations in the region in the summer of 1865, there were estimates regarding the number of people who needed help. In one instance, officials estimated there to be approximately 147,000 rations needed in Arkansas just for the months of July and August 1865. The number needed in Missouri for the same period was about 38,000 bringing the total of rations needed to 185,000 - versus approximately 232,500 rations needed for freedmen

<sup>60</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 143.

<sup>61</sup> “A Refugee Mother and Seven Children,” Fort Smith [AR] *New Era*, May 13, 1865.

during the same period. The author of the report further noted that these were only estimates and should be interpreted as such, as the situation had the possibility to change rapidly.<sup>62</sup> Another report from the same period found that the “government issued rations to 4,452 white refugees and 236 freedmen in Missouri. In Arkansas the number of persons to whom rations were issued is not stated.”<sup>63</sup> While it is difficult to determine an exact number of displaced whites in the region at the end of the war, it is safe to say that their numbers overwhelmed the Bureau, at least initially. From June 1865 through November 1868, the Bureau issued approximately 20.3 million rations in thirteen Southern states and the District of Columbia. Twenty-six percent of these rations were issued to displaced whites.<sup>64</sup> Once on the ground, officials continued to assess the condition of displaced people who very badly needed their help.

Other encounters between Bureau agents and displaced whites demonstrate how under prepared it was. Displaced residents from the across region came to the agency in such large numbers, not only could agents not provide enough rations, but they had trouble keeping their supplies under lock and key. One agent asked for manpower to secure his supplies in November of 1865: “I need a person of intelligence and discrimination to make arrests – also nearly every day it is necessary for me to issue rations to Refugees returning home also it is necessary for me to have some one [sic] to take charge and issue rations & wood to the Refugees in camp as the

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<sup>62</sup> “Brigadier General J.W. Sprague to Major General O.O. Howard,” July 25, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

<sup>63</sup> “J.W. Sprague to O.O. Howard,” June 17, 1865, in U.S. Congress, “Freedmen’s Bureau: Letter from the Secretary of War, in Answer to A Resolution of the House of March 8, Transmitting a Report, by the Commission of the Freedmen’s Bureau, of All Orders Issued by Him or Any Assistant Commissioner,” 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (Washington, D.C., 1866), 364.

<sup>64</sup> Denise E. Wright, “‘Objects of Humanity’: The White Poor in Civil War and Reconstruction Georgia,” in Paul A. Cimballa and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America’s Continuing Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 109. Wright notes that the Bureau issued the most rations in Virginia with Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, and Maryland having the greatest percentage of rations issued to whites.

building containing the rations is broken into and they are stolen and persons at the camp get a part of the wood who are not entitled to it.”<sup>65</sup> Displaced whites, as indicated here, swarmed Bureau offices to, not only receive aid, but take whatever they could for their continued survival. It was a very desperate situation for them and they acted accordingly. Many displaced whites were desperate and they came to the realization that the Bureau was unprepared for the number of people who needed help, so they went around the agency to take what they needed.

Agents had to not only somehow attempt to gauge their number, but also determine their condition and their immediate needs to help them more efficiently. This would allow the agency to have not only the proper amount of supplies but also the supplies needed most by displaced people. For example, Sprague asked of his subordinates: “I respectfully request that you direct all officers serving with you having in charge matters in reference to the Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to at once report to me the condition of their work in detail, so that I may be advised of the number of White Refugees and Freedpeople who are now being subsisted in whole, or in part by the Government, their condition, and all information in their possession that will assist me in the discharge of my duties.”<sup>66</sup> Reports poured in from all over the Bureau’s Arkansas-Missouri district on the condition of displaced people. Only when these reports began to roll in did officials begin to understand the gravity of the situation on the ground based on the numbers of supplies that displaced people needed.

Like the army, the Bureau issued rations to satisfy the immediate needs of displaced whites and freedpeople who came into their care. Rations requested for displaced whites could be quite staggering in terms of the number needed on a monthly basis. Agents were very precise in their

<sup>65</sup> “[signature illegible] to Col. Severing,” November 8, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 10, NARA.

<sup>66</sup> “J.W. Sprague to Major General Greenville,” June 16, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

orders in that they required regular reports about how many rations would be required for displaced whites and freedpeople for the coming months. Some reports offered a county-by-county breakdown of rations needed for the coming month. For example, an August 30, 1865, report from Sprague to Howard requested for Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas, a total number of 77,105 rations just for displaced whites.<sup>67</sup> Other reports detailed what kind and estimated quantities of various supplies for the months ahead. Sprague again wrote Howard in which he provided an extended list of what people needed for the remainder of 1865 (See Fig. 5.2) as well as another estimate for rations for the fourth quarter of that year: 38,628 in Missouri and 137,658 for displaced Arkansans.<sup>68</sup> These amounts demonstrate the fluidity of the situation faced by the Freedmen's Bureau. Additionally, it demonstrates how difficult it would be to provide for the many displaced people in the region.

522 Hats	504 Caps	45 Cap Covers
373 Uniform Coats	2088 Great Cloaks	677 prs [pairs] Trousers
1343 Jackets	241 Sack Coats	378 Flannel Shirts
277 pr [pair] Drawers Knit	350 pr Stockings	193 pr Boots
315 pr Shoes	5000 pr Shoe Strings	1507 Blankets Woolen
221 Blankets Rubber	420 Comforters	195 Pillows
57 Mattresses	226 pr Mittens	21 Haversacks
16 Knapsacks	29 Chairs	13 Washstands
1 Water Cooler	7 Iron Pots & Skillets	2 Scrub Brushes
5 Axes	10 Coffee Pots	74 Tin Cups
56 Tin Plates	40 Table Spoons	86 Table Knives
44 Table Forks	41 Dippers	45 Wash Basins
1 Wash Board	28 Fire Shovels & Pokers	

Fig. 5.2: List of requested supplies for the Trans-Mississippi West from J.W. Sprague. J.W. Sprague to O.O. Howard," September 27, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

Despite the Bureau's efforts, their work did not immediately satisfy the needs of displaced whites. Many individual accounts concerning the situation in the region detailed the challenges faced by the agency in both the short-term as well as the long-term. In the months immediately

<sup>67</sup> J.W. Sprague to O.O. Howard," August 30, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

<sup>68</sup> J.W. Sprague to O.O. Howard," September 27, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

following the end of the war into the fall, officials came face to face with the displaced residents who they came to aid. Writing from Pilot Knob, Missouri, a collecting point for displaced whites from the region, Union chaplain C.H. Lovejoy reported during August of 1865 that he saw “. . . some new and pressing cases of destitution. . . .”<sup>69</sup> This certainly sheds light on just how fast the situation changed and displaced people multiplied for the Bureau during its early stages in dealing with them. Still, officials examined everyone on a case-by-case basis to determine if they really were in need of rations. In this report, Lovejoy expressed skepticism that these people needed immediate relief and they would be questioned and observed. The people here were those that the war left behind.

Soldiers’ wives were of special concern for Bureau agents. Lovejoy notes that special attention must be given to “soldiers’ wives and widows” as they did not receive money from their husbands and could not find work in the area to make any kind of living. The chaplain does not reveal if these widows and soldiers’ wives were Union or Confederate, but it does reveal the hardships faced by these women when their husbands left for war. It also demonstrates the important role played by these women in the aftermath of the war. Historian Stephanie McCurry notes this pattern extensively in her most recent work. “That ‘soldiers’ wives’ emerged as the term of self-discipline for the great majority of poor white Southern women tells us something very significant about the transformative possibilities of politics in war.”<sup>70</sup> Lovejoy concluded, “Their condition is truly a sad one.”<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> “Chaplain C.H. Lovejoy to General Sprague,” August 5, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>70</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 135.

<sup>71</sup> “Chaplain C.H. Lovejoy to General Sprague,” August 5, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

From these Bureau reports, we are able to learn little about those displaced whites, though some offer clues. Union army captain Thomas Abel, writing from Little Rock, detailed the situation in Arkansas to his superiors by early January 1866. Abel began his nine-page letter with an overview of the situation based on reports from those in the field. He toured the state in December 1865, made his own observations, and gathered information from other agents from various parts of the state. Abel noted that people came from as far away as fifty miles from the garrison at Fort Smith. He goes on to detail who some of these people were, at least in terms of numbers, at Fort Smith. “Of that number,” Abel continues, “about fifty-five are men who are either sick, lame or blind, two hundred and fifty are women who represent themselves as widows, or the wives of the above mentioned class of men. Two hundred and seventy are children over fourteen years of age, and seven hundred and twenty five are children under fourteen years old.”<sup>72</sup> Again, in trying to ascertain that those seeking rations are actually in need, the agent questions those who are asking for more than who are actually present at the garrison – individuals asking for more than what they would need. Perhaps there are mothers who left their children behind or children asking for parents, grandparents, or other family members who were unable to make the trek to Fort Smith to ask for aid in person. He is most interested in the widows where he wonders in the letter if their husbands are “living.” Perhaps these women were doing what Abel suspected, trying to get extra rations – for whatever reason – to sell or because they simply did not know if they would be able to get back to ask again. It is also possible that their men were either at home or still displaced, too embarrassed about their condition to ask for aid.

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<sup>72</sup> “Report from Thomas Abel,” January 20, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA. It is unclear who this report was written for, at least specifically. It appears to have been written for some kind of superior officer at the Bureau.

Abel tells a similar story about displaced whites further north at Fayetteville and then Clarksville. Many in Fayetteville were often hungry and some were homeless. Like people at Fort Smith, it was mostly women and children in Fayetteville – with many of them widows of Union soldiers killed in battle. The area he travelled between these two communities was in complete devastation according to Abel. The situation at Clarksville was so bad that entire families, in addition to being in a near constant state of starvation, slept on beds of grass and leaves in the corner of abandoned plantations “and scarcely garments to hide their nakedness.”<sup>73</sup> Overall, Abel paints a rather bleak picture in Arkansas during the final months of 1865 – at least in the handful of places that he had visited.

Freedpeople are not absent in Abel’s lengthy report to his Bureau superiors. He briefly mentions freedpeople present at these locations, but, according to his observations, they appeared to be getting along fine. Occasionally, he would mention the number of rations that they needed or how many freedpeople might be present at a given location. This report, like those from other agents, compared freedpeople and displaced whites. When these comparisons were made, freedpeople were often cast in a more favorable light. For example, in this case, Abel discusses the prospect that they might work so that they are not reliant on the government. Abel ended his report with the following observation: “The people throughout the country seem anxious to have some system of labor adopted, but their talk and actions prove that selfish motives alone prompt them. Their first questions are ‘will Agt. [Bureau agents] have power to make the Nigers [sic] work.’ I found some idle Freedmen at every town, more at Ft. Smith than any other, but I saw more idle whites than negroes [sic].”<sup>74</sup> Is he talking specifically about displaced whites? Is he referring to those who formerly made up the planter class? It was not out of the ordinary for the Bureau to

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* Underlining in the original.

try to put displaced whites to work and, even in Abel's report; there were agents who wondered about the work ethic of these displaced whites before the war. Usually, they concluded that these people were lacking in their work ethics before the war as well. Reports like Abel's often raise more questions than they actually answer.

Similar statements about displaced whites poured in to Washington from Bureau offices across the region. Sensing that the number of people who needed rations – displaced whites, destitute whites, and freedpeople – the agency began to think aloud about utilizing the transportation to shift the burden of these people away from the Bureau. Their first choice it seems would be to turn them loose to work the land and provide their own subsistence through the fruits of their own labor. However, Abel notes that the land around Little Rock was in “exhausted condition” and this would not be possible.<sup>75</sup> It was for reasons such as this that, like the Union army and the different benevolent aid organizations that came before it, the Freedmen's Bureau often organized transport for people who could find shelter and other aid with friends and family elsewhere in the country. Displaced whites were usually transported by rail and were sent all over the country, wherever they could receive help, usually from friends and family.

Other times, the Bureau provided transportation for displaced people who simply wanted to return home. In November of 1865, agent W.S. McCullough, wrote about those seeking transport. In a quickly scrawled note, McCullough wrote from DeValls Bluff, in eastern Arkansas, “I would respectfully request and order for transportation to their homes for the following named families who are sick, destitute, and depending upon the government for support but who have

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

farms at home and think if they could get to them they could support themselves and are anxious to go.”<sup>76</sup> He then notes the names of four families and a sick man who needed travel:

Catherina McClinton and two children Jacksonport, Ark.

Jane Greene and one child to Ft. Smith, Ark.

Lima McCormick and four children Jacksonport, Ark.

John R. Means, wife and three children and sick man Elijah Hox to Jacksonport, Ark.<sup>77</sup>

In this instance, there is very little description of who these people were, what consequences brought them to the Bureau in search of help, or what became of them once they left the care of these agents. What we can deduce from this particular document is that there were people who simply wanted to go back home – to work, to be reunited with families, to return their lives to some kind of normalcy. Not everyone who came to the agency for help wanted it to be long term nor were all of these people who sought help lazy, in line with contemporary views. Three of the four families – or parts of families – were women and children. Perhaps the Confederate army conscripted their husbands, perhaps these men had gone into hiding to avoid having to serve in either army, or, perhaps, they had been killed in the war or during their time on the run. It is hard to tell.

A wide range of people took advantage of the Bureau’s transportation opportunities. Pierce notes in his work about the agency how it “furnished free transportation to four classes of persons: white refugees, freedmen, teachers, and officers and agents of the bureau.”<sup>78</sup> Pierce goes further explaining that this transportation was prevalent during 1865 and 1866. After 1866, a combination

<sup>76</sup> “W.S. McCullough to Captain,” November 15, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Paul Skeels Pierce, *The Freedmen’s Bureau: A Chapter in Reconstruction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1904), 99.

of a decreased need for this transportation as well as a number of abuses of the system extremely limited this service by the Bureau.<sup>79</sup> Pierce estimates that it transported 3,892 displaced people during the period of May 5, 1865 through March 20, 1869 at a cost of approximately \$213,886.36.<sup>80</sup> This transportation was not cost effective when compared to the issuance of rations to those in need. “Transportation is more expensive and logistically more difficult than providing rations,” observes historian Robert C. Lieberman, “and presumably any given individual needs to be transported only once, whereas relief is a continuous need.”<sup>81</sup> The Bureau’s transportation program served the immediate purpose of transitioning displaced whites back to some kind of normalcy.

A number of Bureau records detail the transportation of both displaced individuals as well as entire families to be with others who could provide assistance, easing their transition back into peacetime. Transportation provided for uprooted whites in the region sent them to places like Texas, Alabama, Illinois, Michigan, and places as far away as New York and New England. Often, displaced people had relatives there who could care for them or they were able to find employment of some kind. For example, in October 1865, the Bureau office in Little Rock helped “F.S. Flowers and wife” to Montgomery, Alabama, and “Rev. A.R. Davis, wife, and child” to Bowling Green, Kentucky.<sup>82</sup> A secretary, a chaplain, or some other low-level official often scratched out this

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>80</sup> Displaced people accounted for only part of the number transported by the Freedmen’s Bureau as well as only a fraction of the cost to provide this transportation. Pierce estimates that the total number of people transported by the Bureau during that period (1865-1869) was 38,819 at a total cost of \$769,387.72. *Ibid.*, 102-103. See also Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 258; Robert C. Lieberman, “The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure,” *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 420. Lieberman puts the estimate a bit lower at “more than 3,400 refugees.”

<sup>81</sup> Robert C. Lieberman, “The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure,” *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 419.

<sup>82</sup> “[unnamed individual] Assistant Adjutant General to O.O. Howard,” October 21, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

information in a hastily penned hand. These documents were minimal in detail therefore rendering particulars about their condition and circumstances lost to history. In other instances, the Bureau might provide transportation that was local in nature, perhaps sending displaced people somewhere else within the state or just across the border. A December 1865 report noted a “Barry Putnam & son & daughter & two children” to be transported from St. Louis to Providence, Missouri.<sup>83</sup> The agency transported both individuals and entire families out of the region in order to reduce their impact on the agency’s resources, especially during the first year of Reconstruction.

### **The Role of Army Chaplains in Freedmen’s Bureau Operations**

Chaplains served in the army for a variety of reasons including their own idealism or they served at the request of some of the more religious officers. In addition to their religious duties that included the performing of funerals and distributing religious literature, many of these men helped hospitalized troops or maybe they would go off to secure some good reading material for the men. In many ways, they became roaming pastors, preaching to soldiers on the move. Many soldiers tried to make sense of the war within the framework of religion and the chaplains helped in that effort. “Specifically, from the middle of 1863, many troops in both armies saw the war as God’s punishment for ‘our sins,’ though Northerners and Southerners differed in who they meant by ‘our’ and what they mean by ‘sins.’”<sup>84</sup> Soldiers did not always welcome the chaplains, an outsider in a band of brothers. Soldiers often viewed these men as a fifth wheel or a nuisance to the regiment or company. Over time, however, chaplains would often carve out a place of their own within these military units, catering to not only the needs of the unit, but to the needs of the

<sup>83</sup> “List of Transportations Issued by the Genl. Superintendent of Refugees and Freedmen for the State of Missouri During the Month of November 1865,” December 1, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 10, NARA.

<sup>84</sup> Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 113.

individual soldier. With the war over, chaplains entered the fray of the Bureau and officials charged them with the task of aiding displaced people.<sup>85</sup>

Sometimes, these chaplains served in a dual capacity – they were both the post chaplain as well as the Superintendent of Refugees, who served as a part of the Freedmen’s Bureau, for a given geographic area. Even as the war ended, they served the spiritual needs for soldiers as well as displaced Southern whites. For example, in a general order issued by Major-General Dodge in the Department of the Missouri in December of 1864: “For the purpose of better providing for the wants and of improving the condition of the large number of refugees in this department, and to organize in the different districts a uniform system for their care, a refugee bureau is hereby established. Each district commander will appoint an officer (*a chaplain if possible*) as superintendent of refugees, whose duty is shall be to look after the interests of the destitute refugees in his district.”<sup>86</sup> Chaplains would continue to assist displaced people under the umbrella of Bureau operations.

Army chaplains often served as the face of the Bureau for so many displaced whites. Chaplains, whose duties were “so diversified that one must be cautious in making generalizations,” played a key role in dealing with any and all matters pertaining to displaced people during the later stages of the war into the Reconstruction period.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, while this observation is true as it

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<sup>85</sup> George C. Rable, *God’s Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 111-113; Steven E. Woodworth, *While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001); John W. Brinsfield, Williams C. Davis, and Benedict Maryniak, *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003); Richard G. Williams, “A Great Deal of Good: The Work and Impact of Chaplains During the American Civil War,” *Essential Civil War Curriculum* Virginia Center for Civil War Studies at Virginia Tech (October, 2011): 1-8. For an excellent published account of a chaplain’s duties, see William Furry, ed., *The Preacher’s Tale: The Civil War Journal of Rev. Francis Springer, Chaplain, U.S. Army of the Frontier* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2001).

<sup>86</sup> “J.W. Barnes, General Order Headquarters Department of the Missouri,” Numbers 238, December 27, 1864, U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Vols. (Washington Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XLI, 944. [italics added]

<sup>87</sup> Rollin W. Quimby, “The Chaplains’ Predicament,” *Civil War History* Vol. 8, No. 1 (March, 1962): 32.

pertains to the army, the Bureau utilized the service of chaplains most frequently to aid displaced residents. Chaplains often helped them find transportation to be with family members in other parts of the country or they might help them procure rations from the agency. In much of the Union army and Bureau's written correspondence concerning the displaced, matters were often referred to the chaplain of a given district to handle and report to a commanding officer. Chaplains also detailed the size and scope of the situation as well as the amount of supplies needed/received for these people.

While a number of chaplains served displaced people throughout the Trans-Mississippi West after the war as a part of the Bureau, one name stands out in the region: Alpha Wright. Wright, originally from Vermont, graduated seminary and preached all over the country as an ordained member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. After his tours around the country before the war, Wright settled in Missouri where, as a strong Unionist, he joined the Twenty-fifth Missouri Volunteer Infantry as a chaplain in 1863 and he served in that capacity for the remainder of the war. On June 27, 1865, in Circular No. 4, Sprague assigned Wright as Superintendent of Refugees for the states of Missouri and Kansas under the Freedmen's Bureau, headquartered in St. Louis.<sup>88</sup> Because of this appointment, Wright's name appears in a number of records that pertain to the agency's dealings with displaced people in Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas during 1865 and 1866.<sup>89</sup> Wright, and other men like him, served the Bureau and performed a variety of functions, aiding both displaced whites and freedpeople.

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<sup>88</sup> "Circular No. 4," June 27, 1865, in U.S. Congress, "Freedmen's Bureau: Letter from the Secretary of War, in Answer to A Resolution of the House of March 8, Transmitting a Report, by the Commission of the Freedmen's Bureau, of All Orders Issued by Him or Any Assistant Commissioner," 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (Washington, D.C., 1866), 69.

<sup>89</sup> R. Eli Paul, "An Early Reference to Crazy Horse," *Nebraska History* 75 (1994): 189-190. After his service in the Bureau, Wright served as a chaplain at various posts in Wyoming. He earned notoriety out West as providing one of the earliest references to the Native American leader, Crazy Horse.

Chaplains dutifully cared for the needs of displaced whites and freedpeople and reported all of the details to the Bureau. For example, Chaplain C.H. Lovejoy worked with Wright to obtain second-hand clothing sent to Pilot Knob, Missouri, in June of 1865, for “a few cases of great destitution for clothing. Chaplain Wright when here said that there was second-hand clothing that could be had,” Lovejoy continued, “if so, we could dispose of a box of it to great advantage.”<sup>90</sup> They offered suggestions on how to procure additional supplies as well as advice on how to reduce the needs of displaced people and freedpeople. Usually this meant soliciting donations from the local population or requesting supplies from the benevolent aid societies to shift the cost of providing for displaced people in the region. Sometimes, some Bureau officials accused chaplains of being too generous. In one instance, an official accused a chaplain of being too generous, perhaps, in whom he qualified as displaced. Bureau agent D.H. Williams complained that displaced whites exaggerated their status in an effort to get supplies from the government. Williams wrote to Sprague from Clarksville, Arkansas, that these displaced residents were taking the advantage of the chaplain. “The officer in charge of the Refugee Dept. here is a chaplain (Rev. Z. Keeton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ark. Inf.) and I think too kind hearted and unsuspecting for this [business?]”<sup>91</sup> Here, perhaps the chaplain better assessed the needs of these people, was perhaps too generous with supplies, or, if Williams was correct, residents who were not in any kind of need took advantage of him.

### **Displaced Whites vs. Freedpeople: Treatment by the Freedmen’s Bureau**

Throughout the records of the Bureau, it separated freedpeople from what the agency generically labeled as *refugees* or destitute whites. Certainly, the debates over race that were

<sup>90</sup> “C.H. Lovejoy to J.W. Sprague,” June 30, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>91</sup> “D.H. Williams to J.W. Sprague,” July 18, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

present when Congress decided to include whites under the agency's umbrella of operations, were not over as they poured over into the agency's efforts. From the various meticulously kept charts, detailing the number of rations disbursed to freedpeople and displaced whites to the many transportation arrangements carried out by the Bureau, officials went out of their way to detail whom, amongst displaced whites and freedpeople received what kind of aid. Aid given to *refugees* would be listed in one column while aid for *freedmen* would be listed in another. While no official communication from Washington was found regarding these classifications between the two, it does raise questions about why this practice was adopted. Was this something performed at some offices and not others? Was this practice used as a means to keep track of who received the aid to perhaps back arguments against aid for one group or the other? It is unclear as to why this was done but it does show that even Bureau aid could be segregated in nature.

While agents separated the two groups when it came to aid, this was not the case when it came to enforcing order, displaced whites and freedpersons were sometimes lumped together in the interest of maintaining order. These orders, issued by local Bureau offices, usually contained some kind of prohibition. For example, Special Order No. 7, issued on October 24, 1865, in Monticello, Arkansas, prohibited the sale of alcohol to freedmen or displaced whites. "All persons are hereby inhibited from selling, giving or allowing to be drank on their premises, any intoxicating liquors to or by Refugees, or Freedmen, unless accompanied by a permit from the Supt. Freedmen's Office, or a certified statement from a practicing physician showing that such is necessary as a medicine."<sup>92</sup> Such an order hints that the Bureau viewed both displaced whites and freedpeople as a threat to order and, as a result, they banned the sale of intoxicants to these people.

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<sup>92</sup> "Special Order No. 7," October 24, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

Agents often made it clear that freedpeople were their first priority, even though Congress established the Bureau based on a non-discrimination policy. The attitude conveyed by many officials expressed, at times,” Sprague wrote to Howard during that first summer of peace, “frustration directed at displaced whites who came into their care in search of help. “I am satisfied that the Freedmen of this State will establish and support their own schools almost entirely, if the Government protects them, but this is not true yet of the White Refugees.”<sup>93</sup> For these officials, like Howard and Sprague, displaced whites were somehow still unprepared to do the same. They viewed these whites in much the same way that the Western Sanitary Commission had in their relief efforts. Officials viewed them with a disdain draped with the prejudices of wartime stereotypes of these displaced whites. Perhaps this was because of antebellum prejudices towards Southern whites or maybe it was because they were still viewed as the enemy. Because of this treatment by the Bureau, many displaced whites turned to their state government for help.

### **The Bureau and the States**

Relief for freedpeople and displaced whites in the South raised many questions about government aid. Historian Denise Wright has argued that states evolved their own welfare policies during the war, before the arrival of the Freedmen’s Bureau. “The individual state of the former Confederacy had established welfare policies and programs during the war;” Wright notes, “by providing assistance to the South’s white poor, the Freedmen’s Bureau continued an established practice.”<sup>94</sup> For many Southerners, the agency was the proverbial ‘tip of the sword’ when it came

<sup>93</sup> “J.W. Sprague to O.O. Howard,” June 28, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 1, NARA.

<sup>94</sup> Denise E. Wright, “‘Objects of Humanity’: The White Poor in Civil War and Reconstruction Georgia,” in Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America’s Continuing Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 107. See also John Hope Franklin, “Public Welfare in the South during the Reconstruction Era, 1865-80,” *Social Service Review* Vol. 44, No. 4 (Dec., 1970): 379-392; Alice B. Keith, “White Relief in North Carolina, 1865-1867,” *Social Forces* Vol. 17, No. 3 (Mar., 1939): 337-355; Elna C. Green, *The Business of Relief: Confronting Poverty in a Southern City, 1740-1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), chapters 3 and 4 pertain to the Civil War and Reconstruction.

to government aid. Howard did not hide his feelings on this subject when it came to the Bureau. More often than not, Howard, in line with contemporary beliefs, preferred to “have responsibility for paupers, including indigent refugees and freedmen, restored to local officials.”<sup>95</sup> The war caused a change in how relief for the poor was carried out; it was a significant shift in public policy on this issue. Local governments in the South carried this burden often via property and poll taxes beginning in 1863. This was in addition to other programs aimed at relief programs for the widows of soldiers started a few years earlier.<sup>96</sup> Howard and his actions towards the poor serve as an example of dealing with this change, an attempt to reinforce those beliefs. “From the start I felt sure that the relief offered by the Bureau to refugees and freedmen through the different channels,” Howard recalled in his autobiography, “being abnormal to our system of government, would be but temporary.”<sup>97</sup> Howard and his agents attempted to have local officials handle many of these situations, especially in Arkansas. McCurry notes, “The American Civil War forged a new understanding of the relationship between citizens, subjects, and the state and a renegotiation of the social contract.”<sup>98</sup> Many displaced Southern whites made their way to the Bureau in search of relief, only to be turned away to seek relief from their local government.

In many instances, the Freedmen’s Bureau attempted to work with Arkansas’s Unionist governor Isaac Murphy in resolving pleas for assistance from the state’s citizens where the agency held the state government responsible as much as possible. For example, Sprague forwarded the application of one Mary E. Davis and her pleas for assistance regarding food for her and her

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<sup>95</sup> Robert H. Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 120.

<sup>96</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 194.

<sup>97</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 226.

<sup>98</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 133.

starving children, as well as a request for her deceased husband's pay she felt was owed to her. Sprague reminded Governor Murphy in a March 22, 1866, letter that there were "hundreds of poor women in this State who are suffering for the common necessities of life, and yet there is due them from the General Govt. for services rendered by their deceased husbands, enough to relieve their pressing wants."<sup>99</sup> Here, Sprague asked the state to step in to prevent these kinds of claims, which he felt were the state's responsibility, from reaching his office at the Bureau, again illustrating the agency's limited resources. Asking the state to step in and fulfill the needs of these needy Southern whites was not uncommon. "Opponents demanded that any assistance rendered to poor Confederate veterans or their families come from the southern states rather than the U.S. government."<sup>100</sup> In the post-war debates over not only who should receive aid, but also who would give it, Americans and their military leaders shared the view that the states should share the burden for this aid.

Many Southerners also shared this belief and this was evident in the number of letters and petitions to their state officials requesting relief. Citizens' wartime requests for assistance were common in the South, but these governments usually failed in providing any significant aid. "State and Confederate governments offered a variety of direct and indirect relief to the impoverished, but in quantities insufficient to meet the needs. The result was disillusionment with those governments, which worked to underpin popular support for the war."<sup>101</sup> While some white Southerners went to the Bureau in search of assistance, others hoped that their local officials would answer their pleas for help. "Although many southerners, white and black, had received aid from

<sup>99</sup> "J.W. Sprague to Governor Isaac Murphy Concerning Mary E. Davis," March 22, 1866, L.C. Gulley Collection, Folder 45 (1866), Item 531, Arkansas Historical Commission, Little Rock.

<sup>100</sup> Jennifer Lynn Gross, "'And for the Widow and the Orphan': Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance," in Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 221.

<sup>101</sup> Elna C. Green, *This Business of Relief: Confronting Poverty in a Southern City, 1740-1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 85.

the U.S. government through both the army and the Freedmen's Bureau before the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s," historian Jennifer Lynn Gross reminds us, "southerners largely rejected the ideological underpinnings of that aid."<sup>102</sup> People petitioned their government asking for help on a wide variety of issues: bringing a son or husband home from the war, relief from the poor living conditions many faced because of the war, and pardons for a son or husband convicted of desertion, avoiding conscription, or the breaking of some other wartime measure. What these petitions show, argues historian Amy E. Murrell, was that "[t]hese men and women were frustrated with a perceived lack of government support for their welfare. Their frustration, some historians conclude, represented disillusionment with the war on the part of white Southerners and undermined any chance of cultivating a common identity or purpose among them."<sup>103</sup> Many citizens in the West expressed this sentiment in one way or another, especially communities who were hardest hit by the war.

Communities throughout Missouri and Arkansas, especially as displaced whites returned to their homes, contemplated how they might rebuild. Many faced untold destruction in their communities. The destruction here was physical in the form of destroyed buildings, pillaged possessions, or ravaged fields. Other times, the destruction was social in that some aspect of the war – fighting between the armies, guerrilla fighters' constant raids on Southern and Border State communities, etc. - had torn entire communities apart. As a result, a number of Southern communities needed help and the Freedmen's Bureau provided a great opportunity to put them on the road to recovery. In the summer of 1865, entire communities began to ask the agency for help

<sup>102</sup> Jennifer Lynn Gross, "And for the Widow and the Orphan': Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance," in Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 221.

<sup>103</sup> Amy E. Murrell, "Of Necessity and Public Benefit': Southern Families and Their Appeals for Protection," in Catherine E. Clinton, ed., *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 78. See also Paul D. Escott, "Cry of the Sufferers': The Problem of Welfare in the Confederacy," *Civil War History* 23 (1977): 228-240.

in order to achieve that goal. For example, the people of Lexington, Missouri, asked the agency for help in September of 1865. These citizens described the problem to the Bureau in three parts, thus their reasons for needing assistance:

1. There are in this city and vicinity upwards of two thousand Refugees and Freedmen.
2. Many of these are without regular employment, and consequently, poor and often without the necessities of life.
3. The scarcity of houses, and, the corresponding high rents, compel many to live together in the same rooms, and hence there has been among them much sickness, suffering, and death.<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps the five people who signed this document had exhausted other resources on an individual basis or these communities simply believed their numbers might draw more attention.

Similar petitions came to the Bureau from citizens in need of help in Arkansas as well. For example, petitions from the citizens of Lewisburg, Arkansas, to help “Negroes and indigent Whites of this place and the surrounding county.”<sup>105</sup> Written on January 2, 1866, and addressed to J.W. Sprague, this petition from thirty-five citizens requesting a Bureau agent for their community, putting a name forward of one of their own – Mr. Edward J. Morrill. Sprague received a similar petition from the citizens of Johnson County a little over a week later. The same for Pope and Yell Counties – all “refugees and Freedmen” and all in need of food, shelter, and supplies. Perhaps they wanted one of their own on the inside of the agency or maybe they had requested help before only to receive no response from agents. This could have also been their first attempt to contact the agents in search of aid. Freedpeople and whites asked for help collectively, demonstrating that both needed help from the agency.

<sup>104</sup> “Petition for Supply of Rations to Genl. J.W. Sprague,” September 4, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>105</sup> “Petition to Genl. J.W. Sprague,” January 2, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA.

Writing to the governor for some Arkansans was simply not enough. Some sent a representative to the Governor's Mansion in Little Rock requesting help. This might have been made necessary because the governor had not replied or because their situation was so desperate, citizens felt that a face-to-face visit was important. In one instance, John C. Brown, a former soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup> Arkansas representing Hot Spring County, visited the governor requesting relief in January of 1866 (See Fig. 5.3). While he did not leave with any promised aid, he did leave with what appears to be a letter of introduction from the governor. Unable to help, Murphy referred Mr. Brown to the Bureau for relief. "He comes to seek relief for strong families in that county [Hot Spring County] – soldiers' families – will you be so good as to hear him and if possible devise some plan to give relief."<sup>106</sup> Murphy expressed his displeasure and frustration that he had not heard from his Bureau agent responsible for that part of the state after he had gone north, concluding: "I fear his mission will be a failure."<sup>107</sup> Both worked together to grab the ear of the Bureau, directing aid where it was needed most.

<sup>106</sup> "Isaac Murphy to Maj. Genl. Reynolds," January 31, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Executive Office,  
Little Rock, Ark., Jan 31 1866

My Dear Mr. Reynolds, Com. Asst. Ark  
Gen.

Permit me to introduce to  
you the Cheever John C. Brown a  
Soldier of 4th Ark being in Hot Spring  
County. He comes to seek relief for  
sorrowing families in that County. Soldiers  
families. Will you be so good as to  
hear him and if possible devise some  
plan to give relief. We have been  
expressing a shipment of provisions  
through the agency of Porson Laird  
who has been acting as agent for  
the destitute in this State. I have not  
heard from him since he went north  
and I fear his mission will be  
a failure. With very respect  
Isaac Murphy

Fig. 5.3: Letter of introduction for John C. Brown from Isaac Murphy, January 31, 1866.

Source: Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA.

While asking for help as a community had its benefits, so did asking for help at a more personal level. Citizens of communities in Arkansas and Missouri also wrote to their elected officials on an individual basis. For example, James Penney, another citizen from Paraclyfta, wrote the governor in April 1865, asking him to “suppose you were in the army, your family at home . . . was out of bread, had no one of them able or large enough to go after it for them . . . .”<sup>108</sup> Citizens not only needed protection from irregular military actions, but they also needed help providing for their families – food, shelter, clothing, and housing. Both armies and the remaining citizens

<sup>108</sup> “Letter from James Penney to Gov Flanagin,” April 26, 1865 [?], Item 1058, Box 15, Kie Oldham Collection, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock. Harris Flanagin served as the Democratic (Confederate) governor of Arkansas for most of the Civil War during the years 1862-1865. With the fall of the state capitol at Little Rock in September 1863, Flanagin moved the government to Washington, Arkansas. Arkansas Unionists drafted a new state constitution in 1864 and, with that, elected a Unionist governor in Isaac Murphy that same year. While Flanagin still tried to run the government from Washington, Arkansas, Union military leaders no longer recognized his legal authority in the state after Murphy’s election.

stripped the countryside of any sort of sustenance for the people, so these citizens who could not envision a solution to their local problems wrote their elected officials for help. Sometimes, they wrote as a single county or, in other instances, multiple counties combined their grievances. Another from the citizens of Dallas and Clark Counties, addressed to “His Excellency Gov Flannagin [sic],” detailed the destruction caused by “Jayhawkers, deserters, and stragglers from the Army.”<sup>109</sup> Pleas for help from citizens indicate just how acute the situation concerning irregular troops was in Arkansas. The theft and outright destruction of personal property proved to be so terrible that local officials could not fix the problem; hence, the various petitions seeking help from the governor. Citizens often asked for assistance in procuring food and, most importantly, protection from forces who wished to do them harm. In many instances, entire communities did not know where to turn with regard to their situation at home. There are many instances of Arkansas citizens writing on their behalf asking for help from high-ranking state officials, most notably, the governor. “Writing was to them a means of opening a dialogue with government leaders [.]” Murrell observes with regard to the number of petitions sent by white Southerners, “as a result, their relationship with their leaders appears more giving and less adversarial than previously portrayed.”<sup>110</sup> These letters and petitions are rather straightforward in nature, simply asking for relief – even if temporary – and state how dire their situation is. For example, a J.L. Sumner wrote to Governor Murphy – who he addressed as “My Dear Old Friend” – during the spring of 1866 about widows and orphans in need in Madison County in the northwestern part of the state who needed help. “There are very many families here, that are perfectly destitute, depend

<sup>109</sup> “Petition from citizens of Clark and Dallas Counties to His Excellency Gov. Flannagin,” n.d., Item 904, Box 13, Kie Oldham Collection, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

<sup>110</sup> Amy E. Murrell, “‘Of Necessity and Public Benefit’: Southern Families and Their Appeals for Protection,” in Catherine E. Clinton, ed., *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79.

upon what little they can beg from their neighbors – no one has anything to share without disfurnishing themselves.”<sup>111</sup> Citizens wrote about being near starvation or that they had no food because of guerrillas or poor harvests. There is no discussion in these appeals of one’s political leanings, citizens are not leveraging their whiteness in any way, nor are they criticizing their local or national officials in any way. They simply state that they need help, why they need help, and that they are loyal to the Union.

Governor Murphy received a number of letters and petitions from Arkansas citizens after the war. Not all of these citizens, however, wrote from inside the state. In one instance, a man named Wiley S. King wrote to the governor of Arkansas from Rolla, Missouri, during the summer of 1865. Writing from Rolla, Mr. King pleaded for help from the governor. A loyal citizen who had two sons fight in the Union army, one had been killed, Mr. King stated his desire to return home to Arkansas. The area around Rolla was so unsettled, however, he requested the governor to send federal troops to escort him back home. “I want to return home vary [sic] bad and I will petition you to send about some [?] federal [sic] soldiers to fulton County to help to enforce [sic] the civil law as there is some people thare [sic] that will bee [sic] opposed to the law being enforced [sic]. I will endeavor to do my part I want that contry [sic] to flourish once more.”<sup>112</sup> The war’s impact on displaced whites lingered long after the armies fired the final shot. It is unclear what became of Mr. King after he wrote this letter to the governor, but the uneasiness many in the region experienced after the war can be felt here. While other displaced people wrote Murphy for help procuring food or clothing, this man wrote for assistance in getting back home. It certainly adds variety to the kinds of letters sent to the governor pleading for help.

<sup>111</sup> “Letter from J.L. Sumner to His Excellency I. Murphy,” March 27, 1866, Item 1121, Box 15, Kie Oldham Collection, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from Wiley King to Governor Murphy,” July 23, 1865, Item 1058, Box 15, Kie Oldham Collection, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

While a fair number of petitions and letters from Arkansas citizens can be located in the historical record, few can be found in Missouri from Missouri citizens. This may demonstrate better/more control from local authorities in Missouri, thus negating the need for local communities in that state to request the help of their governor. Though the aforementioned letter indicates that the situation was not perfect with regard to law and order. This does not mean, however, that such letters do not exist. It just shows that things appeared to be better in Missouri than in Arkansas in the immediate aftermath of the war. The lack of such pleas may also show, especially later in the war, how stable the military situation was in Missouri with the increasing Union presence. The Union army was well in control in Missouri for much of the war and, as a result, attended to the needs of the citizens who resided there.

Other petitions notified the Bureau of people running low on their monthly rations. Historian Mary Farmer-Kaiser has noted, “over the first year of operations, between June 1865 and August 1866, the bureau distributed more than thirteen million rations of food to southerners, almost nine million directed to freedpeople.”<sup>113</sup> Petitions of this sort were prevalent during the spring of 1866 when community members wrote to the office in Little Rock pleading for rations. Citizens in Sevier County, Arkansas (Jefferson Township) wrote the Bureau in hopes of making them aware of their situation. “We the undersigned citizens of Jefferson Township and the county and state as aforesaid do depose and say on oath that we have not got one month’s provisions on hand and we do further swear that the number and ages added to our names is true.”<sup>114</sup> This petition, penned by a H.G. Littlefield on behalf of his fellow citizens, then listed the names of

<sup>113</sup> Mary Farmer-Kaiser, “With a Weight of Circumstances like Millstones about Their Necks’: Freedwomen, Federal Relief, and the Benevolent Guardianship of the Freedmen’s Bureau,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 115, No. 3 (2007): 147.

<sup>114</sup> “The State of Arkansas County of Sevier,” May 30, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA.

eighteen heads of household and the numbers in each household both over and under the age of fourteen years. There are similar petitions from the citizens of Pike County (White Township), Saline County (DeKalb Township), and others during the early months of 1866. These petitions support Colby's analysis of the inconsistency of aid on a state-to-state basis. Colby contends that, due to a lack of direction and a lack of national support, it remained to the individual states where the agency operated to generate funding for its operation. Because of this, expenditures for rations, education, and health care varied among the Southern states and led to the agency's ultimate failure. "If the Bureau had been viewed from an institutional perspective," Colby notes, "white refugees might have utilized services and greatly expanded the Bureau's impact on the South."<sup>115</sup> While a number of Southern whites sought the help of the Bureau, a great deal more stayed away.

#### **Andrew Johnson and the Freedmen's Bureau Bill Veto**

One of the first pieces of paper to come across President Johnson's desk was the Freedmen's Bureau Bill in February 1866. This bill, proposed by Illinois senator Lyman Trumbull and passed by Congress just after the New Year, sought to extend the life of the agency, provide direct funding for its operations throughout the South, and allow agents to have jurisdiction over cases that involved African Americans. This jurisdiction included protection from unfair labor contracts and providing the agency with the ability to punish state officials who denied them basic civil rights. Johnson could have signed the bill to indicate his support of the Radical Congress and signify that he stood with freedpeople. Johnson, however, so this bill differently than those Republicans who put him on the ticket and, subsequently, into the Executive Mansion. He saw the bill as an opportunity to slow if not stop any progress made by the Republicans as well as assert

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<sup>115</sup> Ira C. Colby, "The Freedmen's Bureau: From Social Welfare to Segregation," *Phylon* Vol. 46, No. 3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, 1985): 226. Data for Missouri was incomplete and therefore not included in the federal report.

his authority as President of the United States. This veto served as Johnson's first clash with Congress, but it would not be his last, in his years as president.<sup>116</sup>

In his veto message to Congress, President Johnson laid out why he rejected the Bureau's extension. He believed that he could not authorize such an agency as it served to expand federal powers at the expense of the states. When it came to the Bureau's operation costs, Johnson held strong to fiscally conservative beliefs. He also echoed the sentiment that the agency would create a dependent class of citizens and he (mis)characterized the agency as a permanent branch of the government, which it was not.<sup>117</sup> The president's veto message, while acknowledging some kind of federal responsibility for freedpeople, took a shot at displaced and destitute whites who depended on the Bureau. Johnson stated in his February 19, 1866, message:

The institution of slavery, for the military destruction of which the Freedmen's Bureau was called into existence as an auxiliary force, has been already effectually and finally abrogated throughout the whole country by an amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and practically its eradication has received the assent and concurrence of most of those States in which it at any time had existed. I am not, therefore, able to discern in the country any thing [sic] to justify an apprehension that the powers and agencies of the Freedmen's Bureau, which were effective for the protection of freedmen and refugees during the actual continuation of hostilities and of African servitude, will now, in a time of peace and after the abolition of slavery, prove inadequate to the same proper ends.<sup>118</sup>

Here, the president indicates that with the end of the war, and, by result, the end of slavery, destitute and displaced whites no longer needed the support of the government vis-à-vis the Bureau. While his statement here is only one of many that would infuriate Republicans, it does hint at some deeper

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<sup>116</sup> David O. Stewart, *Impeached: The Trial of Andrew Johnson and the Fight for Lincoln's Legacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 49-51; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 243; Paul H. Bergeron, *Andrew Johnson's Civil War and Reconstruction* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 106-108; Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure: Postwar Reconstruction in the American South* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 36-37; Allen C. Guelzo, *The Crisis of the American Republic: A History of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 387-388..

<sup>117</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 246-248.

<sup>118</sup> Lillian Foster, *Andrew Johnson, President of the United States; His Life and Speeches* (New York: Richardson & Co., 1866), 232-233.

sentiments regarding displaced Southern whites present in its operations. “Throughout its existence,” reminds Foner, “the Bureau regarded poor relief as a temptation to idleness.”<sup>119</sup> In his message, Johnson said the same thing, very much aligned with Howard’s view, though his using the end of the war and the end of slavery as his reasons for discontinuing aid for displaced whites and freedpeople is a different way of thinking about it.

### **Conclusion**

With President Johnson’s veto of the Freedmen’s Bureau Bill during the early months of 1866, agents came to the realization that their work would be made more difficult because they would be caught in the middle of an ideological battle between Johnson and the Republicans in Congress. The Bureau helped displaced whites throughout Missouri and Arkansas from the war’s end in April/May 1865 into 1866. Often charged with this task were the many army chaplains who stayed on to work for the agency after the war. Howard placed these chaplains in charge of providing for displaced whites who made their way to the Bureau in search of help. Displaced whites from across the region came to the Bureau in search of relief and received it. Led by General O.O. Howard, the agency had what they felt to be a clear mission in helping the thousands upon thousands of freedpeople throughout the South, but it was unsure of what to do when it came to helping displaced whites. To be sure, the Bureau needed help and they received it from aid societies like the Western Sanitary Commission. While agents were suspicious of Southern whites who came to them for help, they put their initial suspicions aside and issued rations, provided transportation, and employment for so many of these people. In the Trans-Mississippi West, the Bureau consolidated its operations to a headquarters in Little Rock, effectively ending their efforts in Missouri. Howard concluded that freedpeople were adequately protected there and he felt that

<sup>119</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 153.

the support of Missouri's displaced and destitute citizens should fall squarely on the shoulders of the local government. As a result, many displaced citizens wrote to their local officials requesting aid to ameliorate their condition or simply requesting the Bureau to hear their needs. This view that the states should provide relief for its citizens, not the Bureau, not only came from the head of the agency, but it was a view that many Americans shared at that time. During the Bureau's first year of operation, tensions regarding where its focus should be emerged. It became clear that the agency wanted to focus on the plight of freedpeople and its distrust of displaced whites fueled that narrowed focus. Combined, these factors made for a very difficult task for the Bureau when it came to the aid of displaced citizens.

Complicating things for the Bureau and their operations throughout the South was the leadership of new president Andrew Johnson. Johnson held views on how reconstruction should proceed that differed from his predecessor in many ways. The new president was against any kind of large-scale federal programs and agencies that interfered with, what he felt were the affairs of the individual states. His first major clash with the Radical-controlled Congress was his veto of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill (1866). These clashes, however, would continue as the agency moved forward with its program of building schools and establishing hospitals for freedpeople and displaced Southern whites. Johnson thwarted attempts at land redistribution to not only freedpeople, but to displaced whites, and his Proclamation of Amnesty issued in May of 1865. This proclamation, President Johnson's continued disagreements with the Radical Congress, and a famine that affected much of the South during the early part of 1867 would prove to be the end of the Bureau's relief for the wartime displaced. From here, the agency's mission would change and displaced whites were no longer a part of its plans.

## CHAPTER 6: HOSPITALS, SCHOOLS, & LAND REDISTRIBUTION FOR DISPLACED WHITES, 1866-1868

*“According to the best information I could get, there seems to be no part of this place leased, but all the occupants were placed there by this Bureau as destitute Refugees with the hopes that they might assist a little in supporting themselves, thus relieving the Government of a part of the expense and trouble.”<sup>120</sup>*

With the creation of the Freedmen’s Bureau and its operation in Arkansas and Missouri, a great deal of work lay ahead in an effort to reduce the number displaced whites there. Hindered by the constant disagreements between the president and Congress, the agency worked to establish hospitals, schools, orphanages, and embark on a system of land reform to ease the transition to wage labor for freedpeople and help displaced and poor whites. Concerns about dependency not only influenced Washington’s decisions regarding the agency, but it also affected decisions made by agents and superintendents at the local level. “While some needy individuals could find brief assistance from the federal government through the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands,” reminds historian Jennifer Lynn Gross, “many found themselves reliant primarily upon traditional sources.”<sup>121</sup> As a result, there were debates over where displaced whites should go for aid and how much of that aid the agency should provide.

By late 1865, much of the Bureau’s operations in the region focused on Arkansas. While Missouri ratified a new state constitution that banned slavery in 1865, the situation in Arkansas would be much different and the Bureau witnessed this first hand during the following three years. The state remained in political limbo until it ratified its new constitution in 1868. This, combined with the Bureau’s decision to close up its offices in Missouri, made the reconstruction of Arkansas

<sup>120</sup> “F.W. Raymond to Captain H. Skinner,” October 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

<sup>121</sup> Jennifer Lynn Gross, “And for the Widow and Orphan’: Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance,” in Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 220.

the agency's primary focus in the region moving into 1867 and 1868. "Arkansas was a difficult state to reconstruct," General Howard remembered after the war, "and progress, especially in the line of justice was slow enough. There were numbers of desperadoes in remote places, especially in the southern districts. They evaded punishment by running across the State line, so that the emancipation acts and the civil rights law had little effect."<sup>122</sup> Howard and his agents had their work cut out for them in Arkansas, which was made more complicated with the actions of the president through 1868. By the end of that year, the president was embroiled in impeachment proceedings, Congress had gradually weakened the power of the Freedmen's Bureau, and Arkansas completed all of the steps for readmission to the Union effectively ending the agency's operations in the region. It would be a long road for the Bureau in the region, beginning less than two months after the war's end.

### **President Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation and Land Reform**

At the end of the war and large numbers of people, civilians and soldiers alike, returned to their homes and many displaced whites wondered, quite simply, what now? As parts of Arkansas came under Union control, areas around Little Rock soon as the fall of 1863, increasing numbers of uprooted families took refuge on abandoned lands throughout the state. The spring and summer of 1865 would prove to be a period of great consternation for many displaced whites settled on these lands as early debates in Washington would demonstrate how difficult land reform would be. While the Freedmen's Bureau was charged with the task of determining what would happen to abandoned and confiscated lands, the new president would instead heavily influence the immediate future of these people.

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<sup>122</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 335.

While the Freedmen's Bureau decided personnel, established branch offices across the South, and put a massive relief effort into motion, President Johnson announced his Amnesty Proclamation on May 29, 1865. This proclamation and the pardons that it permitted restored all property rights, except slaves, to former Confederates provided they took an oath of allegiance and would support emancipation. Many Radicals in Congress wondered what the president hoped to achieve with these pardons. Some congressmen wondered if Johnson was using this as an attempt to break up the lands of the plantation owners, hoping to create a new yeoman class of Southerner, while others thought that he might be doing it to force Southerners to accept his brand of Reconstruction.<sup>123</sup> The president's Amnesty Proclamation sent a ripple effect through the Bureau as it put the status of abandoned lands throughout the South into question.<sup>124</sup>

In the Amnesty Proclamation, fourteen classes of white Southerners were excluded, including prominent Confederate officials and owners of property valued at more than \$20,000 – called the twenty thousand dollar clause - had to apply for a pardon in writing, on an individual basis, to Johnson. It is important to note, however, as historian Richard B. McCaslin has pointed out, that “[b]eing pardoned did not automatically entail a restoration of confiscated property.”<sup>125</sup> Still, many former Confederates applied for pardons, some even visiting the Executive Mansion in person to do so. By the fall of 1865, the Johnson Administration issued a large number of

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<sup>123</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 183-184; See also Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Ordeal of Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 64-68; Douglas R. Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 103; Jonathan T. Dorris, *Pardon and Amnesty Under Lincoln and Johnson: The Restoration of the Confederates to Their Rights and Privileges, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953); Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 68; Dan T. Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 25.

<sup>124</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 159.

<sup>125</sup> Richard B. McCaslin, “Reconstructing a Frontier Oligarchy: Andrew Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation in Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 49, No. 4 (Winter, 1990): 323.

pardons, sometimes hundreds of them per day. Other white Southerners sought pardons under the twenty-thousand-dollar clause in Johnson's proclamation. These pardons served as an example of how eager the administration was to move forward, forgiving many men who took part in or were responsible for the war. All of this was a part of what historian David Blight has called the "politics of forgetting" throughout much of the South.<sup>126</sup>

Of course, to receive amnesty from President Johnson, one had to take an oath of allegiance affirming his or her loyalty to the United States of America. Once a former Confederate soldier or supporter took the oath, one could head down the path of amnesty. Some former Confederates simply took the oath and moved on with their lives in the reunited United States. Of course, there were various reasons why one would do so – some truly believed that they wrong to oppose the United States while others did so simply to reclaim property. Others, however, remained loyal to the Southern cause, if only in their minds. For example, an Arkansas Bureau agent investigating an abandoned property case in Helena noted how the owner – or soon to be former owner – reacted when it came to taking the oath of allegiance:

The claimant to the within query [?] property abandoned it voluntarily, she bore the character of being a bitter rebel, and still has the reputation of being such, from information which I have received from the Comdg. Officer of the District, she refused to take the oath. The House in question is used as a Home for Refugees, was used as such by Mrs. Coombs for more than 18 months & is very much needed by the Bureau for that purpose. I am told Mrs. West left Helena sooner than take the oath.<sup>127</sup>

As long as these dispossessed property owners chose not to take the oath, their property remained in federal hands and could be used as agents saw fit. Sometimes this meant shelter for freedpeople

<sup>126</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 45.

<sup>127</sup> "Continuation & Application Mrs. S.P. West for Restoration of Property," August 30, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 2, NARA. [underlining in the original]

or displaced whites, a place where they would work, or they might simply occupy a property until the government or the legal owners forced them out. In this case, the owner's refusal to take the oath meant that displaced whites could continue their residence on Mrs. Coombs's property. This pleased both the Bureau and those displaced people who chose to live there.<sup>128</sup>

In Arkansas, the end of the war was to bring about the end of rule by the planter class in the state. However, this was not the case – at least in Arkansas – as so many conservatives had

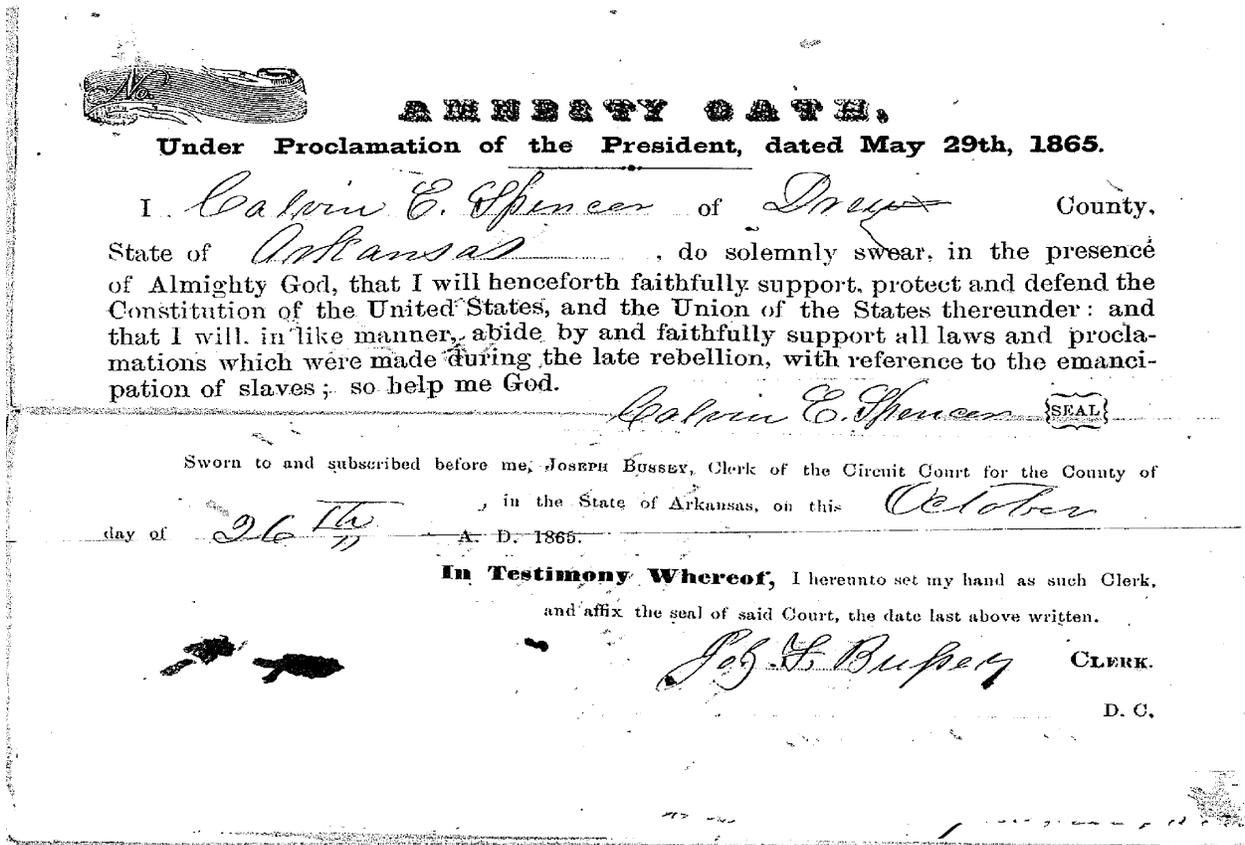


Fig 6.1: Certificate that served as proof that one took Johnson's Amnesty Oath. Source: "William A. Adams to Superintendent," Aug. 23, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA.

their rights restored rather quickly. While the war ruined many planters financially, their

<sup>128</sup> Harold M. Hyman, *Era of the Oath: Northern Loyalty Tests during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954). Arkansas was also the site of experiments in land reform for freedpeople, similar to those on the Sea Islands in Georgia. See Carl H. Moneyhon, "From Slave Labor to Free Labor: The Federal Plantation Experiment in Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer, 1994): 137-160.

representatives regained power at the state level very quickly. McCaslin has argued that Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation played a key role in this happening in Arkansas. In addition, the proclamation allowed for the repudiation of Republican initiatives for African American rights, education, and growth in the economic sector across the state. The proclamation had immediate effects during Reconstruction, but it also had long-standing consequences as well. "Amnesty, then, as administered by Johnson on the advice of many others," McCaslin points out, "led not only to the continuance of conservative politics in Arkansas, but also protracted postponement of substantive social and economic progress in the state."<sup>129</sup> For many former Arkansas Confederate veterans, simply taking the loyalty or amnesty oath (see Fig. 6.1), was enough for them to pick up where they left off before the war.

Debates raged in Congress over the shape of land reform across the South. By April 1865, the Bureau had large tracts of land in its possession to distribute how in accordance with precedent and procedures laid out by Congress and many Radicals wanted to see Confederate property holders punished. The most prominent Radical in Congress, Thaddeus Stevens, called for the confiscation of all large Confederate estates and redistribute that land to freedpeople. In September 1865, during a speech in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Stevens reminded his audience about the need to punish those Confederates. "Look again, and see loyal men reduced to poverty by the confiscations of the Confederate States," Stevens began, "and by the rebel states, see Union men robbed of their property, and their dwellings laid to ashes by rebel raiders, and say if too much is asked for them. But, above all, let us inquire whether imperative duty to the present generation and to posterity, does not command us to comply the wicked enemy to pay the expenses of this unjust

<sup>129</sup> Richard B. McCaslin, "Reconstructing a Frontier Oligarchy: Andrew Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation in Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 49, No. 4 (Winter, 1990): 329.

war.”<sup>130</sup> Stevens wanted to punish former Confederates by dividing their estates into forty-acre plots and use the sale of these lands to pay off the cost of the war. “Let us forget all parties, and build on the broad platform of ‘reconstructing’ the government out of the conquered territory converted into new and free States,” advised Stevens as he ended his speech, “and admitted into the Union by the sovereign power of Congress, with another plank – ‘THE PROPERTY OF THE REBELS SHALL PAY OUR NATIONAL DEBT,’ indemnify freedmen and loyal suffers – and that under no circumstances will we suffer the national debt to be repudiated, or the interest scaled below the contract rates; nor permit any parts of the rebel debt to be assumed by the nation.”<sup>131</sup> Stevens wanted to punish ex-Confederates for their role in the war, eliminate any kind of influence from the planter class, with freedpeople as the beneficiaries of this policy. While many fellow Radicals supported Senator Stevens’s idea, it never gained any kind of traction and, in many ways, only served to highlight differences within the Radical faction of the party.<sup>132</sup>

For Confederates and Confederate supporters who had their lands confiscated, they would not simply allow the Bureau to take them over without a fight. “Land was the major form of wealth in the state,” reminds historian Thomas DeBlack, “and the commodity on which economic, social, and political power were based.”<sup>133</sup> During the war, planters abandoned their lands and, as a result, it was confiscated by the government, leaving large tracts of land unoccupied and unworked. The original Freedmen’s Bureau Bill detailed this provision in Section 4: “to every male citizen,

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<sup>130</sup> “Speech of Hon. Thaddeus Stevens Delivered in the City of Lancaster, September 6, 1865,” Furman University, Thaddeus Stevens Papers Online, accessed February 12, 2015.

<http://history.furman.edu/benson/hst41/red/stevens2.htm>.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 235-236; Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln’s Vanguard for Racial Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 322. Radical Benjamin Butler advocated that the forfeited Rebel lands be distributed to African American veterans. See Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln’s Vanguard for Racial Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 317.

<sup>133</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 150.

whether refugee or freedmen . . . shall be assigned not more than forty acres of land, and the person to whom it was so assigned shall be protected in the use and enjoyment of the land for the term of three years at the annual rent not exceeding six per centum upon the value of such land . . . .”<sup>134</sup>

The Bureau had to operate with regard to these abandoned lands until they received official word on any change in status. As a result, the agency placed a great number of displaced whites on abandoned and confiscated lands until they heard from their superiors, or debates in Washington were settled, that they had to return the land to its legal owners by way of the amnesty program.

Just how much land was in the Bureau’s hands nationally and in the Trans-Mississippi West? While it is difficult to determine an exact figure, historians have come up with a few estimates based on its records. “In the fall of 1865,” Louis S. Gerteis calculated that “the Bureau controlled about 800,000 acres of arable land, enough at most for 20,000 family farms of forty acres or 160,000 five-acre plots.”<sup>135</sup> Howard’s estimate in December of 1865 was a bit less than Gerteis’s. In his *Autobiography*, Howard put the acreage under his control at 768,590 acres for the entire South. This served as the high point in terms of acreage as it was before any large scale land restorations to Southerners who took the amnesty oath. In Arkansas and Missouri, the agency controlled 18,736 acres of land by the end of 1865, with none of it yet restored to its former owners. Of that land, all of it was under cultivation by freedpeople and displaced whites according to reports.<sup>136</sup> Once many former Confederates took Johnson’s Amnesty Oath, acreage in possession

<sup>134</sup> *Freedmen’s Bureau Bill*, March 3, 1865, Sec 4.

<sup>135</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedmen: Federal Policy toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 187. Eric Foner put this number at about 850,000 acres. See Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 158.

<sup>136</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 231.

of the Bureau dropped steadily in 1866, 1867, and 1868. Bureau land holdings fell to about 140,000 acres across the South by 1868.<sup>137</sup>

What enabled the Bureau to control this large amount of land legally? Essentially, there were two classes of property where it had legal control with regard to redistribution to displaced whites and freedpeople. The first class included property abandoned by Confederates. Many Confederate Arkansans left their homes to areas more firmly in the hands of their army, especially after Union forces won key victories during the fall of 1863. The other class of property comprised those lands confiscated by the Union army. This usually involved the property of local politicians or prominent families who supported the Confederate cause, which Union military officials used as headquarters from which they conducted the war. Because the Confederate government had no property in Arkansas, most of the Bureau's property holdings came from individuals with ties to the Confederate government.<sup>138</sup> While agents did not often specify which of the above conditions existed when they took possession of a tract of land, there were a number of accounts that detail what they had and how they intended to use it.

During the summer of 1865, the Bureau's land reform policy was unclear and could be confusing. This, in part, came from both the Bureau and President Johnson trying to get their own policies enacted out in the field. First, General Howard issued Circular 13 on July 28, 1865 that specified the land distribution process to both freedpersons and displaced whites. This order instructed agents to "select and set apart such confiscated lands [*this was not to exceed forty acres*] and property as may be deemed necessary for the immediate use of Refugees and Freedmen, the specific division of which into lots, and the rental or sale thereof according to the law established

<sup>137</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedmen: Federal Policy toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 187-188.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas Starling Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923), 199-200.

by the Bureau, will be completed as soon as practicable and reported to the Commissioner.”<sup>139</sup> For Howard, the pardons issued by the president did not allow for the restoration of lands settled by freedpeople and displaced whites, according to the original Bureau Bill. Johnson, of course, disagreed with him and demanded that the general rescind Circular 13.<sup>140</sup>

Because of the president’s protest of Circular 13, Howard responded with Circular 15 on September 12, 1865. This order allowed for the restoration of all property confiscated by the Bureau if the previous owners of the land provide the proper evidence. The Bureau required evidence that those seeking property restoration had taken the oath of allegiance and had the legal title to the land. The only restriction on restoration of confiscated property was with regard to displaced whites and freedpeople who were already on the land. “No land under cultivation by loyal refugees or freedmen will be restored under this circular,” Circular 15 stated, “until the crops now growing shall be secured for the benefit of the cultivators, unless full and just compensation be made for their labor and its products, and for their expenditures.”<sup>141</sup> Howard granted displaced whites and freedpeople a reprieve. While he tried to operate according to the dictates of Congress and the president, Howard attempted to consider their situation. At the very least, those working abandoned lands would be able to finish the growing and harvest season.

Circular 15 quickly altered the path of land redistribution in the South. Howard and the Bureau restored much of the land in its possession before the agency’s operations ended with this order. Howard’s order changed the character of the agency as intended with the drafting of the Freedmen’s Bureau Bill in March of 1865. It handcuffed agents who would have promoted land

<sup>139</sup> “Circular 13,” Asst. Adjutant General Circulars, 1865-1869, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105, Entry 24, No. 139, NARA.

<sup>140</sup> Donald G. Nieman, “Andrew Johnson, the Freedmen’s Bureau, and the Problem of Equal Rights, 1865-1866,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 44, No. 3 (Aug., 1978): 399-420.

<sup>141</sup> “Circular 15,” Assorted Documents of the Freedmen’s Bureau, accessed December 13, 2014, <http://www.drbronsontours.com/bronsongeneralooowardcircular15abandonedlandsjuly281865.html>.

ownership among freedmen and allowed displaced whites more time on the many abandoned plantations in the region. With Circular 15, as Eric Foner has noted, “Johnson had in effect abrogated the Confiscation Act and unilaterally amended the law creating the Bureau.”<sup>142</sup> As a result, the situation on the ground proved to be quite confusing and discouraging for many displaced whites and freedpeople.

### **The Matilda Johnson Plantation and Feeling the Continued Effects of War**

One example highlighted just how difficult and confusing the whole process could be for both displaced whites and the former landowners and this was the case of the Matilda Johnson plantation in central Arkansas. Matilda Johnson came from both an accomplished family and she married into another. Born in Kentucky in 1793, Matilda Williams married Benjamin Johnson in 1811, cementing a prominent place on the antebellum political landscape of Arkansas. Congress appointed Benjamin as judge of the Superior Court during Arkansas’s territorial days and he became the state’s first federal district judge with statehood. His brother, Richard Mentor Johnson, served as Martin Van Buren’s Vice President. Together, the couple became one of the state’s founding families and created one of the more powerful antebellum political dynasties. As a part of “the Family,” the Johnsons played a key role in shaping the state’s prewar political landscape. The couple had eight children and were one of the largest slave owners in Arkansas. The Johnsons owned large tracts of land, including their stately home in downtown Little Rock and a plantation of approximately 500 acres, twelve miles to the south of the state capitol in Pulaski County, and a

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<sup>142</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 161; Thomas Starling Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923), 200.

number of slaves.<sup>143</sup> It was at this plantation that a minor drama played out, highlighting the difficulty of the Bureau's land reform policy.

The Johnson Plantation, nicknamed the "Refugee Farm" by Bureau agents, had a reported ten to twelve displaced families – mostly women and children - living on and working the land during the summer and fall of 1865. The Bureau had formally confiscated this land on October 6, 1865, and, according to one account, the agency placed these families on the land after the Johnsons fled the coming Union army a few years before. "These families are almost entirely dependent on the Government for support," agent F.W. Raymond wrote, "having drawn rations ever since they first occupied the place."<sup>144</sup> Based on agency records, these displaced families industriously raised corn for their own consumption as well as cotton and paid about a third of what they produced to the local Bureau office as rent. The arrangement was a positive outcome for the Bureau, as it "thus relieve[d] the Government of a part of the expense and trouble."<sup>145</sup> Unfortunately, agents provided little detail about the names and background of these displaced families working on this land. By the fall of 1865, the displaced families on the Johnson Plantation produced about three hundred to four hundred bushels of corn.<sup>146</sup>

It is not exactly clear how the Johnson's property came into the Bureau's possession. A couple of the Bureau agents in the Johnson chain of letters do not appear clear as to how the

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<sup>143</sup> Ann Bolton Bevins, *The Ward and Johnson Families of Central Kentucky and the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Georgetown, KY: The Ward Hall Press, 1984); Thomas A. DeBlack, "The Garden in the Wilderness: The Johnsons and the Making of the Lakeport Plantation, 1831-1876," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1995); Lynn Foster, "Their Pride and Ornament: Judge Benjamin Johnson and the Federal Courts in Early Arkansas," *University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law Review* 22 (Fall, 1999): 21-48. Mr. Johnson died in 1849 and Matilda never remarried.

<sup>144</sup> "F.W. Raymond to Captain H. Skinner," October 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

<sup>145</sup> "F.W. Raymond to Captain H. Skinner," October 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

<sup>146</sup> "W.G. Sargent to Captain H. Skinner," October 5, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

displaced whites were allowed to live and work on this land. Mrs. Johnson's attorney, George C. Watkins tells a different story. The "place was taken up by the Treasury Agent in 1864 and turned it over to the Freedmen's Bureau sometime after and pursuant to an order from the War Department issued in May 1865," Watkins wrote to the Little Rock office, "and that so far as it appears in his Office, said farm and land or any part thereof, has not been set apart for refugees or freedmen, or rented out or otherwise disposed of, by the Freedmen's Bureau."<sup>147</sup> While there was no formal agreement or contract between the agency and the displaced families working the farm, the agency allowed them to reside on the land provided they continued to produce food for their subsistence.

However the property came under Bureau control, it was indeed abandoned by the Johnson family during the war. Mrs. Johnson was a woman of questionable loyalties given her actions during the war and her status as a slave owner. Johnson and her family, like others in her community, fled upon the arrival of General Steele and his Union forces in Little Rock during the fall of 1863.<sup>148</sup> Matilda, her children, and grandchildren, as well as "most of the planters on the Arkansas River owning slaves retired before it."<sup>149</sup> People like the Johnsons abandoned their properties in and around Little Rock and did not return until after the war. In their absence, the Federal government took control of these properties and allowed freedpeople and displaced whites to stay on the abandoned properties.

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<sup>147</sup> Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

<sup>147</sup> "Geo. C. Watkins to W.G. Sargent," October 2, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA. Johnson, in some of her letters to the Bureau, was represented by prominent Little Rock attorney and former state Supreme Court justice Geo. (George) C. Watkins.

<sup>148</sup> Union Brigadier General John Davidson used her home in Little Rock as his headquarters beginning in September 1863. Later, Brigadier General Frederick C. Salomon used the home as his headquarters until July 19, 1865. Charles C. Knott and Archibald Hopkins, Reporters, *Cases Decided in the Court of Claims at the December Term, 1878, With Abstracts of the Decisions of the Supreme Court in Appealed Cases, from October, 1878, to May, 1879, Vol. XIV*, (Washington, D.C.: W.H. & O.H. Morrison, Law Booksellers, 1879), 343.

<sup>149</sup> "Matilda Johnson to W.G. Sargent," October 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

Upon her return, she took inventory of her properties and discovered a number of displaced whites, about whom she does not offer any detail, had occupied her plantation. Johnson took the amnesty oath, so that she could begin the process of having her property south of Little Rock restored. Johnson wrote local Bureau agents and included with her letter signed documentation that stated proof that she had taken the oath, a variety of tax documents as proof of ownership, and additional assurances that the property did indeed belong to her and her family – as stipulated by Circular 15.<sup>150</sup> “Whereupon and in accordance with what I suppose to be the policy off the Government to restore this part of the country to a state of prosperity,” Mrs. Johnson wrote, “by encouraging a return to the cultivation of improved lands and in view of the circumstances of my case, and desireing [sic] as a means of support, to have said farms cultivated next year, and order is asked from Major Genl. Howard. . . for the restoration of said land farm and improvements to me.”<sup>151</sup> Johnson, based on her letters to the Bureau office, does not appear to communicate with the displaced whites on her property. She simply communicates to the agency that, as a result of her oath, she wants her property restored to her and her family for the coming year.

Despite being a prominent slave owner who fled as the Union army approached, she assured Bureau officials that she had never been hostile toward the federal government and further stated that she was willing to cooperate with the government. Additionally, perhaps to elicit pity from Federal officials, she reminded them that she was a widow and seventy-two years old. “I would further represent to you that I am a Widow,” Mrs. Johnson wrote the local Bureau office, over seventy years of age, and committed no act of hostility against the Government, during the late troubles which have afflicted our country, and greatly impoverished so many of our people,

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<sup>150</sup> Mrs. Johnson took the Oath of Amnesty on June 30, 1865. “Matilda Johnson to W.G. Sargent,” October 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*



occupants were placed there by the Bureau as destitute Refugees with the hope that they might assist a little in supporting themselves, thus relieving the Government of a part of the expense and trouble.”<sup>153</sup> She questioned the status of the families on her property who claimed to be refugees; Johnson felt that these people exaggerated their condition. Johnson wrote to the local Bureau office and indicated that what she had heard about how these displaced whites came to be on her land in her absence.

As I am informed and believe, there is no evidence on the books of your office that said lands or improvements have been rented out or disposed of , excepting a memorandum in pencil importing that two acres were rented to one Van Fleet , but in fact there is are as I am informed and believe about one hundred acres of said land in cultivation this year, by some four or five persons, who are not refugees, most if not all of them being former citizens of said county, and who claim no right to or interest in said lands, beyond the close of the present year, and the privilege of gathering the growing crop there on.<sup>154</sup>

Johnson felt that some of her neighbors had taken advantage of her absence, using her land to their benefit. Matilda Johnson demanded them off the land by the end of the 1865 season – a very short time away.

Mrs. Johnson pushed whomever she could and, shortly after, the gears of politics moved in her favor. In accordance with President Johnson’s pardon process, Mrs. Johnson would get her plantation back, though some legal wrangling was required to get some of the property returned.<sup>155</sup> Throughout much of the region, while Howard and the president debated post-war land reform, freedpeople and displaced whites lived and worked on confiscated and abandoned lands across

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<sup>153</sup> “F.W. Raymond to Captain H. Skinner,” October 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

<sup>154</sup> Mrs. Johnson took the Oath of Amnesty on June 30, 1865. “Matilda Johnson to W.G. Sargent,” October 7, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 9, NARA.

<sup>155</sup> Johnson would lose her home in Little Rock in 1865 as the Treasury Department sold the property to satisfy her tax debt of about \$3000.00. In her absence during the war, various Union generals used the home as their headquarters. Her daughter, Irene Taylor, took this matter up with the Court of Claims (*Irene Taylor’s Administrator vs. the United States*) in 1874 and won a judgment of \$2929.50, the value of the property.

Arkansas. Many people working the land were trying to put the war behind them and look to the future, rebuilding their homes and their lives. What happened at the Johnson Plantation serves as only one example of the difficulties that these policies would take at the local level.

While the events surrounding the Johnson Plantation played out in Arkansas, Bureau officials began to assess a number of abandoned and confiscated lands in Missouri – especially lands vacated by military order. In Missouri, for example, the effects of General Thomas Ewing’s General Orders No. 11 still resonated with the many displaced residents there, even by late 1865 as much of the land remained abandoned. Agents assigned these lands to freedpeople and displaced whites, but because of the disagreements between Congress and the president, this process was often muddied at the local level. Mary G. [Gostonius?], displaced by Ewing’s order, detailed her suffering when she wrote that she had been “Reduced to poverty and want after five years anxiety and disappointment I am at last obliged to address the Representatives of the US Government for support and relief.”<sup>156</sup> For some displaced whites, what happened during the war stuck with them and they detailed how this happened in their letters to the Bureau in the months following the Confederate surrender.

Lands confiscated by the Bureau in the aftermath of General Orders, No. 11 caused confusion among agents who possessed these lands in accordance with agency policy, but were unsure as to how they would dispense these lands. For example, Bureau agent William A. Adams wrote from Fort Scott, Kansas, during the late summer of 1865 about land vacated because of the order. “There are abandoned lands in Mo. The counties bordering upon Kansas[,]” Adams proclaimed, but then continued more cautiously, “Am I expected to go upon the ground and take

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<sup>156</sup> “Mary G. to Superintendent of Freedmen’s Bureau,” April 12, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA. The last name in this document is illegible.

possession formally with a view to settling some of my people upon them?”<sup>157</sup> There is no indication that any of these lands fell under the Amnesty Proclamation and, as Adams hinted, agents were unsure of what to do with the land in their possession here. With no clear indication as to how the Bureau might dispense these lands, the Bureau continued to move forward with placing displaced people on it. People affected by Ewing’s order wrote to local agents, asking for the restoration of their property or displaced whites asked what their next step might be.

While the Bureau heard from its own agents who detailed vacant lands in western Missouri, displaced whites wrote to the agency about how they might return to their communities. In a letter dated April 12, 1866, Mary G. noted to agents that: “In 1863 under the vacating ordinance of generals Ewing and Schofield, depopulating the counties of Jackson, Cass, Bates, and northern parts of Vernon. I had to leave my home in the latter county which home was subsequently destroyed by fire and took refuge in Henry County.”<sup>158</sup> She mentioned her husband serving in the Missouri militia and fighting guerrillas in that part of the state, though she does not say what became of him. In this letter, she wrote how she is barely able to survive off his meager pay that they hoped to use to save what remained of their home. “My husband’s pay is but small and as he is obliged to save money to pay the taxes on our land from which we have been driven to save it from being sold for taxes I can hardly claim his support.”<sup>159</sup> In the Bureau, she sought rations for her and her child, but also hoped agents could help her save her abandoned property. No reply from the Bureau concerning her request could be located, but such a letter is telling. People lost property because of the war for a variety of reasons, not just disloyalty or confiscation. As a result,

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<sup>157</sup> “William A. Adams to Superintendent,” Aug. 23, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA.

<sup>158</sup> “Mary G. to Superintendent of Freedmen’s Bureau,” April 12, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 6, NARA. [underline in original]

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

this caused them much worry and they worked hard to keep what they had – no matter what condition it was in after the war.

The impact of the Bureau’s land reform initiatives are difficult to determine. By the summer of 1866, it appeared as though the numbers of displaced whites who wandered the Missouri and Arkansas countrysides declined in overall numbers. Looking at the accounts of different agents who made their way through the region, they indicate that the numbers of uprooted people had dropped from the levels seen during the war and the period immediately after. For example, agent Thomas Abel, writing from Fort Smith – once a key gathering point for so many displaced whites and freedpeople – noted what he had seen in his travels through Arkansas that summer. “I found but few Refugees and Freedmen at Fayetteville. Most of them having gone to the country – All are self-supporting except a few extremely destitute refugees who depend upon the Country and the benevolence of the people for support.”<sup>160</sup> Because of the Bureau’s efforts, combined with the passage of time, there were visibly less displaced whites in the region nearly a year and a half since the end of the war. How much a temporary stay on abandoned lands made a difference in the reduction of these numbers may never be known, but it had to play a role, even if it was only a small one, in reducing the number of displaced whites. A natural disaster that affected much of the South would cause a temporary reversal of this trend.

### **The 1867 Southern Famine**

It appeared that by 1867 the Bureau had an impact on the lives of destitute and displaced whites in Arkansas and Missouri. By this point, however, despite the number of people returning to their farms who renewed their agricultural production, the agrarian sector of the South had not recovered. To say that the war greatly affected Southern agriculture and access to foodstuffs is an

<sup>160</sup> “Thomas Abel to Sir (Major J.W. Sprague),” July 10, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 10, NARA.

understatement. Throughout the war, Southerners suffered through various cycles of famine in different parts of the Confederacy. While people in the Trans-Mississippi West did not experience anything like the destruction of Sherman's March or Sheridan's campaign in the Shenandoah, which wrought all kinds of destruction on the production of foodstuffs, the people in Arkansas and Missouri felt the impact of this inability to produce food in 1866 and 1867. The high number of Southern men lost in the war combined with a countryside left in total and utter destruction and the planter class's unwillingness to plant food instead of cotton, primed the South for agricultural catastrophe as the region moved into Reconstruction. Other wartime factors like the Union blockade primed the pump for the agricultural disaster.

Heavy rains, alternating with drought, brought about a series of crop failures during the 1866 season. An infestation of armyworm, a caterpillar like insect that eats both foodstuffs and cotton, compounded the situation.<sup>161</sup> The combination of these factors led to short crops and, eventually no crops, for many farmers. While the pests and droughts had caused problems there before, Southerners had never seen anything like this. Farmers had experienced near droughts periodically, causing some to switch to sugar cane cultivation, but the droughts typically passed and they switched back to whatever crops they grew before the crisis. In Arkansas, the natural disasters of 1866 and 1867 resulted in small harvests across the state and caused the bottom to fall out of the cotton market. This caused a collapse in prices and sent both freedpeople and displaced whites into Bureau offices for support.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> The armyworm moves rapidly, about ¼ mile per day, and it lives anywhere from about a week to ten days. It survives by eating all plant matter – foodstuffs and cotton. See Science Service, "Army Worm Plague Checked," *The Berkeley Daily Gazette*, July 23, 1924, 4.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 156.

The famine affected both freedpeople and displaced whites across the South. Initially, the Federal government was unaware of just how severe this drought and subsequent famine had become. Northern civilians had trouble believing that the situation was as bad as reports out of the South made it out to be. “With little support from Bureau offices,” historian Jim Downs observes, “freedpeople as well as white refugees suffered enormously from the lack of rainfall and consequent crop failure and deaths of livestock.”<sup>163</sup> By 1868, price inflation on everyday items made things even more difficult. People who General Howard termed “loyal refugees” would pay a price when the famine hit. Howard remarked in his autobiography, “I had abundant authority so far as the loyal refugees and freedmen were involved to feed them to the extent of our food appropriation; but we had reduced this number to narrow limits when this famine hit upon the Southern coast.”<sup>164</sup> With this famine, it all but assured a steady demand for relief from people across the South. “As a result, the number of rations issued to whites quintupled between February and June 1867 while the number to blacks increased just 50%, a further dilution of the bureau’s ability effectively to assist freedmen.”<sup>165</sup> The agency saw an increased number of displaced whites because of this famine, though the exact numbers are difficult to determine. Also difficult to determine are the number of these cases that could be labeled as repeat cases, meaning whites who remained displaced by the war in 1867.

### **Freedmen’s Bureau Schools and Orphanages**

<sup>163</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African Americans Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 141.

<sup>164</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 350. See also Robert C. Lieberman, “The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure,” *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 418-419; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 152; Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 28; Robert H. Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980). 121-124.

<sup>165</sup> Robert C. Lieberman, “The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure,” *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 419.

The Bureau established a number of schools for both freedpeople and displaced whites throughout the South, including Arkansas.<sup>166</sup> While the agency had limited resources when it came to supporting these schools, it did participate in sustaining a number of these facilities in some way led by its education superintendent, William Colby. In Arkansas, for example, this proved to be a difficult task. “Little infrastructure or precedent existed for an educational system in Arkansas,” notes Finley, “despite an 1840 public school law.”<sup>167</sup> Even by the Reconstruction period, Arkansas lagged behind when it came to money spent on public education compared to neighboring states.<sup>168</sup> Schools here were sometimes slow to take shape for a number of reasons, specifically because the Bureau did not always follow through on a number of promises to those who ran these institutions. This was not because Arkansans did not want schools for poor whites and freedpeople. The state’s wealthier citizens wanted these schools because it served them and their economic interests. Educated freedpeople and poor whites would help to provide order and make for a happier work force. To be sure, there were also plenty of whites against education for displaced and destitute whites, but they were relatively few according to the Bureau. If anything, Southern whites were especially against the education of freedpeople and the Bureau received the brunt of that anger.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>166</sup> Robert C. Morris, *Reading, Writing, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>167</sup> Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 122. This was part of a program put forth by Governor Archibald Yell (1840-1844) in which the state attempted to establish a public education system. The 1868 constitution provided free education to both races in segregated schools. The state funded this through a poll tax and local taxes that went into a general fund. See Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 202; Larry Wesley Pearce, “The American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1868-1878,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 31, No. 3 (Autumn, 1972): 246-261.

<sup>168</sup> Arkansas spent just \$2.82 per student in 1860, whereas neighboring Mississippi spent \$5.80 and Louisiana spent \$9.35 per student. Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 122.

<sup>169</sup> Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 122-125; Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 202-203.

General Howard, held to his view that states should step in to help their citizens whenever possible, but when they could not, he hoped that benevolent aid organizations would fill the void. When it came to supporting Bureau schools in the South, he held the same hopes. “The officers of the Bureau should afford the utmost facility to benevolent and religious organizations, and to State authorities, where they exist, in the maintenance of good schools. Do everything possible, was my constant cry, to keep schools on foot till free schools shall be established and reorganized local governments.”<sup>170</sup> Various aid associations helped to cover the cost for schools operated by the Bureau, this included paying teachers’ salaries and paying for books and other supplies for pupils. They also helped to staff a number of the schools operated by the Bureau.

Throughout Arkansas, for example, the American Missionary Association (AMA) supported a number of schools, especially schools intended for freedpeople – though they also believed that poor whites should benefit as well.<sup>171</sup> Support by the AMA and other organizations like it included acquiring property for the construction of schools and the payment of teachers’ salaries. Benevolent organizations played a key role in the establishment of schools in Arkansas. “When the war ended in Confederate defeat, southerners once again had to revise expectations and assumptions about assistance to the poor.”<sup>172</sup> Howard remained committed to letting these organizations do the heavy lifting when it came to the schools. He recalled in his *Autobiography*

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<sup>170</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 221.

<sup>171</sup> Much of the focus of the AMA was on plantation schools. See Larry Wesley Pearce, “Enoch K. Miller and the Freedmen’s Schools,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter, 1972): 305-327; Larry Wesley Pearce, “The American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1868-1878,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 31, No. 3 (Autumn, 1972): 246-261; Larry Wesley Pearce, “The American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1866-1868,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn, 1971): 242-259. As many as 79 different organizations worked with the Bureau, though this number is difficult to determine. Marjorie H. Parker, “Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen’s Bureau,” *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter, 1954): 11.

<sup>172</sup> Jennifer Lynn Gross, “‘And for the Widow and Orphan’: Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance,” in Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 220.

“In all this work,’ I announced, ‘it is not my purpose to supersede the benevolent agencies already engaged, but to systematize and facilitate them.’”<sup>173</sup> As a result, the AMA funded a number of schools.

While Howard was in favor of these aid societies funding and running most, if not all, of these schools, he felt that the federal government should step up and fill the void if they could not or were unable to do so. For him, the education of Southerners was important – not just for the uneducated, but for the postbellum United States in general. “There can be no safety nor permanent peace where ignorance reigns. The law of self-preservation will justify the national legislature in establishing through the Bureau of Education, or some other agency, a general system of free schools, and furnish to all children of a suitable age such instruction in the rudiments of learning as may be necessary to fit them to discharge intelligently the duties of free American citizens.”<sup>174</sup> Drawing on the northern model where state-supported schools were more commonplace, Howard foreshadowed more widespread, compulsory education in the United States and he offers some perspective on what he hoped the Bureau might accomplish with its operations in the South.

Often, middle-class white women, usually from New England, served as teachers in the schools, though teachers came from across the North and parts of the South, some were men and some were African American. The American Missionary Association supplied many of these teachers who worked in Bureau schools. These teachers reported to the agency’s superintendent of education their schools’ progress and the number of students enrolled on a month-to-month basis. The Bureau provided transportation for these teachers at the beginning and the end of the school year, transporting them from various points in the North. The agency also provided

<sup>173</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 221.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

transportation during various vacations during the school year. By the end of 1865, Howard recalled that there were 965 organized schools in areas controlled by the Bureau.

Teaching at Bureau schools was not an easy task. Schools were often located in very remote areas, making transportation back and forth rather difficult. Additionally, many of these teachers faced threats and were under the watchful eye of suspicious white Southerners. “The teachers in Arkansas often had a difficult task; but some of them overcame even ugly prejudice, which is a hard thing to do.”<sup>175</sup> Additionally, funding issues could make the situation difficult for educators as well. The Bureau did not cover the cost books and a number of supplies and teachers had to rely on various aid organizations to provide them and, sometimes, these books and supplies were promised but never arrived. The Bureau also made numerous promises about fixing facilities or responding to grievances, but they did not always follow through either. Teachers could direct complaints to local agents and sometimes to the superintendent of education, but results could be mixed.<sup>176</sup>

The focus for many of these Bureau-supported schools was to promote a mission of republicanism amongst a great many Southerners – both black and white.<sup>177</sup> Alma Baker, a teacher who worked in Missouri noted the need for the education of poor and displaced whites in the region. “They are so very wicked. Much lower than blacks in morals.”<sup>178</sup> These views were similar to the mission of the many benevolent aid societies that operated in the region during the war. In a sense, they wanted to remake them in the Northern image. Schools served as a part of the uplifting

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 335-336.

<sup>176</sup> Larry Wesley Pearce, “Enoch K. Miller and the Freedmen’s Schools,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter, 1972): 317-318; Larry Wesley Pearce, “The American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1866-1868,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn, 1971): 245-248.

<sup>177</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 144-147.

<sup>178</sup> Quoted in Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 230.

mission began during the war, especially with regard to the displaced whites it instructed. Fulfilling this mission would not be an easy task for the Freedmen's Bureau. There was the obvious physical toll across the landscape of Missouri and Arkansas, but what about the toll that the war took on the communities and their people? The situation in the South was so bad that Howard would comment, "The educational and moral condition of these people was never forgotten."<sup>179</sup> For Howard, these schools would be an important component of the Bureau's mission in the South.

Monthly reports provided to the Bureau about the make-up and performance of these schools offer some insight into how displaced whites fit into this part of the agency's operations. These reports were a standard form with a list of 19 questions that covered a variety of issues relating to the education of displaced whites and freedpeople. It asks for the numbers of refugees and freedpeople attending the school in addition to information like the school's location and information about the teachers who work there. Of the 19 questions, three were specific to displaced whites read:

*16. What is the public sentiment as to the education of the Freedmen or Poor Whites?*

*18. What more can this Bureau do for educating children of Refugees (or Poor Whites)?*

*19. How long will Northern charitable aid be needed for Freedmen and Refugee Schools in your District?*<sup>180</sup>

There are also questions that pertained to funding and how long such a school might be needed in a given area and, most importantly, if the school is being used by locals. This questionnaire served as Bureau probes keeping them informed on the developments at these schools.

<sup>179</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 221.

<sup>180</sup> "Monthly Report of Sub-Assistant Commissioner (or Agent) for Pine Bluff," March 1868, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M980, Roll 5, NARA.

The teachers' responses, usually written in very careful penmanship, reveal some insight into the situation surrounding displaced whites in Arkansas. A number of these reports have very little information and much of this arises from the fact that there was little need for a school in a given area. Numbers of pupils enrolled might read zero or in the single digits for both displaced whites and freedpeople. In these instances, comments written by the teachers offer some explanation. For example, one teacher in Pine Bluff noted that the reason for so few whites in the school because "there are very few poor whites in my district – and they are very much scattered."<sup>181</sup> Though scattered, many might have been reluctant to attend because this same report indicates that local whites were strongly opposed to these schools for poor or displaced whites or freedpeople.

In these Bureau schools, there were 1,405 teachers and 90,778 pupils under instruction that year. Teachers educated both children and adults in these schools. Another question found on that questionnaire addressed the need for adult education:

*17. Are Night-Schools for Adults needed in your District? In what way could they be carried on?*<sup>182</sup>

Some teachers did not respond to this question, indicating that there was no perceived need for adult education in whatever location they taught. Other teachers, however, did respond and replied that these schools were needed for adults, probably for both black and white. In their response, this teacher indicated that all was needed was "teachers and books" in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.<sup>183</sup> Howard had hoped for more, indicating that these numbers were merely "a drop in the bucket," but he would gladly take it as a step in the right direction.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 292.

Despite the low enrollment numbers in many districts across Arkansas, it did not mean that people there did not want to attend these schools. In St. Francis and Cass Counties, for example, it appeared as though there was a demand for schools there. A September 1868 report indicated, according to the teacher sent there, that about one hundred pupils might attend this school, but they needed teachers and books before instruction could begin. It is unknown if people at the school previously made requests for these items and the Bureau or benevolent aid organizations did not come through. Alternatively, this increased need was recent and the Bureau had not yet had time to respond. Moreover, as in the previous instance, most whites here were hostile to the establishment of the school, “against it so far as the Freedmen are concerned.”<sup>185</sup> There is no indication from this report that locals were hostile to a white school revealing that much of the resistance to Bureau schools was often rooted in race. This echoed Howard’s aforementioned statement that establishing and sustaining schools in Arkansas would be a difficult task. These schools had to overcome both financial obstacles and negative public opinions of the endeavor.

Children – black, white, destitute, or displaced – were always a concern of General Howard and the Freedmen’s Bureau. While not explicitly laid out in the Bureau’s mission, the agency did occasionally care for the many orphans scattered throughout the region. The agency sometimes issued rations or clothing for displaced children or provided transportation to reunite them with their families so that they could stay with friends, relatives, or perhaps be taken in by an orphanage in Little Rock or St. Louis. In the more hopeful instances, the agency reunited children presumed to be orphans with their parents. In most cases, the Bureau placed these children in the care of a local orphanage, often run by local citizens or the local government. Other incidents saw agents

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<sup>185</sup> “Monthly Report of Sub-Assistant Commissioner (or Agent) for St. Francis and Cass Counties,” September 1868, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M980, Roll 5, NARA.

place these children with local families on a temporary or semi-permanent basis. Howard noted how “many orphans were apprenticed to people of good character, under humane and liberal regulations; and the district, parish, county, or town was for the most part gradually induced to care for all except a few extreme cases of poverty which could not be shown to belong to any particular locality.”<sup>186</sup> No reliable estimates exist for the number of orphaned children who came under the Bureau’s care, but they are a part of its record.

Once the Bureau transported these children off to other parts of the state or set them up in local orphanages, it did not mean that the agency did not have to deal with them again. One interesting example of this involves an orphanage operated by a “Mrs. Phelps” in Springfield, Missouri. This incident serves as a cross-section of Bureau activity and postwar feelings between Unionists and former Confederates. In the early months of 1866, agents began receiving complaints from local citizens about the Orphan’s Refugee House. While it is not made clear in the complaint against this orphanage how these children became orphaned, more than likely it was a result of many of the aforementioned consequences of war – the armies, guerrilla warfare, issues of loyalty, or the scarcity of food and other necessities. On the surface, the home appeared to house about fifty children, many of whom were children of displaced Arkansans. While the documents are not clear as to how much, it appears as though the Freedmen’s Bureau provided some kind of financial or material support for this orphanage. Springfield citizens, however, wrote to the Bureau asking them to take a closer look at Mrs. Phelps and her orphanage.

In a letter to General Howard dated February 21, 1866, an agent detailed the Springfield citizens’ complaints against the Orphan’s Refugee House operated by Mrs. Phelps. First, they doubted that the institution had been legally approved to operate as an orphanage and, quite simply,

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<sup>186</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 255-256.

these citizens disapproved of it. While the children there were indeed the children of displaced Arkansans, citizens complained that many of these children had a father, mother, or both parents still living – they denied that these children were indeed orphans. Even worse, for these citizens, the children and their alleged still living parents were of the “Rebel class.” Loyalty, both during and after the war, played a role in how displaced people were viewed by their communities. The locals wanted the children placed in the care of private families or even a soldiers’ home of some kind. The agent remarked, “It is thought that there is no need for the Govt. to extend help to this institution. It will be of no benefit to the loyal element.”<sup>187</sup> Certainly, there were instances where children had been exploited and held as apprentices and, perhaps, this was a part of Mrs. Phelps’s operations. The records in this particular case, however, do not indicate that this was the case.<sup>188</sup>

Mary Whitney Phelps, the wife of former Missouri Democratic senator (1853-1863) and future governor (1877-1881) John Smith Phelps, was a woman of importance in her home state.<sup>189</sup> Herself an orphan, Phelps had dedicated her life to helping children in Missouri by providing education and orphanages. Phelps also achieved a bit of fame during the war when she arranged for a dignified burial of Union general Nathaniel Lyon following the battle at Wilson’s Creek after his body had been mistakenly left behind. Her good deed did not go unnoticed by government officials in Washington D.C. In recognition of her service to the fallen general and work with orphans, Congress awarded her \$20,000 that she used to start her orphanage. There were no public indications that she was disliked in any way.

<sup>187</sup> “(signature illegible) to Genl. Howard,” February 21, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA.

<sup>188</sup> See chapter 4 for examples on how St. Louis orphanages used children as indentures.

<sup>189</sup> President Lincoln appointed Senator Phelps the military governor of Arkansas in 1863 but he declined to ill health.

Months after the initial complaints from Springfield citizens, another agent paid a visit to Mrs. Phelps and her orphanage. Thomas Abel visited her during the summer of 1866. Abel, nor anyone else in the record, indicate the reason for this particular meeting. Perhaps this was a follow-up because of the complaints against her the previous February or maybe this visit was strictly routine as she ran the orphanage. In his record of the meeting, he paints a more favorable picture of Mrs. Phelps and her orphanage in Springfield. He notes that the Bureau appointed her as a non-salaried civil agent. Abel further noted that while she was not without her flaws, her intentions were good. Abel remarked, “Mrs. Phelps is a woman of strong prejudices against the negro having once owned slaves but she seems to some extent to have overcome her prejudice and advocates the importance of educating and caring for them. There was considerable suffering among refugees and freedmen during last winter and much praise is due Mrs. Phelps and the teachers of the colored school.”<sup>190</sup> There is no evidence here that any of her orphans were African American children or that she held any of them against their will. Mrs. Phelps, at least according to Abel, appeared to be doing good work for displaced whites and freedpeople alike. Why the conflicting opinions of her and her efforts?

While documents concerning these complaints from the citizens of Springfield are few and do not offer any kind of clarification, a couple of explanations are possible for this tension surrounding Mrs. Phelps’s orphanage. First, it was possible that these complaints were rooted in their Victorian beliefs about charity. For one reason or another, perhaps these citizens directed anger at Mrs. Phelps because they did not believe the children in her orphanage deserving of the government’s charity. The accusations that these children were not really orphans might be rooted in this belief, a means of rationalizing it possibly. Second, these complaints against the orphanage

<sup>190</sup> “Thomas Abel to Sir (J.W. Sprague),” July 10, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 10, NARA.

lie in the belief – real or not - that these were children of “the rebel class” and from a different state. Wartime animosities could have played a role in their views of Mrs. Phelps and her work with the orphanage. Another possible explanation is political – perhaps these citizens were staunch Republicans and they used this as an opportunity to attack a woman whose husband was a Democratic senator and a man who would run for governor in 1868. Nothing in the sources pertaining to Mrs. Phelps offer any clues as to who the complainants were and what their motives might have been. Of course, their anger could have been the result of a combination of some or all of these factors. Whatever their reasons for disapproving of Mrs. Phelps’s work, such an incident offers a window into the Bureau’s role in reconstructing the South.

### **Freedmen’s Bureau Medical Division**

The Civil War brought about some of the most unsanitary conditions Americans had ever seen. The vast number of unburied human and animal bodies, contaminated water sources, and overcrowding in many areas ravaged by the war. These conditions continued well into the postwar period throughout much of the South. Downs has noted the effect of these conditions on freedpeople both during and after the war: “The Civil War, however, produced the largest biological crisis of the nineteenth century, claiming more soldiers’ lives and resulting in more casualties than battle or warfare and wreaking havoc on the population of the newly freed.”<sup>191</sup> What were conditions like for displaced whites as they looked for help from the Freedmen’s Bureau?

Only a few months after Appomattox, local agents and national leaders realized the need for medical care in the defeated Confederacy. On June 1, 1865, General Howard created the Bureau Medical Division. While larger cities like Richmond and New Orleans had functioning hospitals

<sup>191</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African Americans Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

that cared for many people after the war, it was up to the Bureau to establish facilities that provided medical care throughout much of the South. Disagreements between the Radical Congress and a president delayed the establishment of a medical branch for the agency and forced Howard to act. Concerns in Washington centered on fears that a medical division within the agency might create some kind of dependency amongst both displaced whites and freedpeople. During the months prior to the creation of this division, the Bureau simply continued to operate army hospitals that operated in various localities during the war.<sup>192</sup>

With this newly created Medical Division, Howard hoped to avoid chaos across the South. In describing the various Bureau components, Howard recalled its creation in his *Autobiography*: “The fourth, just then very necessary, was the Medical Division, which embraced the medical attendance of camps and colonies all over the land, and had supervision of all hospitals and asylums where were collections of refugees and freedmen with hosts of orphan children. An army medical officer of rank was placed at the head of this important division.”<sup>193</sup> Out of this came the Bureau hospitals that would dot the Southern landscape during the early years of Reconstruction. These hospitals, however, did not send an army of doctors into the South to care for the large number of freedpeople and displaced whites, it instead set up underfunded and understaffed facilities overwhelmed by the needs of Southerners.<sup>194</sup>

Most of the hospitals were to support the large number of freedpeople who sought medical care upon the arrival of the agency; however, many poor Southern whites needed and wanted access to this care as well. Providing care on this scale, however, was not without its problems.

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<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>193</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 219.

<sup>194</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African Americans Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 65-94.

First, there were the institutional problems surrounding funding and hospitals. “Plagued by inadequate funding, a shortage of hospital beds, and a lack of facilities in rural areas where most blacks lived,” notes Foner, “the Bureau nonetheless managed the early years of Reconstruction to treat an estimated half million suffering freedmen, as well as a smaller but significant number of whites.”<sup>195</sup> Financial support for the hospitals was difficult to come by in the nation’s capital as the government was always looking to cut funding whenever and wherever it could not to mention the fact that any legislation involving the Bureau usually turned into a political circus.

The government assumed much of the cost for these hospitals as local officials in Arkansas did very little to offer any kind of funding or assistance once these hospitals were established.<sup>196</sup> Evidence of this lack of federal and state funding could be found in facilities throughout Arkansas. Moreover, unlike its schools, the Bureau constructed these facilities in a haphazard fashion usually based on need in a given location, especially in rural areas. For example, a Bureau hospital in Pine Bluff lacked proper heating for the winter months and it made taking care of the sick there difficult. A woman named Mrs. Dawes, who presumably worked at the hospital, wrote to the local agent, Major John Tyler, to indicate that there were no stoves for heating the building. It appears as though the agency promised these stoves some months prior to the letter, but they had not yet arrived. She noted in a November 1866 letter that the “sick in the hospital are suffering severely with cold – the building is open – their blood is thin and clothing will not keep them warm”<sup>197</sup> This was nearly a year and a half after the creation of the Medical Division and hospitals still lacked basic equipment like stoves. Such stories only compounded the suffering for some many displaced

<sup>195</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 151.

<sup>196</sup> Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 111.

<sup>197</sup> “Mrs. Dawes to Sir (Major John Tyler – agent),” November 12, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Microfilm M979, Roll 7, NARA.

whites and freedpeople. To make her point to Tyler as to just how dire the situation was because of the delay, Mrs. Dawes continued, “I fear many deaths. . .”<sup>198</sup>

With the establishment of these hospitals, hospital staffs ran into a number of roadblocks when it came to providing care. Certainly, nineteenth century medical technology had advanced little in the previous century. This was an age of home remedies where the cure was often worse than the disease. In addition, many doctors, like physicians at the Bureau hospitals, lacked proper training. Agents often dismissed some very qualified physicians, as they would not swear an oath of loyalty. Loyalty cost the Bureau more than a few good doctors. The war also took its toll on the available number of good Southern doctors. The situation surrounding the Bureau’s ability to attract good physicians was the fact that the war reduced the overall number of those available to work after the war. For example, in 1860, there were 1,222 doctors there with that number reduced to 1,026 a decade later. Another factor contributing to the poor quality of these medical facilities was the fact that the agency paid low salaries to employees and the staffs were often quite small, making the task of treating displaced whites and freedpeople in the region quite difficult.<sup>199</sup>

While there were a number of whites who needed medical care, the primary focus of the Medical Division was to care for the large number of freedpeople coming to the agency for care. A key factor in this larger number was the fact that local and state hospitals cared for a number of these whites while they refused African Americans treatment. “According to the Bureau’s documentation,” Downs observes, “there were exponentially fewer white people than black people who were treated by Bureau doctors – which made it appear to federal authorities that smallpox

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 112-114.

disproportionately infected freedpeople.”<sup>200</sup> By the end of 1865, Howard put the number of displaced whites who needed medical care at 2,531 while he put the number of freedpeople in need at 45,898, indicating just how large the gap was between these two groups. The mortality rate for displaced whites was about 9 per cent while the rate among freedpeople was at 13 per cent.<sup>201</sup>

Like the Bureau’s education statistics, displaced whites comprised a much smaller portion of those in need of medical care. “The total number in all the country under medical care during the eleven months prior to August 31, 1866,” Howard noted in his *Autobiography*, “was of refugees 5,784, of freedmen 160,737. Still, there remained September 1, 1866, but 501 refugees and 6,045 freed people actually in the hospital. The 56 hospitals, according to our plan, were reduced during the year to 46; there were, however, established a number of dispensaries at different points from which medicines were obtained.”<sup>202</sup> While these numbers demonstrate the need for medical care was greater amongst freedpeople, it does raise questions about why these numbers for displaced whites were so low given how many rations the Bureau distributed to people during this same period.

Perhaps Southern whites – displaced, poor, etc. – did not need medical help following the war. They were simply content to return to their homes and resume their lives without any real need for medical attention. In addition, it is possible given the Victorian attitudes towards aid prevented many from visiting the Bureau hospitals. Other reasons include whites hearing about the inferiority of Bureau facilities in terms of staffing and location availability and they had other options or, perhaps, pressured them not to visit these hospitals if their neighbors held views hostile

<sup>200</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African Americans Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 102.

<sup>201</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 259.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

to the agency. While the number of rations issued by the Bureau may not be a direct correlation to medical care, one would think that these numbers would be more even in their distribution. It is difficult to deduce exactly why these numbers were so low from the primary sources available, but these are certainly questions worth considering.

Bureau records contain a number of monthly reports sent to the main office in Little Rock from the Surgeon-in-Chief from various locations in Arkansas. These reports often detailed the number of people in the different hospitals, though they do not offer a breakdown about who was treated. Downs, who reviewed similar reports for his study of the medical crisis faced by freedpeople after the war, points out the problems historians face when consulting these records. “Instead, federal reports generalized conditions,” observes Downs, “broadly summarized problems, and, most important, often kept an eye for any sign of improvement to justify the federal government’s withdrawal from the South.”<sup>203</sup> The medical reports from Arkansas were no different in that they provide little insight into the operation of these facilities. Though the recorded numbers are small, often in the single digits, they reveal very little about who came to the hospitals, why they came, and how long they stayed.

### **The End of the Freedmen’s Bureau**

By the end of 1868, the Freedmen’s Bureau neared the end of its mission. Developments in Washington during the early years of Reconstruction had a tremendous impact on its operations, as did a number of its decisions at the local level. Following racial violence in Memphis and New Orleans in May and July of 1866 respectively, combined with the rise of Black Codes and the Ku Klux Klan during the first two years of Reconstruction, Congress decided that something had to

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<sup>203</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African Americans Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 74.

be done to stem the tide of violence against freedpeople.<sup>204</sup> The Reconstruction Acts, passed by the Radical Congress in March of 1867 over the president's veto, was the Radicals' response to this violence. These acts set the terms for the readmission of the former Confederate states. These terms for regaining their place in the Union required the states to draft new state constitutions, allowing black men to vote by way of ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, and the disqualification of former Confederates from holding office or voting in the reconstructed state governments.



Fig 6.3: Map of the military districts established by the Reconstruction Acts of 1867. Source: <http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/reconstruction-acts-of-1867-definition-lesson-quiz.html>

<sup>204</sup> For more on the 1866 events in Memphis and New Orleans, see Stephen V. Ash, *Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot that Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013) and James K. Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 31-52.

By 1868, a number of other factors had come together to further the Bureau's decline. As states began to reestablish their governments, Congress removed federal troops from a number of Southern states in accordance with the Reconstruction Acts.<sup>205</sup> As a result, there was virtually no enforcement of the agency's already unpopular policies. By this point, the many faces of the Bureau – its agents and other employees – started to change. This was rooted in the increasing use of civilian employees in its local operations. Howard, as one would expect, preferred the discipline of military men in the operation of the Bureau. By 1868, Howard noted that there were 412 “civilian agents” working for the agency, though these numbers would drop sharply - down to just 71 – the following year.<sup>206</sup> The agency moved from one staffed by military officers, hardened by war, to one staffed by a number of civilians who did not always share Howard's mission. President Johnson had always pestered Howard about the staffing of the local offices. Because the Bureau was a military agency, it fell under the president's war powers and gave him a say in how it functioned and who would work there. Howard often watched helplessly as Johnson meddled with agency personnel, often firing those who disagreed with him as well as awarding jobs to his political supporters. This would shift, not end, because of the impeachment proceedings against Johnson during the early months of 1868, as Radicals took control of Reconstruction's path.<sup>207</sup> With the Republicans in control, they also used well-paying jobs in much the same way, rewarding political favors. “Moreover,” notes Lieberman, “the creation of several hundred new civilian

<sup>205</sup> By 1868, this included Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

<sup>206</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 361-362.

<sup>207</sup> For more on Johnson's impeachment, see Hans L. Trefousse, *Impeachment of a President: Andrew Johnson, the Blacks, and Reconstruction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999); David O. Stewart, *Impeached: The Trial of President Andrew Johnson and the Fight for Lincoln's Legacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 333-336.

positions with comfortable salaries represented a sizeable patronage plum to Republican members of Congress eager to build their party in the South; despite Howard's resistance, he was flooded with congressional endorsements for civilians seeking Bureau appointments."<sup>208</sup> This caused General Howard to have a decreasing amount of influence over Bureau affairs and the reduction in military men weakened the agency both visibly and operationally.

Another factor in the Bureau's demise came with the agency's expanded tasks. With Congress's extension of the Bureau over the president's veto in 1866 came an expansion of its mission during the following two years. Developing out of this expanded mission, the agency extended itself to include the Freedmen's Savings and Trust, known simply as the Freedmen's Bank, and it involved itself in paying out bounties to African American army and navy veterans.<sup>209</sup> The bank, chartered in 1865, hoped to teach freedpeople thrift and inspire confidence as they employed many black leaders in their offices and often shared offices with the agency.<sup>210</sup> While the Bureau helped many freedmen collect on their bounties after the war, in 1867 Congress made the agency the primary payer of these bounties. The agency performed this task because a number of legal sharks tried to swindle these men out of their money by charging exorbitant legal fees in collecting their bounties. The Bureau helped black veterans fill out the extensive paperwork to receive these bounties and then encouraged them to deposit their money in the Freedmen's Bank. Rather than focusing on the agency's initial goals – helping freedpeople and refugees – the bank

<sup>208</sup> Robert C. Lieberman, "The Freedmen's Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure," *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 428. See also John Cox and LaWanda Cox, "O.O. Howard and the 'Misrepresented Bureau,'" *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Nov., 1953): 441.

<sup>209</sup> For more on the process of paying out these bounties, see Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 354-355; Robert C. Lieberman, "The Freedmen's Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure," *Social Science History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 430.

<sup>210</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York; Harper Collins, 1988), 531-532. The bank functioned as a private corporation, not as a part of the government. It went under in 1874 because of bad business practices, particularly centered on speculation in railroads during the early 1870s.

and bounties pushed the Bureau, and much of its military leadership, into unfamiliar territory. The agency's foray into these areas, however, was not the final blow – this would come from Congress.

While the Bureau officially lasted until 1872, two acts of Congress in July of 1868 brought about its decline. First, the Fortieth Congress passed an act on July 6, 1868, that continued the agency for another year, with a few modifications. While this act stipulated that the education of freedpeople and refugees would continue, all other operations of the agency were to cease. Congress stopped funding other ventures pursued by the agency. While Johnson did not approve this act, it became law as the ten days in which he could veto the law had elapsed and it went back to the House for approval. Second, on July 25, 1868, that same Congress passed “An Act relating to the Freedmen’s Bureau and providing for its Discontinuance” over the president’s veto. The second act kept Howard in charge of the agency, but it ended its operations as of January 1, 1869. Section 2 of this bill laid out the agency’s end:

*And be it further enacted, That the commissioner of the bureau shall, on the first day of January next, cause the said bureau to be withdrawn from the several States within which said bureau has acted and its operations shall be discontinued. But the educational department of the said bureau and the collection and payment of moneys due the soldiers, sailors, and marines, or their heirs, shall be continued as now provided by law until otherwise ordered by act of Congress.<sup>211</sup>*

The educational mission of the Bureau would continue, as would its payment of bounties to African American soldiers and sailors until Congress said otherwise, but the agency as it had existed since the war’s end, was no more. For the next four years, only a shell of the former agency would remain.

With the events of 1868, many who relied on the Bureau for support expressed their displeasure at the aforementioned acts of Congress. By 1868, freedpeople, poor whites, and

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-194. See also Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 359-360.

displaced whites “feared for a future without the bureau.”<sup>212</sup> To be sure, many Southern whites were quite pleased to see the agency disappear, eager to replace Republican rule with home rule in their states. Howard noted the reactions to the Bureau’s closing in a letter to the Secretary of War: “Many entreaties have come to me from Southern men, white and colored, and from several commissioners, to urge upon Congress the continuance of the operations of this Bureau beyond the time of its limit by law (January 1, 1869). But after having carefully considered the whole subject, I believe it is better *not to do so*.”<sup>213</sup> Howard would later use this letter to the Secretary of War to defend himself against accusations that he was against ever closing the agency. For Howard, it was a way of finally inducing local communities to help the indigent and freedpeople who resided there – something he had pushed for all along. Still, Howard did not leave all Southern communities in the cold. He managed to leave recommendations for some of the harder hit areas a continuance of rations and hospitals.<sup>214</sup>

The Freedmen’s Bureau officially ended on June 28, 1872, when President Ulysses S. Grant’s Secretary of War, William Belknap, issued an order that officially ended the agency. This was in accordance with the act of Congress dated June 10, 1872. With the dissolution of the Bureau, the Federal army took over the agency’s remaining tasks in the South. These troops remained until their removal in 1877, as a part of what historians have called “the Compromise of 1877.”<sup>215</sup> Looking back on the agency and its impact on the South, Howard was proud of what the agency was able to do:

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<sup>212</sup> Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 163.

<sup>213</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 357. Italics in the original.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 357-358.

<sup>215</sup> See C. Vann Woodward, “Yes, There Was a Compromise of 1877,” *The Journal of American History* 60 (1973): 215-223 and C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1951).

But for the presence of Bureau officers, sustained by a military force, there would have been no one to whom these victims of cruelty and wrong could have appealed for defense. And the evils remedied have probably been far less than the evils prevented. No one can tell what scenes of violence and strife and insurrection the whole South might have presented without the presence of this agency of the Government to preserve order and to enforce justice. Fallen in the faithful discharge of duty, in brave defense of right, in heroic protection of the weak and the poor, their names deserve a place on their country's "Roll of Fame."<sup>216</sup>

Historians have had a far different assessment of the Bureau, which, until recently, many did not view in a favorable light. One wonders what the agency might have been able to accomplish had it received more support from Washington.

### **Conclusion**

The year 1868 was not only an important year for the Freedmen's Bureau, but it was an important year for Arkansas. By January 1868, seventy delegates had convened in the state capitol to draft a new constitution. Most of the delegates were radicals, made primarily of people from outside of the state – the despised carpetbaggers and scalawags – as well as a number of loyalists created a progressive document for the time. The convention had its issues, including intense debates over the issue of granting full civil and political rights to African Americans. Voting irregularities existed in the voting for the new state charter, but ultimately, the legislature ratified the new constitution on April 1, 1868.<sup>217</sup> In line with the Reconstruction Acts, the newly elected general assembly ratified the Fourteenth Amendment the next day and set a date for elections. On July 3, Arkansans elected a new governor, Powell Clayton, a former Federal cavalry officer from Kansas and pre-war Democrat-turned-Republican. Then, on June 22, 1868, Congress readmitted Arkansas to the Union thus ending its adventure in rebellion.<sup>218</sup> By no means was Arkansas's

<sup>216</sup> Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army, Volume II* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 371.

<sup>217</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 161-173.

<sup>218</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 244-250. For more on Powell Clayton, see Powell

journey over, readmission to the Union was only the first step in a very long process for Arkansas and its citizens to move forward.

With Arkansas's readmission to the Union and the Bureau's decreased operations, 1868 marked the end of its operations in the Trans-Mississippi West assisting both freedpeople and displaced Southern whites. While its educational efforts continued in various capacities throughout the South, the agency was as far as Howard was concerned, finished with its mission. In 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau embarked on the task of situating displaced whites on confiscated and abandoned lands across Arkansas. Large tracts of abandoned and confiscated lands were at the Bureau's disposal in Missouri and Arkansas. Western Missouri still had vacated lands resulting from General Orders, No. 11 with these lands at the Bureau's disposal. Many uprooted people lived and worked on a temporarily on a number of plantations, often under the Bureau's watchful eye. With President Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation that May, things became increasingly complicated for the both the Bureau and the displaced whites residing on these soon to be reclaimed lands. While the president and General Howard went back and forth through Circulars 13 and 15 during the summer of 1865, any major land reform pursued by the Bureau came to a screeching halt. Displaced whites like those who resided on the Matilda Johnson Plantation near Little Rock, were soon forced off their temporary quarters as a result.

By 1866, the Bureau became more involved with education and healthcare for freedpeople and displaced whites in the region. Like the Bureau's battles with the president over land reform, similar battles continued in this area. Only a small number of displaced whites, however, took advantage of these programs. Problems with funding, adequate facilities, and the views of local whites, all hindered any kind of progress by the agency in this area and possibly deterred whites

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Clayton, *The Aftermath of the Civil War* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1915); Richard Nelson Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

from seeking these services. While it did not provide direct funding, the Bureau also assisted locally with orphanages, as so many children displaced by the war either lost their parents or were unable to find them once hostilities had ended. Even Bureau oversight in this area ruffled feathers in local communities. While 1865 could be characterized as the ration-giving period, 1866 and 1867 might be labeled as the medical and educational period – of course had famine not hit the South in 1867. The famine of 1867 had been, in many ways, building since the start of the war with Mother Nature playing a key role in the form of droughts and heavy rains but also the refusal of the South's planter class to grow food instead of cotton during the war years. The resulting influx of poor and displaced whites and freedpeople caused a temporary uptick in rations issued by the Bureau in 1867, but a combination of the aforementioned factors rendered the agency powerless, especially with regard to displaced whites in the region.

## CONCLUSION

The outbreak of civil war in 1861 not only signaled the bell for the clash of armies across much of the nation's south and mid-section, but it also brought about some of the largest movements of civilians that the young nation had known. While this study focuses on those people in Arkansas and Missouri, it is important to remember that the war forced a number of people from their communities, from Virginia to Georgia and from Tennessee to Texas and Louisiana; a great number of Southerners fled the war. The clash of armies, roaming guerrillas, and tests of loyalty sent a great number of people on the run at various times during the war. This was not a single, regional displacement by any means but one that occurred on a community-by-community basis and its effects felt long after the armies had left the field. With each passing year, and the mounting numbers of displaced whites, armies, governments, and aid societies dealt with the crisis.

Understanding the circumstances that created so many displaced white Southerners during the war and how various governmental agencies' responded to their plight is critical if historians are to better understand the impact of the war on civilian populations. Not just the war in general, but the war in the Trans-Mississippi West – a different and vastly understudied aspect of the Civil War. Displaced whites were a hot potato of sorts both during and after the war in the sense that no one really wanted to help them. Local benevolent aid organizations and both governments viewed them as a burden. A burden to each side's war effort and, after the war, a burden to helping freedpeople. Sure, these agencies helped them, but in a way that gave the sense that these people were simply being brushed out of the way. Displaced Southern whites were simply given minimal amounts of aid in the form of rations before they were transported somewhere else, where organizations might be more eager to help them. As the number of displaced people mounted by the final two years of the war, neither army had any kind of clear plan in place to assist the region's

uprooted citizens. Through these reactions to displaced people, historians can see how unprepared local border communities were for this war. Furthermore, this shows how the borders between Union and Confederate were not as clear-cut as contemporaries might have expected them to be. These divided loyalties only served to complicate responses to the problem of displaced whites.

A focus on displaced whites reveals a number of things about the impact of the war in the Trans-Mississippi West. The handling of displaced people here demonstrates a complete lack of preparedness by the United States government and the army in that each failed to put forth any kind of plan for these people with each passing year of the war and the intensification of the crisis. With each battle in this region, the wants and needs of displaced whites was made clear and the Union army was unable or unwilling to deal with the problem. Additionally, the army's pursuit of guerrilla fighters across the region contributed to their inability to deal with the crisis and, in some instances, making it worse. The Federal government offered no solution, despite its awareness of the situation there and, as a result, neither did the army. This was evident the army's foisting of displaced people on to local communities or benevolent aid organizations.

Studying displaced whites also exposes how loyalties played a role in southern Missouri and northwestern Arkansas. Receiving aid from the Union army or the Freedmen's Bureau often required some kind of affirmation of loyalty to the United States government, but it also shows how divided many communities in the region were. Mountain Federals in northwestern Arkansas as well as other Unionists scattered throughout the region faced constant pressure from local Confederate supporters and local governments loyal to the Confederate cause. This pressure often led to the displacement of many men, women, and children, often made worse by the actions of the armies and guerrilla fighters. While many people held strong to their loyalties, there were

instances where one's loyalties were hidden or malleable. Many whites held these loyalties as a means of preserving one's property or receiving help.

The Confederate government, like its Northern adversary, failed to recognize the crisis among its own citizens. Despite the fact that many loyal Confederates made their way out of the region, to areas deemed more secure, the government failed to offer any kind of help for people who needed it. The government did offer some relief to its citizens, but this was often limited to the families of soldiers and the reduction of taxes for citizens pushed to the brink of starvation. Displaced whites should have been more of a concern for the government as some of them were the families of Confederate soldiers, which forced a number of men from the front to check on or care for their families. This added to a number of internal problems for the government, which served to weaken the war effort in each passing year of the war.

Aid organizations in the region reached their limits because of the number of displaced whites who came seeking their help. This created a need for organizations like the Western Sanitary Commission, which made them vital to the survival of so many displaced people in the region. Because governments and armies were so focused on fighting a war, many neglected to account for the effect of that war on the various communities that it touched. This was the same for aid organization scattered throughout the country. Unfortunately, for these aid organizations, it was the armies and the governments who relied on them to help solve the problem. While they were unprepared, aid organizations did what they could to organize themselves and focus their efforts on helping those people who came in search of help. Civic-minded citizens heeded the call and followed down the path of the European counterparts, forged only a decade earlier, and created ad hoc methods of dealing with the increasing number of displaced people who sought their help. As a result, organizations like the Refugee Relief Commission of Ohio, the American Union

Commission, and the Western Sanitary Commission did what they could to help displaced whites in the region.

After the war, the Freedmen's Bureau looked to help displaced people, but not at the expense of the many freedpeople who needed their services. The Bureau did what it could, given its mission, and issued rations to a number of displaced whites in the region. In addition, the agency did what it could to situate uprooted people on lands abandoned by Confederates or confiscated by the Federal government. Benevolent aid societies still aided the Bureau where they could, but it was primarily General Howard's task to reduce the number of wartime displacements so that his agency could focus on the task of assisting the millions of freedpeople across much of the South. Through the issuance of rations, the creation of schools and hospitals, and the placement of displaced whites on abandoned lands throughout the region, Howard and the Bureau moved to reduce their number throughout the South. While battles between the president and Congress made this task more difficult, the agency worked hard to help both displaced whites during the early years of Reconstruction.

Overall, penetrating all of these areas is Victorian anxiety about dependency. The Union army, Northern and Southern governments, benevolent aid organizations, and the Bureau, at one time or another, expressed fears that helping displaced whites had the potential to create a dependent class of people across the region. Contemporary opinions about the poor and relief for the poor influenced the actions of the aforementioned organizations as well as their opinions about displaced whites. Uprooted people were sometimes referred to as poor white trash or Northerners opined that they needed to be educated in the ways of the North. Cutting through these contemporary views of displaced people, we see the ways in which they inspired people to help, but also offer opinions on both how these people became uprooted and how they might be able to

improve their situation. All of this reveals a window in which to view outsiders' perceptions of displaced whites and the aid that was offered during the war and after.

While historians work to tell the story of these displaced people, it is important to note that Americans noticed their wartime plight. Both during and after the war, stories about uprooted citizens made their way into American popular culture – sometimes over issues of loyalty, other times over the hardships experienced by these displaced people. Poems, songs, and plays were used to highlight the plight of displaced whites during and after the war. One poem entitled *The Refugee*, appeared in the September 17, 1864, issue of *Harper's Weekly*. The poem relayed the suffering of so many Unionist mothers in the South. Popular media tried to relay the feeling of having a son fight for the other side:

*“But where were they, her noble boys,  
In this her hour of woe?”  
“Ah! They had sought the battle-field  
Ere fell this fearful blow.”*

*“Two were with Grant when Vicksburg fell.”  
“The other, where was he?”  
“Another flag above him waved  
At Richmond, under Lee.”*

*“And him she mourns as worse than dead,  
For in this deadly strife  
He battles on the side of those  
Who took his father's life.”<sup>1</sup>*

The mother here is heartbroken by the thought of one of her sons fighting for the very side that sent her and her family on the run, depriving them of the nice life that she and her family had

<sup>1</sup> “The Refugee,” *Harper's Weekly*, September 17, 1864, 606. The full version of this poem is located in Appendix B.

before the war. Digging deeper into these sources to uncover the plight of so many civilians across the South will help historians to understand the war and its impact.

While historians have touched on the plight of these displaced whites before, even if in a limited fashion, we need to learn more broadly about their experiences – both during and after the war - and what we might be able to learn from those experiences on a larger scale. While some research exists concerning displaced people in the East, more should be written about their experiences and how these experiences are part of a larger narrative. We have heard a number of accounts from those people who had the means to relocate because of the war. More research is needed regarding displaced people who were not so lucky, those who were left to wander for much of the war and after. Historians need to paint a better, more complete picture of those displaced by the war in the East, Virginia in particular, and link that with the stories of other displaced people across the South. How did the armies, governments, and various aid societies deal with the crisis across the entire Confederacy? Did the same or similar displacement factors exist across the South and the Border States? Were their differences from one region of the Confederate States in comparison with another? In addition, what can be said about both displaced blacks and whites? Are their wartime experiences intertwined and, if so, how? Certainly, the questions are there and, digging a bit deeper in the primary sources, I believe that the sources are there as well.

## APPENDIX A

### *The Southern Wagon*<sup>1</sup>

Come all ye sons of freedom and our southern band  
 We're going to fight the enemy and drive them from our land  
 Justice is our motto and Providence our guide  
 So jump in the wagon and we'll all take a ride

#### *Chorus*

Wail for the wagon  
 The Secession wagon  
 The South is a wagon  
 And we'll all take ride

Secession is our watch-word, our rights we all demand  
 And to defend our firesides we'll pledge our hearts and hands  
 Jeff Davis is our president and Stephens by his side  
 Brave Beauregard our general will join us in the ride

#### *Chorus*

Our wagon plenty big enough, the running gear is good  
 Tis stuffed with cotton round the sides and made of southern wood  
 Carolina is our driver with Georgia by her side  
 Virginia'll hold the flag up and we'll all take a ride

#### *Chorus*

There's Tennessee and Texas also in the ring  
 They wouldn't have a Government where cotton wasn't king  
 Alabama too and Florida have long ago replied  
 Mississippi in the wagon anxious for the ride

#### *Chorus*

Arkansas, North Carolina and Missouri were slow  
 But now they hurry they've found where they must go  
 There's Old Kentuck and Maryland each won't make their mind  
 So I reckon after all we'll have to take them up behind

#### *Chorus*

Our cause is Just and holy our Men are brave and true  
 To whip the Lincoln Cut-Throats is all we have to do

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<sup>1</sup> "The Southern Wagon," n.d., Lorraine Blore Raglund Collection, 1863-1981, Box 2: File 4, Special Collections at the University of Arkansas (Fayetteville).

God Bless our noble army – in Him we all confide  
So jump into the wagon and we'll all take a ride

*Chorus*

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**ABSTRACT****A LONELY WANDERING REFUGEE”: DISPLACED WHITES IN THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861-1868**

by

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Historians have written a great deal about the American Civil War and, until recently, much of that scholarly activity has focused on military battles and the effectiveness of the Union and Confederate armies on the war’s outcome. During the past few decades, social historians have tried to dig beneath that narrative to situate the war in the eyes of American citizens and how that war affected their lives. With this, there has been a focus on the Northern and Southern homefronts, African Americans, and soldiers’ motivations to fight – all rooted in the wartime experience. In this discussion, however, there is very little attention paid to the plight of Southern whites displaced by the war. In “‘A Lonely Wandering Refugee’: Displaced Whites in the Trans-Mississippi West During the American Civil War, 1861-1868,” I argue that displaced whites, both during and after the war, were largely pushed off by the armies, the U.S. and Confederate governments, and the Freedmen’s Bureau to local aid organizations in Missouri and Arkansas. Through an analysis of both Union and Confederate army records, Freedmen’s Bureau records, personal correspondence of local citizens, local and national newspapers, and regional aid organizations, I have detailed the treatment of uprooted people in the region.

From the start of the war in 1861, battlefield clashes, guerrilla warfare, hunger, Union, war policies, Confederate conscription, and conflicts over loyalties sent many whites on the run and, almost immediately, they encountered one of the armies in search of help. As it encountered these people in the region, the Union army provided enough rations to support displaced whites until the army transported them to Union-controlled areas where they received aid, most often, from private benevolent aid organizations. While soldiers held a variety of opinions of these people and their situation, the army was vastly unprepared for the number of people who came into their lines seeking support. While there was no clear policy on how to handle the large number of displaced whites, it was not they did not try. Colony farms and other programs were attempted to put displaced people back on their feet but because the army's lack of consistency, nothing came from these attempts. The Confederate army, on the other hand, did nothing to support those displaced whites who came into their lines. If anything, Confederate soldiers left the ranks because of people uprooted by the war because so many of those men, women, and children sent on the run were their own friends and families back home.

Aid organizations in the West, like the Western Sanitary Commission in St. Louis, often filled the void of caring for these displaced whites. While these organizations originated out of the need to care for wounded soldiers, they expanded their mission to include help for displaced whites who came from across Missouri and Arkansas. By the war's midpoint, they provided temporary shelter, food, and the necessities of life for people on a short and long-term basis. To reduce the numbers of displaced whites dependent upon their care, organizations also provided transportation to these people, often sending them north to be with friends and family. As one would expect, care for these people over the final two years of the war was expensive and, as a result, they held sanitary fairs to raise money for their endeavors. The most prominent such fair was the Mississippi

Valley Sanitary Fair held in St. Louis in 1864 that raised a great deal of money for their efforts. The Western Sanitary Commission and like-minded organizations provided care for displaced whites both during the war and into Reconstruction, as the Bureau relied on their continued support of displaced people.

With the dawn of Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau fanned out across the South to help both freedpeople and displaced whites. The Bureau stepped in to help when local governments could or would not do so. During the early months of Reconstruction, the Bureau placed a number of displaced people on abandoned and confiscated lands throughout the region. This, however, was quickly complicated by debates in Washington between the Radical Congress and President Andrew Johnson. The issue at hand in these debates concerned the fate of former Confederates and their property. While the agency also offered rations, provided transportation, offered schooling, and medical care, it was their placement of displaced people on abandoned lands that proved to be the most successful. Once the president removed this option, the Bureau moved to make displaced, and now destitute, whites to be self-sufficient as quickly as possible. For the Bureau, displaced whites were a hindrance on its primary focus – assisting freedmen. While the Bureau did what it could when it came to aiding displaced people scattered throughout the region at the close of the war, it came undone because of what happened in Washington. This, by 1868, rendered the Bureau ineffective in Arkansas and throughout much of the South.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

David P. Hopkins, Jr. earned his Ph.D. from Wayne State University Department of History in October 2015, where he also earned his M.A. degree. Here, he studied American history with a focus on the Civil War. He holds a B.A. degree from Michigan State University where he studied Africa and the Cold War. David was born in Bay City, Michigan, and currently resides in Midland, Texas, where he is an associate professor of history at Midland College.