

PETTICOAT FLAG

The Actions of Confederate Women in Missouri During the Civil War

A Thesis

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Master of Arts

by

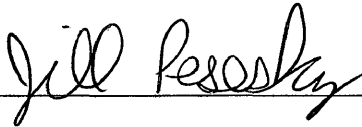
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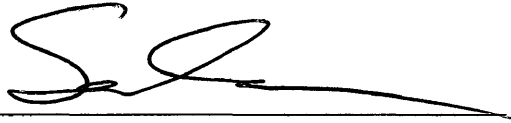
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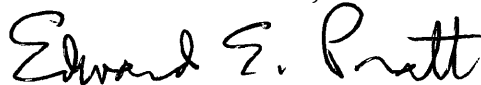


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Approved by the Committee, July 2005



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Carol Sheriff

Thanks, Mom and Dad, for all your love and help through this long process.
Also, much love to John for all your support.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to study the activities of Confederate supporting women in Missouri during the American Civil War. It covers the pre- War years, through the Civil War itself, and the aftermath. These women's lives were studied using letters, diaries, and memoirs.

Confederate supporting women were often active in assisting Confederate guerrillas, but they continued to view and portray themselves as helpless victims of circumstances. Because many of their men were taking part in secretive raids for the Confederate cause in a Union state, women had to protect their homes and families in a way that they were not used to. Women drew on their experiences as frontier women to defend themselves against an increasingly hostile Union Army. The experience of defending themselves did not change how Confederate supporting women viewed their roles within their communities and households.

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INTRODUCTION

Missouri faced sectional conflict a decade before the Civil War began in the East. Widespread guerrilla activity brought the War directly to civilians. This study focuses on the region south and east of Kansas City, the center of activity for Confederate guerrillas and the women with Southern sympathies who directly and indirectly helped them. Although historians acknowledge that guerrillas justified their actions by claiming they were protecting women, these same historians have often missed female participation, turning women into the passive creatures relying on the partisans for protection. In many cases, it was the actions of women that protected the guerrillas and made it possible for them to continue their activities.¹

Many Confederate-supporting Missouri women acted outside of the bounds of their prescribed gender role to help the Confederate cause. At the same time, they clung to their understanding of how women were supposed to behave, and expected men to treat them according to their familiar role. Indeed, these women used to their advantage the nineteenth-century norm that protected white women. Since men on both sides were reluctant to hurt white women, these women could actively assist the guerrillas without having to fear for their lives. As Union efforts to control the conflict in Missouri grew more desperate, Union officials became less tolerant of these women's actions, and began

¹ Albert Castel, *Winning and Losing in the Civil War: Essays and Stories* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 135. Michael Fellman, "Women and Guerrilla Warfare," *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 149.

to understand just how dangerous they were. As a result some Confederate-supporting women were imprisoned and banished for assisting the guerrillas. Though their outrage at this treatment suggests that they still wanted to be treated with the respect usually accorded to white women, they nonetheless moved outside of their traditional gender role. Their outrage suggests they were prompted by the necessities of war, not a desire for change in their roles.²

The activities of Confederate-supporting women were not unique. Throughout the Confederate States, many women who supported the cause stepped outside their traditional roles to assist with the war effort. For example, Rose Greenhow worked as a Confederate spy close to the U.S. capitol. Even young women like Celine Fremaux in Louisiana witnessed and took part in smuggling operations. These women expected to enjoy the protection offered to white women, especially elite white women, even as they undertook activities that were outside of their expected behavior. As areas of the Confederate South came under the control of the Union Army, more women engaged in smuggling and spying. The women in Missouri were engaging in activities similar to those of women in the Confederate South, but with one important difference: their state never seceded from the Union. Confederate-supporting women in Missouri risked assisting a Confederate Cause that was never enforced by a legal government in their state. And after the early days of the War, there was no regular Confederate presence in the state. The guerilla warfare that ran rampant in Missouri allowed for much more direct female action than traditional warfare.

² Fellman, "Women and Guerrilla Warfare," 153.

CHAPTER I

SOUTHERN BY BLOOD, WESTERN BY EXPERIENCE

The strong support that the Southern Cause had in Missouri was not that surprising when one traces the footsteps of many Missouri settlers. Most settlers who poured into Missouri in the early part of the nineteenth century were Southern in origin, looking back to Kentucky and Virginia. When Missouri achieved statehood in 1821, approximately two-thirds of the population living in the central counties along the Missouri River, referred to as “Little Dixie,” was born in Kentucky, Tennessee, or Virginia. Even by the 1850 census, 36 percent of the people living in Missouri were still born in one of those states. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Missourians’ ancestry played a great part in the side that they chose. According to Mrs. C.C. Rainwater, politics followed genealogy: “Mr. Rainwater’s parents being of Carolina and Tennessee stock, and mine of Maryland, there was no question about where our sympathies lay when the ‘War Cloud’ appeared in 1861.” There was more to being Southern than a place of birth: “It was my glorious privilege to be born of Virginia parents,” said one anonymous woman, “therefore I am Southern by blood, birth, and education.”³

The connection to Virginia was not just geographical; it was also ideological. Early settlers hoped to establish a yeomen’s utopia in Missouri. Appropriately, they

³ Mrs. C.C. Rainwater, “Reminiscences from 1861 to 1865.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties* (Dayton: Morningside House Press, 1988), 17-18. Anonymous, “A Reminiscence of the War in St. Louis.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 44.

named the state capital the Jefferson City in honor of the champion of their ideal.

Although Missouri eventually developed areas with large farms, plantations were very rare. For the most part, Missourians lived in plain wooden houses. “A life consumed by hard farm work with a diversity of crops and other commercial endeavors - even with the advantage of slave labor - offered precious little time and even less surplus capital for decadent construction.” Although some landowners did become prosperous enough to have estates that could be considered plantations, for the most part life in Missouri was one of hard labor.⁴

Despite the connection to Virginia, life in rural Missouri was much different from life on the Southeastern seaboard. Slaveholding was not widespread; most slaveholders in Missouri owned only a few slaves. Most slaveowners were in the “Little Dixie” section, made up of counties that bordered the Missouri River: Clay, Lafayette, Saline, Fayette, Cooper, Boone, and Calloway counties. According to historian James Oakes, the typical slaveowner, whether he or she lived in Missouri or in the East, owned ten slaves or fewer. Slaves were needed for a large-scale hemp industry, which thrived along the Missouri River until the 1850’s. “Little Dixie” also grew tobacco. Both crops required a reliable labor source, and since there were not enough white men to provide labor in the region in the earliest years of settlement, the hemp industry was based on slave labor. Unlike the large plantation owners back East, Missouri farmers were more likely to diversify their crops. For example, Boone County became wealthy because the planters there grew everything from grains to peas to potatoes. Boone county farmers led the state in livestock value. Since “Little Dixie’s” counties were located on the Missouri river,

⁴ Christopher Phillips, *Missouri’s Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern*

farmers found it easy to ship their goods to St. Louis and beyond. This diversification of crops and access to markets allowed some planters in Missouri to enjoy a comfortable way of life.⁵

The scarcity of labor in Missouri allowed planters with many slaves to make money by hiring their slaves out. Planters had a variety of reasons for renting their slaves' services to other farmers. William A. Lenoir took his family's slaves with him on an exploratory trip to Missouri from North Carolina in 1834. He discovered that the farmers he encountered in Missouri were eager for slave labor, and he wrote to his father that he could "hire out 9 or 10 Negroes which can be done without difficulty immediately in this settlement." By hiring out the slaves, Lenoir would be able to travel in Missouri more easily, and he would also have money to finance his trip. Planters with more slaves could also hire out slaves during slow times in the growing season. In a letter to William A. Lenoir from his aunt, she informed him "we have had ten Negroes hired out for some time. Next week Mr. Lenoir intends having three or four at home to save his fodder. After that, they will return to the same places, where they will work for several months the hire at this time, amounts to \$75 per month." Because of the prevalence of hiring out slaves, the extent of the slave economy in Missouri cannot be judged simply by looking at how many slaves each family owned.⁶

Identity in the Border West (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 27-29.

⁵Phillips, 40-41. R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 122-123. James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 39. James William McGettigan, "Boone County Slaves: Sales, Estate Divisions, and Families, 1820-1865, Part I," *Missouri Historical Review* 72, no. 1 (April 1978): 180.

⁶ Lewis B. Atherton, "Life, Labor, and Society in Boone County, Missouri, 1834-1852, as Revealed in the Correspondence of an Immigrant Slave Owning Family from North Carolina," *Missouri Historical Review* 93, no. 1 (Oct. 1998): 284, 299-300.

Hiring out slaves became even more popular in Missouri as a professional class began to develop in the burgeoning towns. Because people in this class did not rely entirely on agriculture for their economic well-being, they had less need to diversify their crops. They would hire slaves on a seasonal or yearly basis. For example, Willard Hall Mendenhall, a Lexington carriage maker, never owned his own slaves but began to rent them to work the twelve acres of farmland he purchased shortly after his marriage. Mendenhall's situation is a perfect illustration of the complex nature of the slave system. Just because an individual did not personally own slaves does not mean that he was not invested in the slave system. Slaveowners in Missouri needed people like Mendenhall so that their slaves were never idle, and Mendenhall needed more labor than his new family could provide. Due to the shortage of white labor in Missouri, slavery provided an important source of labor and income to slaveowners and non-slaveowners alike.⁷

The glaring exception to the rural, and some would say Southern, character of Missouri was St. Louis. The city retained elements of its Spanish and French heritage. To newcomers it appeared a product of the East rather than the West. Increasingly industrialized, the city grew rapidly in the antebellum era, owing to an influx of German and Irish immigrants. Approximately sixty percent of St. Louis' population was foreign born, compared to eight percent in the Missouri valley counties. Although many of these immigrants had come to the New World with the intention of farming, immigrants were faced with economic and financial hardships on the plains. Many turned to St. Louis for economic opportunities. As a growing port town, St. Louis had a demand for cheap labor,

⁷ Oakes, 40. Willard Hall Mendenhall, "Life is Uncertain... Willard Hall Mendenhall's 1862 Civil War Diary, Part 1." Ed. By Margaret Mendenhall Frazier and James W. Goodrich. *Missouri Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (July 1984): 432.

and most of that labor came from immigrants rather than slaves. While slaves may have made up as much as ten percent of St. Louis's population in 1840, by the beginning of the Civil War they made up less than one percent. Free blacks in the city outnumbered them. German immigrants and their descendents became the leaders of the abolition movement in St. Louis, a position that put them at odds with much of rural Missouri.⁸

The combination of industry and immigration combined to make St. Louis a symbol of the evils of that other Missourians had hoped to escape in their Jeffersonian "paradise". The German opposition to slavery and, indirectly, to the Southern way of life, was reflected in the German press. In an article in the *Westliche Post* dated September 27, 1857, the editors proclaimed "We consider it to be one of our main duties to consider all measures that seem suitable for bringing us closer to the goal of transforming Missouri into a flourishing *free state*." Though anti-slavery, the German population was not necessarily without racism. An article from January 1, 1860, supported the colonization of blacks in Latin America to prevent the white population from having to interact with a free black population.⁹

The German population's alignment with the anti-slavery movement created animosity among rural Missourians. To many Missourians, the Germans' attack on their Southern heritage was unbearable. The distrust would come to a head during the sectional conflict, when a large percentage of the German population, joined the Union army and ensured that the state remained in the Union. While before the War, rural Missourians had

⁸ Phillips, 115-121

⁹ Rowan, 51.

needed the businesses and markets of St. Louis to distribute the crops and goods they produced on their farms, by 1861 St. Louis became the focal point of Confederate wrath.¹⁰

Since farms with large numbers of slaves were so scarce, the family was the primary source of labor and support on most Missouri farms. The family-oriented nature of most Missouri farms is illustrated by the memoirs of Joshua Ely Briggs. Briggs was born in Ralls County, Missouri, just north of the Little Dixie region, to a family that owned a few slaves. His grandparents had emigrated from Kentucky to the wilderness of Missouri in 1821. Even though his family had been in Missouri for nearly two decades when he was born, Briggs remembered that the family still lived in a log cabin. The family was outfitted in homespun, showing a reliance on home industry well into the middle part of the century. According to Briggs, “everybody had to work. There were no rich, they were all pioneers.” This poverty was typical among frontier families, even those who could own slaves, like the Briggs’. Historian James Oakes claims, “It was their obsession with the acquisition of land and slaves... that caused wealthy men to live so poorly. And it was their incessant desire to move in search of greater opportunities to use their slaves that made masters live like paupers.” Joshua’s father’s attitude about slavery was a common one. Although his father “didn’t believe in buying and selling darkies, parting families...” he still owned slaves “because the Constitution guaranteed him that right.” Whether Joshua’s father truly felt this way or his son was trying to put him in a more favorable light in by twentieth-century standards is debatable. Nevertheless, Briggs family did not own enough slaves to keep Joshua from fieldwork. Joshua recalled breaking prairie with a slave named Henry. The economy of the Briggs family is typical of the

¹⁰Rowan, 92-94. Phillips, 115-121. Edward E. Leslie, *The Devil Knows how to Ride: The True Story of*

slaveowning families in the Missouri frontier. Many Missouri farms relied on the hard labor of all its members to be successful.¹¹

Women in Missouri who referred to themselves as Southern women acknowledged a connection of heritage, not lifestyle. In the introduction of the United Daughters of the Confederacy's collection of Missouri women's reminiscences about the War, the author claimed, "The women of the South were neither by birth nor education ever expected to endure toil and hardship..." The majority of the women in Missouri would probably not have agreed with this. Frontier life presented women with different challenges than elite Southern women of the East coast would have to face. Historian Julie Roy Jeffrey points out that the isolated nature of frontier areas meant that many families relied on household production for survival, which required a great deal of work from everyone in the household: "The hard work frontier women routinely performed highlighted the absurdity of the view of women as weak." After the founding of a homestead on the prairie, women engaged in a variety of activities to sustain their families. Because most of the families were cash-poor and their homes were situated far from town, women were in charge of making necessities. Along with making homespun clothes, some women also made shoes. Women also engaged in the hot and tiresome work of making candles. The farms that did have slaves most often only had field hands, leaving the women in charge of the household. Missouri suffered from a labor shortage, so even women who could afford to have house slaves could not find anyone to work for them. Some families did receive

William Clarke Quantrill and His Confederate Raiders (New York: Random House, 1996), 7.

¹¹ Joshua Ely Briggs and Ruth Flowerree, *A Pioneer Missourian* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1939), v, 13, 17, 21-23. Oakes, 86.

female slaves as gifts from relatives, but Missourians often found it more profitable to sell slaves South than to keep them.¹²

The diaries of women living in counties with high slave populations, such as Saline County, are curiously silent on the presence of any house slaves. Of course, some women did have female slaves to assist them in the house. Joshua Briggs recalled that a slave named Sarah Ann cooked and mended his clothes. However, Joshua's mother died when he was fifteen, leaving his father with seven children to care for. Probably Joshua's father needed to invest in female slaves to keep his household running smoothly. It appears that women relied on a kin network instead of house slaves, drawing on female relatives from either Missouri or areas in the east for assistance with childcare and housework. In Missouri and other parts of the frontier, women would try to work in groups as often as possible to ease the tedium of their tasks. By combining work and socializing, frontier women could sustain female friendship networks, even as the transient nature of Missouri's pioneer population constantly changed the community dynamic. Despite the hardships of housework, Missouri women counted their blessings that they did not have to work in factories like some girls in the Northeast. Both men and women in Missouri believed "... that rural life, particularly farm life, was the best way of living." Although some white women in Missouri were employed outside of the home, it was in socially acceptable positions, such as maids and cooks. The realities of life on the Missouri frontier may have prevented women from enjoying the more leisurely life of the elite

¹² *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Civil War*, 6. Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: "Civilizing" The West?* (Revised Edition) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 19-20. Lew Larkin, *Vanguard of Empire: Missouri's Century of Expansion* (St. Louis: State Capital Publishing, 1961), 35. Briggs and Flowerree, 20.

Southern women, but they had distinct ideas about what jobs were proper ones for a woman.¹³

Missouri families may have had distinct notions about the proper place of women within the household, but this did not prevent women from contributing to the economic survival of their families. Because certain goods were not available on a wide scale in the West, women could often turn their domestic talents into a profitable enterprise for their families. Missouri's location as a starting point for wagon trains heading to Oregon made it an ideal place for enterprising women to sell baked goods, clothes, and animal products to pioneers. Similarly, yeoman women in South Carolina sold domestic goods to general stores and local planters. In these situations, yeoman and frontier women contributed specie to households that were constantly low on cash. Their households may have at times existed at subsistence level, but Missouri women were still a part of the budding western market economy. Still, frontier women did not see themselves as moving beyond their gender roles within the family.¹⁴

Even though their many frontier tasks kept them busy, emigrant women's thoughts often turned to their friends and family back East. Because mail service to the east coast was slow and unpredictable, women in Missouri, as in other frontier areas, were often anxious for news of loved ones whom they could no longer see. Pioneer women

¹³ Briggs and Flowerree, 23, 25. Carla Waal and Barbara Oliver Korner, Eds., *Hardship and Hope: Missouri Women Writing about Their Lives, 1820-1920* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 58-71. Jeffrey, 108. Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie*, 238, 206, 208. Phillips, 253-254. Leslie, 86-88. *The Civil War in Missouri Day by Day*, 14-15.

¹⁴ Jeffrey, 77-78. Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 76-77

desperately wanted to keep their connections to the female community they had left behind, especially when faced with the process of making new friendships in a sparsely settled land. In contrast with the letters that men wrote home, which often dealt with the economic endeavors that these pioneers were engaging in, women's letters were more personal. In fact, women sometimes indirectly questioned their husbands' wisdom at pursuing economic ends at the expense of kin and friendship networks. In a letter home to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Walter Raleigh Lenoir expressed doubts about the intelligence of leaving all of their friends and family behind: "...when I think of the kind friends we have left it is most [sic] too great a sacrifice to be reconciled to for the sake of a little more of this worlds goods." To ease the pain of parting, women often tried to convince their relatives to join them in the West. Men did this as well, but framed this plea by extolling the virtues of the new land. William B. Lenoir wrote to his family in North Carolina in 1836: "Come and see Missouri and I think you will say with me the Old No[rth] Ca[rolina] will not do." Men may have been just as lonely for their friends back East, but they may have hidden their desire to see them again in the language of economic gain. In other cases, they tried to appear casual in their desire to see their family again. But women wrote of more personal needs to see their friends and family again.¹⁵

Because Missouri was a state with few towns, rural neighbors had to rely on one another in times of crisis. A duty that women often took on was caring for the sick. Many of the letters from Missouri before the Civil War mention the good or bad health of their family and friends. Some settlers claimed in letters that their health was better in Missouri than it had been back East, but this may have been an attempt to convince family

¹⁵ Jeffrey, 93-93. Atherton, "Life, Labor, and Society in Boone County, Missouri, 1834-1852, Part II,"

members to emigrate west. In 1836 William B. Lenoir wrote, “Health has in general prevailed [sic] throughout our towns and settlements with the exception of a few localities. Our family never have enjoyed better health and more of it since we came to Missouri.” Despite Lenoir’s endorsement, Missouri settlers dealt with a host of diseases. Settlers in Missouri had to contend with mosquitoes that caused malaria and impure water that caused dysentery. In a letter to her husband, Frances Gates Willis describes an outbreak of cholera in St. Louis in August of 1849: “The cholera has been raging to a great extent in St. Louis. The people fled a great many of them.” She then listed the names of several friends who had succumbed to the disease. Missouri’s location as the starting point on the Oregon Trail meant that emigrants often brought disease epidemics from the East to Missouri. Mrs. Walter Raleigh Lenoir wrote from Boone County to her sister Louisa in North Carolina about an outbreak of Cholera in 1852: “The health of this country-has been good- considering the many inroads for disease, a great deal of Cholera has been on the Boats; passengers from all parts of the United States have been traveling West- often stopping to see the Towns and Country- unfortunately some stopt [sic] that had Cholera in Columbia.” The infected travelers died in Columbia, but not before causing a minor outbreak among the inhabitants of the town: “They died, and some 8 or ten of our citizens- two worthy ladies.” But as frightening as the possibility of epidemics were, most Missourians more often faced illness and injury on a smaller and more personal scale. And it was in these times of illness that the nursing skills of women were most needed.¹⁶

409.

¹⁶ Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri’s Little Dixie*, 75. Atherton, “Life, Labor, and Society in Boone County, Missouri, 1834-1852, Part II,” 411, 424. Waal and Korner, *Hardship and Hope*, 51.

Because a doctor's services were often unavailable, women relied on folk medicines and invested in patent medicines when home remedies were unsuccessful. Those who did go to doctors were often made worse by the bleeding, vomiting, and purging that most doctors of the time employed to cure illnesses. Like most other Americans, Missourians relied on the advice of merchants who supplied medical advice and supplies. General stores often carried a variety of patent pills that claimed to cure a variety of illnesses. However, like the doctor's remedies, these medicines were sometimes more dangerous than helpful. Caring for the family was considered a suitable female interest, so many women became adept at easing the pain of the sick. In fact, some women were able to turn their nursing skills into a career. According to historian Glenda Riley, 39 Missouri women were listed as midwives in the 1860 census. Even those women who did not pursue medicine as a career often had ample training in caring for the sick, and especially in caring for women in childbirth. Women would often serve as "neighborhood nurses," visiting sick people nearby. Because of the variety of ways that nurses practiced, from working for a thank you to an established cash payment, it is difficult to pin down just how many women served as nurses. But the prevalence of nurses and midwives with no formal training in Missouri points both to the unsettled nature of the state and to the need for women to rely on in each other in times of crisis.¹⁷

Women in other areas of Missouri did not face as many hardships as the women that Martha Wood encountered. Especially in the areas surrounding the Missouri River, women had a number of opportunities to better themselves. Changing views of women's

¹⁷ Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie*, 211-213. Charles McKinley Evans, *The Missouri Story: A Deluge of Strangers*. (Conway, Ark. Charlemarie Press, 1986), 100. Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 111-112.

education from the east, notably from Catherine Beecher, reached Missouri and spurred Missourians to demand education for their daughters. Beginning in the 1820's, parents began organizing female academies for their daughters. Although the state-supported schools were technically coeducational, parents were opposed to sending their daughters to school with men. The female institutions were often understaffed and rarely had buildings of their own, but they were very popular. For example, because the Columbia Female Academy had only one teacher, it had to turn applicants away. Because all of the female educational institutions were private, they had to rely on tuition and donations to remain open. Also, because these private institutions had no set standards for teachers, the quality of the education they offered varied widely. Nevertheless, parents in Missouri appear to have been pleased with the results of their daughters' education.¹⁸

The academies had strict rules for female behavior. Students at the Howard Female College could not correspond with men, talk to men on the streets, or receive presents. These strict codes for female behavior, combined with the opposition of parents to sending girls to school with boys, suggests that Missouri parents were vigilant about protecting their daughters' reputations. The goal of education was to prepare women to be better wives and mothers. In Missouri, as in other frontier states, the mission of each school varied. Some claimed to educate women in fields ranging from languages to business to science, while other had a more modest goal of "preparing women for a life of quiet domesticity." Still, education allowed girls and opportunity to create strong friendship bonds and also provided them with an awareness of politics. An understanding

¹⁸ Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Little Dixie*, 199-201; Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 151-152.

of the political world would be critical as the sectional conflict became central to Missouri women's lives.¹⁹

The female academies and other schools provided women with opportunities for employment. As early as 1835 Catherine Beecher was organizing groups of women to go West to teach. Since women were working with children, teaching allowed women to retain their moral authority and virtue because they were not dealing with the corrupt world of men. Susan B. Vanarsdale traveled from Illinois to join her sister in Mexico, Missouri to set up a school. Although she boarded with families in the area to maintain her reputation, Vanarsdale made enough money from the tuition to support herself. In 1848, her school averaged fifty-two students and earned her ninety dollars a year. Even with her success, Varnarsdale still hoped to find a husband. For most white Missouri women, marriage was the ultimate goal. Women were looking for security in marriage, but some wanted a partner to be more than just a provider. After her wedding, Amelia Hockaday found that she preferred married life to the "cold climes of celibacy." The quest for love sometimes left these women heartbroken. Vanarsdale fell in love with a doctor in Mexico, but after he asked her to become his mistress she realized that he would never marry her. Although she received several marriage proposals, she turned them all down because she could not imagine not marrying for love. Though other Missouri women probably could not afford to turn down marriage proposals, women did demand some form of companionship in their marriages.²⁰

¹⁹ Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Little Dixie*, 199-201; Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 151.

²⁰ Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, 20-21. Waal and Korner, 28-39. Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie*, 205-206.

The isolation of the frontier pushed many pioneer women to seek strong emotional and physical bonds with their husbands. Although some historians have suggested that nineteenth-century women neither wanted nor enjoyed sex, Julie Roy Jeffrey found evidence to the contrary. In letters to absent husbands, frontier women made it clear that they wanted their husbands for more than labor or friendship. Drew Gilpin Faust also found evidence of sexual desires among Confederate women during the Civil War. Any hint at sexual longing by a Southern woman was directly at odds with the ideals that were often assigned to Southern womanhood. Of course, because women were ideally wives and mothers, their purity could not simply be defined as virginity. Therefore, Southern women were enjoined to see sex as a necessary evil: something that had to be done to fulfill their destiny to be mothers. Exhibiting sexual desire for their husbands and for other men was taboo.²¹

White women in Missouri faced a challenge in maintaining their traditional role within the household. To make a start on the frontier, all of the family members contributed labor, and women were sometimes the only other adults in the family. Although some women in Missouri enjoyed the assistance of slaves, slaves were often rented out in off seasons. Though white women often worked in the fields, they nonetheless sought to establish control over their household, often through a moral authority within their households. After facing obstacles in keeping their families together to settle on the frontier, they soon had to hold their families together in the face of bitter

²¹ Jeffrey, 86-87. Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 123. Virginia Kent Anderson Leslie, "A Myth of the Southern Lady: Antebellum Proslavery Rhetoric and the Proper Place of Women" in *Southern Women*, ed. Caroline Matheny Dillman (New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1988), 30-31.

sectional conflict. The powerful ties that Southern-supporting women had created with their family and friends were put to the test as the country split in two.

Missourians worked hard to recreate eastern society on the frontier. By the time of the Civil War, Missouri had been settled long enough for generations to be born in Missouri. As frontier women they sought to create new friendship bonds in their communities. This would be difficult under normal circumstances, but tension over the expansion of slavery caused even greater problems among people who otherwise had a great deal in common.

Missouri was thrown into chaos by the slavery issue much earlier than the rest of the country. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 provided that the citizens of Kansas would decide whether to allow slavery in the territory. When the territorial elections were held on November 29th of that year, thousands of proslavery Missourians flooded into Kansas to cast their votes. Missourians believed their votes should be valid, arguing that most northern emigrants had been sent to Kansas simply to swing the election. Ironically, the Kansans may have favored slavery without the votes of the Missourians. Some counties in Kansas, such as Franklin, New Georgia, Hickory Point, Paola, and Kickapoo, were proslavery, and most Kansas emigrants had come for economic opportunities and were not interested in the slavery issue, although the two might well have been connected. Nevertheless, the events around the election triggered a series of events that would make Missouri one of the most dangerous places to be during the Civil War.²²

²² Leslie, 5-9.

By 1861, the Federal government hoped to suppress the conflict in Missouri and prevent the state from seceding, but provided little guidance to the military commanders in the Western theater. Many officers aggravated an already tense situation. John C. Fremont declared martial law in St. Louis county and later throughout the state in the summer of 1861. Union officers were all too aware of the sectional violence that had engulfed the state before the War, and few were willing to leave anything to chance. In a letter dated November 4, 1861, Colonel G.M. Dodge ordered Colonel Greusel, who was heading up an expedition in the southern part of the state, to take action against Southern sympathizers: "If the men who are away from home are in the rebel army, or if their families cannot give good account of themselves or their whereabouts, take their property... Be sure they are aiding the enemy, and then take all they have got." Although Dodge warned his officer to be sure that the families are Southern sympathizers before taking their property, the decision as to whether the families gave a "good account of themselves or their whereabouts" was completely subjective and left to the discretion of the officer in the field.²³

Realizing that controlling Missouri would be easier with the assistance of the population, some Union officers tried to work with Southern sympathizers. Brigadier General John Pope ordered the commanding officer in Boonville to create a panel on public safety from members of the town's five wealthiest families, three of which were known to be Southern sympathizers. Of course even this gesture was intended to exert more control over the town's population, as families appointed to the panel could not opt out of this duty. Furthermore, this panel was responsible for informing the Federal Army

²³Mark E. Neely, Jr. *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford

of “any disturbance of the peace or any assembling of armed forces hostile to the Federal Government.” Union officials hoped they could force these wealthy families to support the U.S. government, and that in turn other Missourians would follow suit. All the plan did was cause Missourians to distrust one another and the Federal government as the army attempted to gain control over the population.²⁴

The Missourians who rallied around the Federal government the fastest were the German population of St. Louis. Most American-born Missourians already had an intense distrust for the German population in the state. This only increased as the War began and the German population in St. Louis mobilized to form Union regiments. The majority of German-Americans adopted Fremont as their hero, expecting him to protect Union interests against the conservative Pro-Southern government that Missouri still had in place. Even though they had to live under the confines of Fremont’s declaration of martial law, most of them supported it. As one German-American newspaper editorialized, “Summary punishment, including execution for spies and other cohorts of rebels, particularly those found bearing arms against the government, is needed. That can only take place if there is a formal declaration of martial law, which is needed to accomplish what is needed in several parts of the state.” Although probably no Southern sympathizer could have read these remarks, cheers of “Martial law, then! Martial law over the whole state!” would have been attributed to the German population anyway.²⁵

University Press, 1991), 22-34. *OR*, Series 1, Volume 3, 255.

²⁴ *The Civil War Day by Day, 1861-1865* (Shawnee Mission, Ks.: Two Trails Publishing, 1992), 14.

²⁵ William E. Parrish, “Fremont in Missouri,” *Civil War Times Illustrated* 17, no. 1 (April 1978) : 9. Rowan, *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 238.

Comparing German troops with the Hessians that fought with England during the American Revolution, Southern sympathizers agreed with Elvira Scott in considering German troops “mercenaries and void of genuine patriotism.” Some Missourians claimed not only that Germans were fighting for profit but that they were barbarians as well. In a letter to her children, Bethiah Pyatt McKown bemoaned the situation in St. Louis since the formation of German regiments, saying “I see nothing but ruin and starvation, and when it will end God only knows.” She compared what was happening in St. Louis to the fall of Rome: “our city is encompass’d with armed *Goths* and *Vandels*, for they are Dutch and Poles that cannot speak our language and they are searching every carriage as it passes.” William Monks, a Union supporter, recalled a speech given by a Southern sympathizer in which the speaker called Southern men to enlist in “the interest of his home, his wife, his children and everything that is sacred and good, to drive out lopeared Dutch, a certain class of Hessian, from our land.” Unlike these so-called German mercenaries, Scott believed that Southerners were fighting to defend their homes and their rights as guaranteed to American citizens by the Constitution. By categorizing the Germans this way, Southern sympathizers were able to frame the sectional conflict as a continuation of the American Revolution, with Southerner leaders picking up where the Founding Fathers left off.²⁶

The tension in Missouri escalated, and Fremont’s actions finally got the attention of the War Department. They reacted quickly to his proclamation freeing the slaves of

²⁶ Erin Kempker, “The Union, the War, and Elvira Scott.” *Missouri Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (Apr. 2001): 292. Bethiah Pyatt McKown, “The Civil War Letters of Bethiah Pyatt McKown, Part I” Ed. James W. Goodrich. *Missouri Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (Jan. 1973): 237. William Monks, *A History of Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas: Being an Account of the Early Settlements, the Civil War, the Ku-Klux, and Times of Peace* (West Plains, MO: West Plains Journal Co., 1907), 44.

Southern sympathizers and mandating the execution of Missourians who took arms against the Union. Lincoln overturned Fremont's emancipation proclamation, but he let Fremont keep the state under martial law: Fremont could execute rebel citizens, so long as a court martial reviewed the cases first. Southern sympathizers found that the confiscation of their property, including slaves, became more common, as the first and second Confiscation Acts, declared that goods used in support of the Confederacy could be seized. Even though their state had remained in the Union, Pro-South Missourians suddenly saw their Constitutional rights taken away.²⁷

Thus, as the Civil War emerged in Missouri, many white women and men saw the conflict from a combination of Southern and frontier sensibilities. Missouri, and the Little Dixie region in particular, was composed mainly of descendents of slaveholders. While unlike the planters in the East, they were bound in complex ways to the institution of slavery, often renting or selling their slaves. The profits from their agriculture were dependent on the activities of St. Louis, but many rural Missourians were suspicious of city life in general and the German-American immigrants living in the city in particular. Like the majority of yeoman women in the South, they often worked in the fields, but they dominated a separate domestic sphere. These women would compose an important reserve force for the emergence of Confederate sympathy when the Civil War broke out.

²⁷ Neely, *The Fate of Liberty*, 32-34.

CHAPTER II

PRO-CONFEDERATE WOMEN IN A UNION STATE

In May in 1861, the women of Plattsburg, Missouri presented the Confederate units of the Missouri State Guard with their battle flags. To show their overwhelming support for the Confederate troops, the women and girls presented a pageant that sang the praises of the Confederate states. In the lavish presentation, three young ladies dressed in white robes representing virtue carried the flag, flanked by seven little girls who represented the seven seceded states. The women offered rousing speeches filled with highly symbolic language. The little girl who represented South Carolina told the other “states” to “...watch and pray and keep their house in order”, portraying the Southern states with feminine language. The North, on the other hand was portrayed in a harsh masculine light: “tall, grown-up brothers [who] ... have become cold, and proud, and insolent.” Despite the violence that the citizens of Missouri had already seen since the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the young girl ended on a hopeful note. She claimed that the South was strong in its love and devotion for the land, and that those who supported the Southern cause would enjoy peace and God’s protection. Although the names of those who took part in the pageant are not recorded, more than likely they were all soon swept up in the chaos of Civil War Missouri.²⁸

²⁸ Florence May Porter, “Our First Flag.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During to Sixties*, 10-13.

Early in the War, women with Confederate sympathies let their loyalties be known. As one unidentified Southern woman recalled: “when the war of the States was on I had ample opportunity to display my southern proclivities.” These women were used to exercising the right to express their opinions, even if they were criticizing the government. Pageants like the flag presentation in Plattsburg gave Southern-supporting women the opportunity to show their passion for the Confederate cause in a gender-appropriate way. Pageants also helped women send their menfolk off to war. But right as the War began, both men and women in Missouri found that the Union Army had a limited tolerance for those who supported the Confederate cause. Although some officers tried at first to maintain the civil rights of Missourians, eventually miserable conditions and the fear of guerilla attacks led the Union Army to become suspicious of any Missourian who did not support the Union. This situation benefited the state’s slave population, many of whom found their way to freedom by working as informants for the Union Army. But the white Missourians of neutral or Confederate leanings were shocked to be living under martial law in their own state. ²⁹

The beginning of the War saw a great deal of pageantry, but the prospect of men going off to battle must have scared the women of Missouri. Women throughout the Confederate South saw the War as an event that “threatened to make the men and women of the South foreigners to one another,” comments Drew Faust, by “separating them into quite different wartime lives.” To compensate for the physical separation the War brought about, Southern women attempted to remain spiritually connected to their men through the Cause. This would explain events such as the flag presentation ceremony; women in

²⁹ Writer Unknown, “A Reminiscence of the War in St. Louis.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri*

Pro-Southern communities wanted to show that they felt as passionately about the war effort as men did. But in becoming involved in the Cause, women ventured into the traditionally male arenas of politics and war. Missouri was no exception. In a study of Elvira Scott's diary, Erin Kempker found that prior to and after the War, Scott's diary makes few references to politics. But during the War, nearly all of her diary entries focused on politics. Possibly, Scott saw her everyday life as inconsequential when compared to the Civil War. But because the sectional conflict touched her and many other Missouri women so personally, they probably strove to understand the conflict better.³⁰

The conflict came quickly. In June of 1861, Missouri's Confederate governor, Claiborne Jackson, took advantage of Confederate sentiment and put out the call for 50,000 men "for the purpose of repelling [the Union] invasion; and for the protection of the lives liberty, and property of the citizens of this state." Jackson was careful not to imply that Missouri was seceding from the Union, stating that "I hold it to be my solemn duty to remind you that Missouri is still one of the United States... it is your duty to obey all the constitutional requirements of the Federal Government." But Jackson also claimed that because the Federal government was not acting constitutionally when it imposed martial law on Missouri, Missourians had the right to defend their state: "it is equally my duty to advise you that your first allegiance is to your own State, and that you are under no obligation whatever to obey the unconstitutional edicts of the military despotism which has enthroned itself at Washington..." By claiming that Missourians were defending their homes against unconstitutional military edicts, Jackson hoped to protect the state militia

During the Sixties, 44.

³⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 10. Kempker, 290.

from accusations of treason. The militia would fight for Missouri, not for the Confederacy.³¹

Of course, because these militias were formed to drive Federal forces from the state, they were perceived as rebel troops, and in fact many of the men enlisted in them identified themselves as such. Early in the Civil War, many Missouri Confederate men enlisted in regular Confederate units. Sterling Price, a brigadier general in the Mexican War and a former governor, commanded the Missouri State Guard, which numbered approximately two thousand men. Appointed by Jackson to legitimate Confederate efforts in the state, Price was enormously popular and attracted a great deal of support. Despite the enthusiasm, the Guard was repeatedly pushed back by Union troops. A reversal in Confederate fortunes came at dawn on August 10, 1861 when the Missouri State Guard successfully defended their camp along Wilson's Creek. Union General Nathaniel Lyon's forces had been pursuing the Confederates since June, but with support from Confederate Brigadier General Ben McCulloch, the Missouri State Guard was able to repulse repeated Union charges and eventually won the day.³²

The victory boosted Confederate morale in the state. Trying to hold onto the momentum, General McCulloch pressed for Missourians to take an official stand in the War: "Missouri must be allowed to choose her own destiny... I have driven the enemy from among you. The time has now arrived for the people of your state to act; you can no longer procrastinate. Missouri must now take her position, be it North or South." This declaration galvanized Missourians on both sides, and the fighting in Missouri continued

³¹ *OR*, Series 1, Volume 53, 698.

³² Phillips, 253-254. Leslie, 86-88. *The Civil War in Missouri Day by Day*, 14-15.

to be fierce. The Confederates won the battle, but they sustained too many casualties to take effective control of the state. Eventually, the regular Confederate army was driven from Missouri, and any resistance to Union rule had to come from guerrilla forces. Former Guard members such as William Quantrill and Frank James would use their regular military experiences when they became part of the guerrilla forces. But the defeat of the Confederate regular forces allowed the Union Army to consolidate its control over the population of Missouri.³³

As the formal fighting died down, the war over free speech began. According to a declaration from S.A. Hurlbut, the Brigadier-General of the U.S. Volunteers dated July 16, 1861, “No man is to be arrested or detained for mere expression of opinion.” Unfortunately, many Union soldiers began to equate those with Southern sympathies and those who actively aided Southern guerrillas, no matter what the evidence showed. Later in the War, Union soldiers mocked the claims of neutrality from Missourians. Abraham Allen, who organized a Union volunteer militia and attempted to gain Confederate intelligence, wrote a letter to Brigadier General Clinton B. Fisk detailing the duplicity of some Missouri citizens: “Every place where those rebels or sympathizers lived, they were all at work, never ever raising their heads until I would call out to them, asking them whether they had heard of the jayhawking the night before. Invariably their answer was no, with as much astonishment as if they lived in Saint Paul, Minn.” Michael Fellman claims this mockery covered Union soldiers’ fears of an underground Confederate network that supported the bushwackers: “Many soldiers believed that there must have been an organized conspiracy in this civilian-guerrilla activity. Too many carefully

³³ Leslie, *The Devil Knows how to Ride*, 86-88. OR, Series 1, Volume 3, 109. *The Civil War in Missouri*

arranged ambushes and other attacks occurred for there not to have been careful spying and tactical planning.” Union skepticism made it difficult for Missourians who did not come out and support the Union to live peace from Union interference.³⁴

Union tolerance of dissent in Missouri also wore thin as the living conditions of the troops in Missouri got steadily worse. In a letter dated October 13, 1861, Sam Stafford discussed the difficulty his unit was having in getting supplies: “We had [received] only our fatigue uniform, and no arms at all. The pants of the fatigue dress were very poor things.” A week and a half later, Stafford complained to his sister, “We are not drilling any now, because we have nothing to drill with.” The miserable conditions in most Missouri Union camps added to the loneliness felt by many of the troops. Soldiers were desperate for mail, but the unreliable mail system, coupled with Confederate guerrilla attacks on Union supply lines, made it difficult for them to get letters from home. Union soldiers pleaded with their family to send more letters. Sam Stafford told his sister about the mail situation in camp: “Quite likely we don’t get all the letters addressed to us. I haven’t [received] a paper in at least three weeks. Jim McK. got a letter two or three days ago from Fred Finley stating that he had sent him about fifteen papers. Jim has got three of them.” Cut off from their family and friends, Union soldiers felt trapped in a country where they were unsure of whom they could trust.³⁵

Day by Day, 15.

³⁴ S.A. Hurlbut, General Orders, No.2, Quincy, Ill., July 16, 1861, *OR*, Series 2, I: 186. Abraham Allen to Brigadier General Clinton B. Fisk, Crab Orchard, May 25, 1864, *OR*, XXXIV (4): 37. Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 163

³⁵ John Quincy Adams Campbell. *The Union Must Stand: The Civil War Diary of John Quincy Adams Campbell, Fifth Iowa Volunteer Infantry*. Ed. Mark Grimsley and Todd D. Miller (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 4. Sam Stafford Letters.

Since Union officials had trouble figuring out which white Missourians were really on their side, they began to place more and more faith in the assistance of black Missourians. The idea of accepting a black person's word over a white person's was difficult at first, even for the most enlightened Union soldier. At first, slaves were viewed by the Union Army strictly as property, and were only considered valuable if their freedom hurt disloyal Missourians. James Lane, the infamous jayhawker who commanded a Kansas brigade, was acutely aware of the value of slaves to the Confederate effort in Missouri. In an 1861 letter to General S.D. Sturgis at the headquarters of the Kansas brigade, Lane at first tried to protect the reputation of his unit from their pre-War jayhawking reputation by claiming, "My brigade is not here for the purpose of interfering in anywise with the institution of slavery. They shall not become Negro thieves nor shall they be prostituted into Negro-catchers." However, he continued by explaining the benefits of assisting slaves: "Confiscation of slaves and other property which can be made useful to the army should follow treason as the thunder peal follows the lightning flash." The policy of confiscating slaves of disloyal Missourians became widespread early in the War. In a letter dated November 4, 1861, Colonel G.M. Dodge reminded Colonel Greusel of the policy regarding runaway slaves: "Be careful in taking contraband Negroes that their owners are aiding the enemy." At first, the Union army for the most part assisted slaves for selfish reasons. But Union attitudes towards Missouri African Americans changed because, according to Michael Fellman, "Discovering islands of black truthfulness in a sea of white deceit contradicted one of the underlying racist premises of slavery, that

slaves could never be trusted.” As Union soldiers became leery of all white Missourians, African Americans received more compassion and respect from the soldiers.³⁶

Even as the attitudes of average Union soldiers changed about African Americans, Union officials were slow to assist African Americans who turned to the Union Army for protection. Missouri was still in the Union, so even though some of its citizens may have been disloyal, Federal officials did not want to treat all Missourians as they would Confederates in seceded states. This, combined with the fact that most Union soldiers did not want to fight a war against slavery early in the conflict, led to lackluster assistance for runaway slaves. In a letter dated September 20, 1861, Brigadier General J. McKinstry entrusted Captain G. Granger with “certain runaway negro slaves who have been heretofore apprehended and committed to military prison.” These slaves were to be employed by the Union army, but only “until they are reclaimed by their masters, who upon proof of their ownership and that they are loyal to the United States will be entitled to receive them back into their services.” On the same day, Secretary of War Simon Cameron replied to an inquiry from Major General John E. Wool about what to do with the overwhelming number of runaway slaves arriving in Fort Monroe, Virginia. Cameron did not consider any claims that might have been made on these slaves; rather, he told Wool that all able-bodied runaway men could “be usefully employed on the military works.” In seceded states, Union officials could be almost entirely certain that the slaves’ owners were disloyal. But at least early in the war in Missouri, Union officials were

³⁶ James H. Lane to General S.D. Strugis, Kansas City, KS, October 3, 1861, *OR*, Series 2,I: 771-771. Colonel G. M. Dodge to Colonel Greusel, Rolla, MO, November 4, 1861, *OR*, Series 1,III: 255. Fellman, “Emancipation in Missouri,” 37.

interested in protecting the rights of the slaveowner, if the slaveowner could indeed prove they were loyal.³⁷

Even in the early years of the War, Missouri slaveowners found it difficult to keep their slaves from leaving. In some cases, the slaveholders blamed the Jayhawkers, whom they believed had a history of stealing slaves. Mrs. William H. Gregg, before becoming the wife of a guerrilla, remembered how in 1862 Federal troops “came to our home with wagons in which they loaded the Negroes and their belongings; the Negro men were mounted on my father’s horses and forced to ride them away.” A Confederate supporting Missouri woman named Martha F. Horne reported that in February of 1862, “the Jayhawkers came, and hitching up our wagons with the few remaining horses... took Negroes, provision stores and all out for Lawrence.” Noting that her goods were taken to Lawrence is critical; the town’s reputation as a hotbed of Jayhawking activity would lead to its targeting for the infamous raid later in the War. Interestingly, Horne says that many of her other slaves had run off before the arrival of the Jayhawkers, suggesting that many of her slaves had decided to run away on their own, without any inducements from Union troops. Some Missouri women were more realistic about the “confiscated” slaves’ desires. Margaret J. Hays, wife of guerrilla leader Upton Hays, wrote to her mother about the Union troops taking her slaves: “They took two wagons loaded full from here, my carriage, and every Negro on the place.” Mrs. Hays had no illusions about her slaves’ wishes, writing “They were all willing to go. The idea of being free seemed a great inducement to them.” The unrest that warfare created in Missouri gave slaves the perfect

³⁷ Brigadier General J. McKinstry to Captain G. Granger, St. Louis, MO, September 20, 1861, *OR*, Series 2, I: 771. Major General John E. Wool to Simon Cameron, Fort Monroe, VA, September 18, 1861, *OR*,

opportunity to finally escape to freedom. Ironically, many of the white citizens of the state discovered that the War would mean a loss of some other the freedoms that they had previously enjoyed.³⁸

Activities in Missouri prior to the War by the border ruffians gave its citizens a reputation for being ardently pro-Southern. In fact, most Missourians probably wanted to remain neutral. In a letter to her son, Bethiah Pyatt McKown wrote, “Neither your Father or I are secessionist nor did we ever wish or approve of it but it has been done.” Missourians soon discovered that both Union and Confederate forces saw claims of neutrality as naïve at best and treacherous at worst. Elvira Scott was sympathetic to the Southern cause, believing Northern radicals were trampling the rights of the Southern states. But despite her Southern leanings, she never publicly advocated for secession. During the early years of the War, Scott discovered that even subtle actions, such as her absence from the 1862 July Fourth celebration given by the Federal soldiers, were taken as treasonous acts. Because Union officials were increasingly unsure of who they could trust, they seized on even the smallest unpatriotic act as a sign of rebel support. Cole Younger claimed in his memoirs that despite his own association with Quantrill in the early part of the War, his father remained loyal to the Union: “Though a slave owner, father had never been in sympathy with secession... He was for the Union, in spite of his natural inclination to sympathy with the South.” Younger’s father was murdered in 1862, almost certainly by a Union officer attempting to punish Cole Younger. Families were tied

Series 2, I: 770-771. Simon Cameron to Major General John E. Wool, Washington, D.C., September 20, 1861, *OR*, Series 2, I: 771.

³⁸ Mrs. W.H. Gregg, “Can Forgive, But Not Forget.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 27. Martha F. Horne, “War Experiences.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 42.

to the beliefs of their most active and outspoken members. As the cycle of repression and resentment intensified, many Missourians, including women, with Southern sympathies took a more active role against the Federal Government.³⁹

Despite the tenacity with which Confederate women supported their cause, Union officers tried to avoid involving women in military affairs. Early in the War, Union soldiers were given strict orders regarding their treatment of women: “No interference with women, no breaking into houses or stores, no unauthorized seizures or destruction of private property will be tolerated.” Some Union officers apparently tried faithfully to protect women from the ravages of the War in the first two years. In a letter to Confederate General N.W. Watkins, Colonel L.F. Ross promises that Watkins’ wife would be allowed to return to their home unharmed, because “The purpose of my government is not to make war on women and children.” However, Ross informed Watkins that neither the presence of his wife or his son, who had sworn allegiance to the Union, would “prevent the Government taking such steps hereafter toward the confiscation of such property as may be owned by disloyal citizens.” Therefore, even when women were treated in the beginning of the War as neutral, their assumed neutrality could not protect the homes into which women had invested so much. And as the War dragged on, the Union Army had less and less tolerance for any pro-Confederate rhetoric from any Missourian.⁴⁰

³⁹ McKown, “The Civil War Letters of Bethiah Pyatt McKown.” Part 1, 251. Kempler, 291-292. Cole Younger, *The Story of Cole Younger by Himself: Being an Autobiography of the Missouri Guerrilla Captain and Outlaw, His Capture and Prison Life, and the Only Authentic Account of the Northfield Raid Ever Published* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000 (1903)), 14

⁴⁰ S.A. Hurlbut, General Orders No. 2, Quincy, Ill., July 16, 1861, *OR*, Series 2, I: 186. L.F. Ross to General N.W. Watkins, Cape Girardeau, Mo., January 30, 1862, *OR*, Series 2, I: 163.

Confederate women in Missouri had begun to speak out on behalf of the Confederacy soon after the beginning of the War. Confederate-supporting women, especially those from upper-class families, expected that they would be protected from retaliation due to their status. The Union army attempted to discourage women from speaking out by reminding them of their accepted role. Elvira Scott, a Southern woman living in Saline County, received a notice from the Federal army telling her “a Ladies place is to fulfill her household duties, and not to spread treason and excite men to rebellion.” She was ordered to report to the commanding officer once a week until he was convinced that she would behave like a lady. The Union army recognized the power that women could have in supporting the Southern Cause, so they were swift to control the women’s behavior. By bringing up the traditional roles of women, the Federals hoped to shame the women in to silence.⁴¹

Some Missouri citizens were naïve to expect that they could enjoy the same freedom to express themselves as they had enjoyed in peace times. Confederate supporters in other Union-controlled areas sometimes felt the same way. Rose O’Neal Greenhow fiercely defended her right to express her political opinions, even as Union detectives searched her Washington, D.C. home: “I had no fear of consequences from the papers which as had yet fallen into their hands. I had a right to my own political opinions.” Greenhow’s ideas were treasonous in the eyes of the Union army, but she said her actions came from the fact that she was “a Southern woman, born with revolutionary blood in my veins... Freedom of speech and thought were my birthrights.” Because of strong Confederate sympathy in areas like Washington, D.C. and Missouri, Union officials

⁴¹ Waal and Korner, 93.

were extremely sensitive to any possible Confederate support. By 1864, Union officials in Missouri had restricted written materials in an effort to quell Confederate support. In a letter date March 29, 1864 and addressed to Captain Gray in Rolla and Lieutenant Owens in Cape Girardeau, Provost Marshal J.P. Sanderson informed them of an order “against the sale of Pollard’s Southern History of the War, Confederate Official Reports, Life of Stonewall Jackson, [and] Adventures of Morgan and his Men.” According to Sanderson, these books were to be seized and those selling them arrested. The assumption was that those who read about the South supported the Confederate cause, and would work in the guerrilla effort in the State.⁴²

Willard Hall Mendenhall learned early in the War that he would pay a price for his pro-Southern leanings, even though he never actively supported the guerrillas. His diary is peppered with run-ins with Union officials. In one example, Mendenhall recorded on August 21, 1862 that one of his heifers was mysteriously missing after two pickets demanded dinner from his family: “I expect the soldiers have drove it off to their camp and butchered it.” Most of the time Union troops were more obvious in requisitioning Mendenhall’s property. On September 23, 1862, Mendenhall arrived at his farm to find two Union soldiers who informed him that they were taking his mules. The next day Mendenhall attempted to plead with Union officials to stop taking his property. Mendenhall tried to justify his position by claiming that he was a Union man, but came to believe that the War was an attack on slavery, an institution that he believed the Constitution protected. He reasoned that he could have taken up arms against the Union

⁴² Greenhow, “In Prison for My Country.” Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 40. Provost Marshal General J.P Sanderson to Captain J. Gray and Lieutenant W.P. Gray, St. Louis, March 29, 1864 OR, Series 34, Volume 2, 777.

but since he did not he deserved a certain amount of protection from the Union troops by Union officials. Union Colonel Neill scoffed at this defense and told Mendenhall “to go ask Jeff Davis for protection not to come to him.” Neill and Mendenhall had been friends before the War, which made Neill’s dismissal even harder for Mendenhall to take. But in most cases, the bitter feelings that resulted from the sectional conflict destroyed friendships that had been nurtured over lifetimes.⁴³

The fractures among friends and family were especially hard on women because of the importance women placed on their social networks. Early in the War, Missourians tried to maintain old social ties despite conflicting positions on the War. In February of 1862, Mendenhall and his wife attended the funeral of Silas Silver, who was “a very strong Union man.” Mendenhall noted, “There were about as many Secessionists at his funeral as Union men.” In other entries of his diary, Mendenhall recorded attending the funerals of other Union men, but by July, Mendenhall and his wife were being excluded from social events hosted by Union sympathizers. Despite the importance that Confederate-supporting women placed on social ties, early in the War their passion for their cause trumped these carefully built networks. Bethiah Pyatt McKown wrote to her son in 1861 that she was not sorry that her nephew’s Union regiment was nearly destroyed in battle. In her mind, her nephew had “enlisted for three years under *Lyon the king of the beasts* (General Nathaniel Lyon, a Unionist Missourian and supporter of Lincoln, had been responsible for securing the St. Louis arsenal and arresting many pro-Confederate Missouri leaders early in the War)...the murderer of innocent women and children and as I believe under the displeasure of God, he has met his just reward.” In McKown’s mind,

⁴³ Mendenhall, “Life is Uncertain..., Part II” *Missouri Historical Review*, 79, no. 1 (Oct. 1984) :72, 75-

her nephew's enlistment in the Union army was akin to turning his back on God. As painful as it must have been for women to lose the companionship of friends and family, many felt so strongly about their cause early in the War that it was unthinkable to remain friends with those who supported the Union. Eventually, the proliferation of outlaw guerrilla bands that claimed to be fighting for the Confederacy divided communities even further.⁴⁴

After the Battle of Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861 and the establishment of martial law over Missouri soon afterwards, men with Confederate sympathies began to join irregular units. Dispirited from the constant retreats and frustrated by Price's inability to secure Missouri for the Confederacy, many young men saw guerrilla warfare as a more effective way of protecting their homes. Price, in fact, encouraged some of his men to go home because he was too short on provisions to supply a large army through the winter. William Quantrill was one of the men who left the regular Confederate army and never returned. In late 1861, Quantrill formed a band that numbered only fifteen men, all from Jackson County with the exception of George Todd. Quantrill's reputation was growing, and when he reformed the band at the end on January 1862, he had several new recruits. In March 1862, Price's forces were defeated at the Battle of Pea Ridge and the remaining men in the State Guard dispersed among other Confederate units. The regular Confederate army never again attempted a major military action in Missouri, so men with Confederate sympathies had the choice of fighting for the Confederacy in the regular army

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⁴⁴ Mendenhall, "Life is Uncertain... , Part I" *Missouri Historical Review*, 442. Mendenhall, "Life is Uncertain... Part II" *Missouri Historical Review* : 65-66. Bethiah Pyatt McKown, "The Civil War Letters of Bethiah Pyatt McKown, Part I" Ed. James W. Goodrich. *Missouri Historical Review*, 242-243.

but leaving their home state, or joining an irregular force. Many men chose the latter, and Southern women took the job of protecting them.⁴⁵

Union officials became less tolerant of disloyal speech as the War dragged on. In fact, some Federals began to blame Southern-supporting women for inciting pro-Confederate activity among their male relatives and friends. In attempting to justify the arrest of several prominent women in St. Louis, F.A. Dick highlighted how influential these women were in keeping rebel activity alive in Missouri: “They incite our young men to join the rebellion; their letters are full of encouragement to their husbands and sons to continue the war... These disloyal women, too, seek every opportunity to keep disloyalty alive amongst rebel prisoners.” Dick implied that with the constant encouragement from women to continue fighting, the Confederates in the state would have given up and possibly joined the Union. In letters justifying the arrest of Confederate women, Union officials portrayed Confederate soldiers and guerrillas in the state as honest men who had come under the sway of bewitching and/or wealthy women. For example, in his letter reporting the arrest of two young Missouri women, Mildred Elizabeth Powell and Maggie Creath, Brigadier General John McNeil described the havoc that their disloyal speech had caused: “Their beauty, talents and superior education have made many a man a bushwacker who except for that influence would have been a honest man.” In any other correspondence, no Union officer would have ever used the words “honest” and “bushwacker” in the same sentence. But army officials working in Missouri were aware that those higher on the chain of command would not know the complicated nature of warfare in Missouri, and may have taken issue with massive arrests of women. Therefore,

⁴⁵ Leslie, 94-99.

Union officers had to use grandiose language to explain precisely how dangerous Southern women were to the Union effort on Missouri.⁴⁶

The Federals soon discovered that shaming the women would not be an effective means of controlling their behavior. This led to more drastic action towards women. Mildred Elizabeth Powell first attracted the notice of Union officials with her outspoken support for the Southern Cause. She encouraged friends to ignore “the persuasions of the Union men or their newspapers” and to join the Confederate forces. Arrested in September 1862, she remained imprisoned and was banished several months later. Even after her arrest, Powell continued to provoke her captors. On the night of her arrest, she told a Union colonel “from the beginning of the war in our state the unprincipled party that had inaugurated it had waged it against the women and children, and the cries of the weak and unprotected were more pleasing to his party than the defiance of the brave.” Even though the Union army was willing to imprison women, it was not willing to execute them. Therefore, Southern women enjoyed a protection that Southern men did not.⁴⁷

As Powell bemoaned her fate of banishment, male Confederate prisoners in Palmyra were not so lucky. Shortly before Powell was imprisoned, Colonel Joseph C. Porter and approximately four hundred Confederate troops raided the town. Porter took several prisoners, one of whom was a Union man who had apparently provided the Federals with information about some of Porter’s officers. This man, Allan Allsman, was never seen alive again. In retribution, the Union provost marshal general Colonel W.R.

⁴⁶ F.A. Dick to W. Hoffman, Saint Louis, Mo., March 5, 1863, *OR*, Series 2, V: 320. John McNeil to Brigadier General Merrill, Palmyra, Mo., December 13, 1862, *OR*, Series 2, V: 78.

⁴⁷ Mary Stella Hereford Ball, Ed. “Journal of Mildred Elizabeth Powell.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 148-151.

Strachan declared that unless this man was returned, ten Confederate soldiers would be executed. Ten days later, Strachan personally selected the Confederates to be executed. One of those killed would become legendary among the Confederate sympathizers in Missouri.⁴⁸

In her diary, Powell recorded the story of Hiram Smith, the young man who replaced William T. Humphrey as one of the ten to be executed. According to the popular version that Powell related, Smith was so heartbroken at seeing Humphrey's weeping wife at the feet of the uncaring General McNeil that he offered to take his place. Smith's selfless act to save a man with a wife and six children was a stark contrast with the Union officer's heartless deed. In reality, the pleas of Humphrey's young daughter convinced McNeil to spare Humphrey. But the story of a young man sacrificing his life so another man could live and protect his wife and children was irresistible to Confederate sympathizers, especially those who were justifying their actions by claiming a right to protect their families. Powell eulogized the men in her journal: "They died like men- like heroes- like martyrs!" In his autobiography, Cole Younger reprints a newspaper article from the *Lexington Caucasian* that is almost identical to the account recorded by Powell. It is likely that Southern supporters got this version of the event and retold it as if it were a fact. Ironically, it was Humphrey's female kin who ended up defending him, actively highlighting their roles as helpless women and girls in need of protection to keep Humphrey from being executed. After the executions, rumors circulated that McNeil would continue to execute men every week until Allsman was returned. Humphrey's wife

⁴⁸ James M. McCaffrey. "The Palmyra Massacre," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, 19, no. 8 (Dec. 1980) : 37-38. Leslie, 150-151.

went to Colonel Strachan to beg for his life again, and this time Strachan reportedly forced Mrs. Humphrey to provide him with sexual favors in exchange for her husband's life. When this incident became known, it added to the guerrillas' case that they needed to protect their women from unscrupulous Union men.⁴⁹

White women throughout the Confederate South were left open to violations that "ladies" were not expected to endure. Confederate women took special exception when Union soldiers entered their bedroom, as their bedrooms had always off limits to non-related men. Celine Fremaux, a fourteen-year-old girl from Louisiana, was shocked when Union soldiers insisted on searching the bed of an elderly neighbor lady. One soldier demanded that the sick lady get out of bed so it could be searched. Another soldier searched the bed with the woman in it by flipping the mattress over, and only stopped when another woman attacked him. By the end of the War, women like Mary Mallard were accustomed to Union invasions of their privacy. When Union soldiers again invaded her Georgia home in 1864, a friend of Mallard's recognized that silk used in a Union soldier's cravat came from a dress of hers that had been stolen. Adding insult to injury, Mallard and her friends were forced to watch as the Union soldier stole their male relatives' clothes. Even though personal searches became expected, they still horrified most Southern women. Rose O'Neal Greenhow, a spy who provided the Confederate army with the Union battle plan for the first battle of Manassas, was disgusted by the invasion of her privacy in her Washington, D.C. home: "An indiscriminate search now commenced throughout my house. Men rushed with frantic haste into my chamber, into every sanctuary. My beds, drawers, and wardrobes were all upturned; soiled clothes were

⁴⁹ Ball, "Journal of Mildred Elizabeth Powell." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the*

pounced upon with avidity; and mercilessly exposed.” Due to her espionage activities, Greenhow expected a search, but still felt that her rights has been violated. The symbolic violation of women’s personal space was a common complaint of women in Missouri as well.⁵⁰

Incidents of Union brutality towards Confederate women were widely discussed in Missouri. Mrs. W.H. Gregg recounted an event involving a Union soldier and her mother-in-law. According to Gregg, her mother-in-law had attempted to hide her watch and jewelry under her corset, but a soldier saw the watch chain and “Tore her dress open, robbed her, almost choking her to death in trying to release the chain.” Gregg believed the incident was typical of Union behavior. Cole Younger’s sister Sally told him that Union soldiers had interrupted a meeting of women at their mother’s house, and a captain had demanded that Sally walk with him outside. He then proceeded physically to attack her. Most Southern supporting men were hiding or fighting somewhere, leaving their female relative vulnerable to attacks. Although the guerrillas retaliated when their houses were burned and the women were imprisoned, the guerrillas actions did not scare the Union troops enough to leave the women alone. Their treatment of Union women became a point of pride for the guerrillas, as they believed they could show their superiority to the Union men by treating Union women with respect.⁵¹

Sixties, 162. McCaffrey, “The Palmyra Massacre.” *Civil War Times Illustrated*, 40-42. Younger, 38-41.

⁵⁰ Celine Fremaux, “A Cap for Mrs. Worthey.” Walter Sullivan, Ed., *The War the Women Lived: Female Voices from the Confederate South*. Nashville: J.S. Sanders & Company, 1995, 192. Mary Jones and Mary Mallard, “A Birth in the Ruins.” Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 240. Rose O’Neal Greehow, “In Prison for My Country.” Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 39.

⁵¹ Mrs. W.H. Gregg, “Can Forgive, But Not Forget.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 29. Marley Brant, *The Outlaw Youngers: A Confederate Brotherhood* (New York: Madison Books, 1992), 38.

In many cases, women were symbolically violated. Mrs. N.M. Harris described an incident in which Jayhawkers invaded the house of a Confederate officer. According to Harris, "The outlaws... turned their attention to the girls, using insulting terms, searched their persons for valuables, all the while singing ribald songs or telling obscene jokes." After robbing the house, "three of the wretches took by force three of the girls into the yard and marched back and forth in the moonlight, making most vicious threats and insinuations." John McCorkle, one of Quantrill's trusted lieutenants, justified actions against an African American soldier from Kansas named Jack Mann because of Mann's actions towards women. In an anecdote, McCorkle related how Mann broke into the house of Dick Maddox, another guerrilla. Finding only Mrs. Maddox at home, Mann ransacked the house and found Maddox's wedding suit. According to McCorkle, "undressing before Mrs. Maddox, put on the wedding suit on and, striding up before her, said, 'How do you like my looks with this wedding suit on?'" Mann's assault touched on another fear of Confederate white men and women- that the Union army intended to disrupt the established racial order and allow black men to take the place of white men.⁵²

Even when men were present, it was sometimes impossible for them to protect their female relatives. Mendenhall and his wife were followed home from a funeral by a group of Jayhawkers from Jennison's command. The Jayhawkers accused Mendenhall of being a guerrilla captain and recruiter and demanded Mendenhall turn over his guns. Unsatisfied with Mendenhall's answer, the soldiers proceeded to search his wife's room "while she was dressing." The soldiers went through her clothes and tore the sheets off her bed, an enormous invasion of privacy in an era when men would never enter the

⁵² Mrs. N.M. Harris, "Atrocities upon the Missouri Border." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri*

bedroom of an unrelated female, let alone while she was dressing. Mendenhall's comment "they [the soldiers] found they did not alarm anyone" suggests that the Mendenhalls expected such behavior from Jayhawkers. But obviously this did not make the incident, or similar incidents, any less insulting. Of course it was not just Union officers committing such violations. John M. Richardson, a captain in the Missouri State Militia' Mountain Rangers, a Union outfit, justified the destruction of several still houses in part because "bad men would get drunk there, and go to Union men's houses and expose their naked persons to Union women." It seems that both sides had many examples of incidents of women being victimized by drunk soldiers.⁵³

Sexual assault was a terrifying possibility for Missouri women. Although historical records do not explicitly give any examples of white women being assaulted, it is clear that these women were aware that it could happen. While under house arrest, Mildred Powell feared that Union soldiers could not be trusted to act like gentlemen. One night in January, Powell recorded: "The guards, drunken and infuriated, made several ineffectual attempts to enter my room, and had it not been for a small bolt I had fastened over the lock their efforts must have been effectual. Finding they were defeated, I could hear them heaping their curses on me and planning to come in through the window. I was almost speechless with fear... I sprang upright in my bed and kept that position until daylight." Mendenhall recorded several instances in his diary in which local Southern supporting women had to endure sexual comments from Union officers. At the house of Thomas Shields, a Lexington farmer originally from Virginia, Mendenhall recorded several

During the Sixties, p. 215. McCorkle, 141.

⁵³ Mendenhall, "Life is Uncertain... , Part I" *Missouri Historical Review*, 443. John M. Richardson, *OR*, Series 1, Volume 8.

violations of Shields' female relatives and neighbors: "They forced Mrs. [Susan] Trigg to play for them while they danced, as they left the house one of the men remarked to Mrs. Thos. Shields (who was quite a fine looking woman) that he liked her looks and would come back that night and stay with her." In another incident, the wife of a Colonel Caleb Bellis had to not only endure the theft of her husband's money, horse, and gold watch, but also a personal violation: "[the Union soldiers] abused his wife shamefully, felt of her person, and us[ed] insulting language." Women who had always had the protection of male kin from sexual insults were forced to face vulgarities that previously saved for prostitutes. Union soldiers, convinced that guerrillas were of the lowest possible social character, probably transferred their lack of respect for the guerrillas onto the women who were related to them, especially those who would marry them.⁵⁴

Early in the War, Union officials attempted to portray Confederate guerrillas as marauding bands of outcasts. But historical evidence from Jackson County, an area in the western part of the state that saw some of the worst partisan fighting during the War, paints a very different picture of guerrillas. Don R. Bowen believes that guerrilla actions can be explained by the relative deprivation theory, meaning that the guerrillas resorted to their actions because of "... a perceived acute discrepancy between valued goals and the enjoyment thereof." In studying census records from the county, Bowen discovered that "as a group the families of the guerrillas were, in terms of the times, wealthy people." In the case of the guerrillas, Bowen discovered that the majority of them, 63.8 percent, were either eldest or only sons. According to Bowen, these facts, coupled with the familial ties that the majority of the families had with the Confederacy, drove many of those whom

⁵⁴ Ball, "Journal of Mildred Elizabeth Powell." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the*

would have been in peace times been considered the best of Missouri society into outlaws.⁵⁵

A critical point to Bowen's theory is that the young men who joined guerrilla bands did so because their families' position in society was threatened. This threat could come both in the form of the loss of slaves or property as the Union Army targeted those families with Southern connections and sympathies. These men watched as forces beyond their control took the life that they had prepared for away. Angered by this encroachment, many men saw guerrilla tactics as a viable way of trying to maintain their way of life. Combined with the day-to-day danger of war, the tension created was high enough to drive ordinary young men to engage in vicious acts that those who knew them before the War would not have thought them capable.

In all likelihood, the female relatives of well-to-do Missourians also felt that their positions in society were threatened. Since women, especially in the West, defined so much of their lives by their families, they were probably angered by Union incursions that threatened their way of life. A combination of anger and fear drove women to defy the Federal army, even though many of them may not have originally been ardently pro-Confederate at the beginning of the War.

As the War in Missouri shifted from battlefield fighting to guerrilla warfare and a war of words, Confederate-supporting women's activity came to the forefront. Union soldiers' fear of guerrilla attacks often focused on the tacit or implicit support that women appeared to give guerrilla warfare. As women became targeted, a spiral began. More

Sixties, 177. Mendenhall, "Life is Uncertain... , Part I" *Missouri Historical Review*, 444.

⁵⁵ Don. R. Bowen, "Guerrilla War in Western Missouri, 1862-1865: Historical Extensions of the Relative Deprivation Hypothesis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 14 (Jan. 1977): 33-34, 46-47.

women directly supported the Confederacy as stories of violation and outrage grew.

Guerrillas found a cause in the defense of womanhood, and the violence expanded.

CHAPTER 3

“HARMLESS” REBEL WOMEN

One winter day in 1861, Lucy Nickolson (later Lindsay) answered a knock at her door to find two “Southern men” standing on her porch. After confirming Nickolson’s identity, they gave her a message from General Price. The men claimed that the Missouri Confederate troops were out of morphine and quinine, and they also needed new clothing to get them through the winter. Nickolson promised to try her best to help them, and the next day, set about procuring the necessary items. She traveled to Boonville, a city two counties over, to a store she knew was owned by a Southern man named Mr. Harper. When she asked him for the morphine and quinine, he said “I can’t do it... it would be the ruination of me; but here it is; I am compelled to go down town.” Mr. Harper then left Nickolson to help herself to the medicine. Next, Nickolson went to the dry goods store, where, after asking the owner for gray flannel and black velvet, informed him that she would not be paying for the material at that time. When the owner asked her when she would pay for the material, she vaguely replied “O, some of these days.” Nickolson then undertook the arduous journey to deliver the goods herself to the Confederate troops. Eventually, Nickolson was arrested and imprisoned for her actions.⁵⁶

Lucy Nickolson Lindsay’s account of her wartime activities illustrates the lengths

⁵⁶ Lucy Nickolson Lindsay, “A Cold Way Home.” Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 55-65.

that some Confederate-supporting women were willing to go to help the Confederate Cause. And several key details in the account reflect just how active these women were in their support, despite their protestations to the contrary. For example, Nickolson freely admitted that she was part of “an underground road of communication... and by that means people that were southerners would go from one point to another.” The Confederate officers sought her out specifically to assist Price’s army because someone within this road of communication must have told them that she would get them the goods they needed. This memoir contradicts the writings of many other women who engaged in similar activities, because Nickolson did not try to portray herself as a helpless female victim of Union aggression. She acknowledged her active role in supporting the Confederate cause in Missouri. Many other Confederate-supporting women took an active role as well, but tried to portray themselves as passive bystanders. Perhaps these women did not want to admit to the level of involvement they had in military, and therefore masculine, affairs. But these women were aware that their status as passive actors in the War allowed them to get away with activities to help the irregular troops in ways that men could not. As the Union Army struggled to come to terms with how to deal with these active women, the women themselves tried to maintain their image as ladies. Their wartime activities did not change how these women saw their role in society in the long term, but was rather a short-term adjustment to the stresses of war.⁵⁷

As guerrilla warfare became more prevalent in Missouri, Confederate-sympathizing women often did more than just talk about their support of the Confederacy. At first, Union soldiers were in a delicate position, because they needed to take action against

⁵⁷ Lucy Nickolson Lindsay, “A Cold Way Home.” Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 55-56.

women who supported the guerrillas, but they had to be sure that it was justified. In a letter to Captain Lucien J. Barnes, Lieutenant-Colonel J.H. Blood explained the circumstances surrounding the pillaging of the house of a Mrs. Crook: "These circumstances and the appearance of the house inside were conclusive evidence that Mrs. Crook had been harboring the enemy to an alarming extent." He noted that Mrs. Crook was able to take many of her personal effects, and that he believed the pillaging was justified. Perhaps because he was from Missouri, he understood the varying loyalties among residents of his home state. Women's active engagement in supporting the Confederate guerrillas became apparent, Union officials resolved to action would have to be taken against women, but they were still not comfortable with arresting women. Provost Marshal General F.A. Dick acknowledged in a letter to the Commissary General of Prisoners W. Hoffman that "I have now the evidence upon which these women can be convicted," but to do this Dick would have been required to detain these women. Dick continued to explain his dilemma: "I have been for some time past been thinking of arresting and trying them but the embarrassment is to know what to do with them." As Southern women began to be arrested, arrangements had to be made for their detainment.⁵⁸

Confederate women with wealth and connections often actively used both to support both their male relatives and their cause. The women that F.A. Dick listed for arrest are almost exclusively the wives and daughters of Confederate officers or government officials. Because Dick referred to these men as officers, they most likely were serving the regular Confederate army, so probably by 1863 would have been

⁵⁸ J.H. Blood to Lucien J. Barnes, Tipton, Mo., April 12, 1862, *OR*, Series 2, I: 280. F.A. Dick to W.

working outside of Missouri. Dick implied that their female relatives had not simply supported their husbands and fathers, but provided goods to support the war effort: “they convey information to them and by every possible contrivance they forward clothing and other support to the rebels.” Although he was vague about the recipients of the goods and information, Dick’s letter implied that these women used their influence to support the rebel effort in the state, which would include guerrillas.⁵⁹

A few women may have even traveled with guerrillas, a move that meant they risked the protection normally afforded to women. In discussing Mildred Powell and Maggie Creath, William Strachan made their connection to guerrillas explicit, noting, “Miss Creath made quite a sensation in Monroe County traveling with one Clay Price, a noted captain of guerrillas, dressed in rebel colors and a brace of rebel pistols ornamenting her taper waste.” With this comment, Strachan may have been trying to strip Creath of the protection that her status as a lady would have afforded her. By carrying pistols and riding with guerrillas, Creath possibly had killed Union soldiers, actions that could justify treating her just as male prisoners would have been in the same situation. In addition, Strachan also implied that Creath was Clay Price’s lover, damaging her reputation as a lady. Strachan may have done this because Creath and Powell looked harmless to convince other army officials that they posed a real threat and he was justified in locking them up.⁶⁰

Hoffman, Saint Louis, Mo., March 5, 1863, *OR*, Series 2, V: 320.

⁵⁹ F.A. Dick to W. Hoffman, Saint Louis, Mo., March 5, 1863, *OR*, Series 2, V: 320.

⁶⁰ William R. Strachan to John McNeil, Palmyra, Mo., December 13, 1862, *OR*, Series 2, V: 78.

The women who were related to and supported the guerrillas rarely referred to them as guerrillas, perhaps because they were aware that guerrillas stood outside the laws of war. For example, Mary A. Owen, whose husband was shot by Union troops as a guerrilla, took her case to the press to clear his name. According to an article that appeared in the *Quincy (Illinois) Herald*, a newspaper that enjoyed a high circulation in Northeastern Missouri, her husband had served in the regular Confederate army with Price, and had “never either before or since his return from the army been engaged in what is termed bushwhacking... on the contrary I know he was always opposed to that kind of warfare.” But in Mary Owen’s testimony, the Union troops were so savage that they believed the information provided by spies and abducted him. Owen followed the troops and pleaded for her husband’s life, but returned home after the Union officials told her she could see her husband the next day in Palmyra. Her husband was shot about a half-mile down the road. Throughout her letter, Owen repeated claims of her husband’s innocence of the charges of bushwhacking. But her final paragraph casts suspicion on these claims, as it seems that she is issuing a call to action by bushwhackers: “Oh, does not his innocent blood call for revenge? Will not his friends avenge his brutal, cruel death?” The Union response to this newspaper article was swift; Provost Marshall William Strachan claimed that John Owen was a notorious outlaw, and many Missouri Unionists canceled their subscription to the newspaper. But Mary Owen’s article gave Confederate supporters yet another example of Union atrocity, and the grieving widow was the perfect person to convey this message.⁶¹

⁶¹ William Strachan to J.M. Schofield Palmyra, Mo., July 16, 1862 *OR*, Series 2, V 4: 232-236.

Every man in Missouri who had not come out in support for the Union was under suspicion as a Confederate sympathizer. This situation made it difficult for men who were not guerrillas to assist the Southern Cause. The wife of William Gregg, one of Quantrill's trusted lieutenants, recalled that her father had been too old for military service, but he had helped the guerrillas in any way he could, providing food, horses, and money to the guerrillas. These activities caused him to be arrested twice; he was sentenced to death for assisting Quantrill's men. Although he received a reprieve, many other men, such as those executed in the Palmyra Massacre, were not so lucky. Because of the suspicion surrounding young men, many felt they were forced to join irregular groups. Therefore, in a sense they were leaving their women unprotected because they had to protect their own lives. Some of the men made themselves feel better by leaving a younger brother at home to look out for the women. After the murder of his father by a Union soldier, Jim Younger felt obligated to join his older brother Cole in Quantrill's band. Cole told Jim it was his duty "to watch over their mother and direct the activities of their two younger brothers." Jim was fourteen at the time; his younger brothers, John and Bob, who also wanted to join Quantrill, were eleven and nine. Women were often left under the "protection" of their sons whom they still considered children. Often, they had to undertake their own protection.⁶²

Left alone to defend their households, Confederate women employed a variety of means to protect their property. The most common defense was for a woman to portray herself as helpless and reliant on male assistance. Kate Donegy was left alone with her small children while her husband was "in the South": she had managed to prevent Union

⁶² Mrs. W.H. Gregg. "Can Forgive, But Not Forget." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During*

troops from burning her house for a year. In 1862, Federal troops came to Donegy's house after hearing a rumor that her husband had returned. Angry that he was not there, the soldiers were about to burn the house when Donegy's six-year-old son appeared at the door holding the family Bible. The sight of a young religious mother and child apparently made the soldiers have second thoughts, and they left the family unharmed. Other women were not as lucky as Kate Donegy, but they managed to use their position as women to their advantage to some degree. Women who took a more active role in assisting the Southern Cause also used their position as women to gain a measure of protection while they engaged in treasonous activities.⁶³

In assisting the Confederate effort, some Missouri women engaged in traditionally female domains. Mrs. B.T. Bass, a woman living in Independence during Quantrill's August 11, 1862 raid of the town, recorded how Confederate women took on the task of nursing the wounded guerrillas. Bass's description of the women's reaction to their nursing paints a conflicted picture of Southern womanhood. On the one hand, the young women react with typical fragility: "Being our first experience in such proximity to an actual real battle, and with no male protector, there was consternation and alarm among those young girls, and increased to wildest excitement when they began to bring in the wounded men." But on the other hand, Confederate-supporting women were expected to be strong in the face of crisis: "It required strong nerves for young girls to assist in dressing wounds, nursing and soothing the suffering, but I never heard of a Southern woman, old or young, that was not equal to such an emergency when it came to her."

the Sixties, 27. Brant, 35.

⁶³ Kate S. Donegy, "Saved by the Bible." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 186-187.

Missouri women obviously had to be resourceful to survive such trying circumstances, but they seemed to shy away from acknowledging their strength. Theresa J. Freeman wrote about how when Missouri Confederate women heard of Sherman's march through Georgia, they organized to send relief to the South. Despite the effort this relief project must have taken, Freeman went out of her way to highlight how weak the women were. For example, she described the woman who suggested the relief effort as "a frail, delicate woman of the South." Also, Freeman claimed that the motto of their society was "to beg and receive," portraying the women as passive charity recipients, rather than active philanthropic organizers. No matter how these women saw their activities, they took action for themselves in the absence of their male relatives.⁶⁴

The level of involvement for women supporting the Confederate Cause depended on a number of factors. Most Confederate-supporting Missouri women did not engage in large-scale smuggling or espionage. The women who were more active fit a specific profile. For the most part they did not have children and were part of a financially stable family. These factors would allow the woman to be away for the extensive period of time needed to carry out some of the smuggling missions. The reasons why women engaged in dangerous activities depended on the situation. Of course, some did it for the love of their country, and this is the reason that is most often given in their writing. Also, because of the local nature of the guerrilla warfare, the women probably knew where their male relatives were serving, and may have assisted these groups out of a desire to protect their kin. But evidence also exists that suggests that women were actively recruited by the

⁶⁴ Mrs. R.T. Bass, "Recollections of Quantrill." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 234. Theresa J. Freeman, "A Brief Reminiscence of St. Louis, MO., of the Years 1860-65." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 233

army or guerrilla forces as spies. On the Union side, Brigadier General John B. Sanborn sent a dispatch to Majors Melton and Moore requesting them to get women's assistance: "Send out women spies or good scouts and ascertain, if possible, what the enemy's force is and what he intends to do and who is in command." The nature of this request not only suggests that the practice of using female spies was accepted, but also that there was a supply of trustworthy women spies to draw on. Elizabeth D. Leonard argues that many of the women who served as spies in the Civil War were paid for their activities. The harsh realities of war left many women searching for a way to support their families. But the nature of guerrilla warfare makes it unlikely that women could be paid for their actions. Although some women may have expected protection in return of their assistance to the guerrillas, realistically guerrillas could not be expected to provide large-scale protection. Therefore, Confederate-supporting women in Missouri may have been risking their lives to protect their male relatives.⁶⁵

The women spies and smugglers in Missouri differed from their counterparts in the Confederacy in that the Missouri women were, for the most part, engaged in efforts around the state. In discussing a women spy for the Union in Missouri, a report claimed, "Her sex... prevented [her] enlistment, but it enabled her to gain access to the enemy, to pass safely by and through their lines." This was also true for Missouri women working for the Southern Cause. Often, women were able to sneak through the Union lines by highlighting their innocence as members of the "weaker sex." For example, Mrs. S. E. Ustick relates that she and a female companion were able to sneak goods past Union

⁶⁵ Brigadier General John B. Sandborn to Majors Melton and Moore, May 28, 1864, Cassville, MO., *OR*, Series 1, Volume 34, Part 4. Elizabeth D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 230-238.

soldiers because "... we were two harmless women." Another common trick was to play upon women's role as traditional caregivers and claim that a sick relative was in need.

Lucy Nickolson Lindsay used this trick when attempting to cross Union lines into Springfield. By claiming that she wanted to see her ailing aunt, Lindsay convinced a Union guard that she and her traveling companions were harmless, even though they had stashed medicine and clothing for Confederates under their skirts. The women were able to fool some of the Union guards, but the officers in charge quickly became aware of their activities, and began implementing ways to stop the women.⁶⁶

As some women became deeply involved in assisting the Confederate effort, they devised elaborate ways to conceal their activity. According to Lucy Nickolson Lindsay, Confederate Missourians took part in an "underground road of communication" which allowed Confederate activity in the state to flourish even after the regular army was no longer a presence in the state. With this method, Confederate supporters were directed to Confederate General Price's army, which by 1862 was engaged in raids around the state. Price and his lieutenants also used this road to procure supplies for their men. The road was a series of houses that stretched out from Jefferson City, in which the residents would point the Confederate support in the correct direction. Women were critical to this effort because, as Lindsay explained, "The ladies generally answered the door, for they were in the habit of shooting down the men." In Lindsay's memoirs, she wrote that guerrillas asked her if she and the other ladies could help by getting medicine and clothes. Since women were actively involved in assisting the Confederate effort, it was difficult for them

⁶⁶ Leonard, 237. Mrs. S.E. Ustick, "An Incident of the Civil War." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 39. Lindsay, "A Cold Way Home." Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 56-57.

to claim innocence. And as the War in Missouri continued to be extraordinarily violent, the Union army was less tolerant of the women's behavior.⁶⁷

By the last half of the War, Union officials were well aware of the actions of many female Confederate sympathizers, and had no patience when dealing with them. Some Union soldiers were so frustrated with the situation that they questioned whether the women deserved to be protected. In a letter dated February 1, 1864 to General Fisk, Captain W.T. Leeper informed the General "our good, loyal friend Mrs. Byrne has been a regular spy since the commencement of the War." Aware that Mrs. Byrne's sex protected her from the usual sentence that spies received, he wrote, "General, if Mrs. Byrne was a man, and guilty of the crimes that she is, he would not live here twenty-four hours." Captain Robert McElroy also acknowledged the danger of rebel women. At the end of his scouting report of southern Missouri for the Third Missouri State Militia Cavalry dated November 9, 1863, McElroy let his feelings about disloyal Missouri women known: "I am of the opinion that the women in that region are even more daring and treacherous, and, in fact, worse than the men, as we found in their possession an number of newly made rebel uniforms." McElroy probably did not find the women more treacherous, but rather more frustrating. In his report, McElroy claim to have "killed 8 and captured 5 of the most notorious guerrillas," but he could not do anything about the women assisting the guerrilla effort. Union officials were frustrated because they could not end the guerrilla efforts as long as there were women available to assist them. As the War dragged on, Union officials began to see Confederate-supporting women as treacherous rather than weak and

⁶⁷ Lindsay, "A Cold Way Home." Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 55.

helpless. This change in circumstances because of the situation made it easier for Union officials to pursue action against women.⁶⁸

Confederate-supporting women who smuggled goods to the guerrillas actively used their female trappings to assist them. The most common way for Confederate women to smuggle goods was to hide them under their hoop skirts. The size and construction of hoop skirts made them excellent places to hide and transport goods. For example, Maria J. Walker remembered that her friend Mrs. Houston could take socks, medicine, and money to her friends male relatives because “She wore hoop skirts, and I tell you they were fine ladders to hang things on.” Another trick was to make petticoats out of uniform cloth. While on a smuggling operation, Mrs. C.C. Rainwater and her companions turned rolls of gray cloth for uniforms into underskirts. Lucy Nickolson Lindsay also made skirts out of gray flannel. On top of that, she hid twenty-two pairs of socks within the skirts. Of course, adding weight to the already unwieldy skirts could make travel difficult for women. In one humorous anecdote, Mrs. S.E. Ustick related the difficulty a traveling companion had with goods hidden under her skirt. The young woman was wearing a suit she had made for her husband, but she moved awkwardly because “She was a tall, slender pattern, while her husband... was a stout, heavy-set man, who probably weighed 200 pounds.” The overwhelming size of the suit was not her only problem: “In order to prevent the bottom of the pants from showing she had given them several artistic rolls, which made them still more clumsy.” Needless to say, Ustick feared her friend’s awkward movements would draw the attention of Union troops and lead to a

⁶⁸ Captain W.T. Leeper to Brigadier General C.B. Fisk, Patterson, Mo., February 1, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Volume 34, Part 2, 213. Scouting Report from Pilot Knob to Alton and Doniphan, Mo., by Captain Robert McElroy, Pilot Knob, Mo., November 9, 1863, Series 1, Volume 22, Part 1, 744.

search. This trick was not unique to Missouri Confederate women. Celine Fremaux, of Jackson, Louisiana, wrote in her diary “Ladies wore hoopskirts in those days and could hide much beneath them.” However, most Confederate women were fairly confident that even Union soldiers would never stoop as low as to search under a lady’s skirts.⁶⁹

Guerrillas took advantage of the protection that petticoats provided women, not only in asking the women for assistance but sometimes by disguising themselves as women. By dressing up as a woman, a guerrilla would probably expect to be able to move freely through Union occupied sections of Missouri. Unfortunately for them, the Union army’s scrutiny of women made this plan dangerous. In his memoirs, Cole Younger recalled how he was nearly caught by the Union army while on a spy mission disguised as a woman. To secure information about the Union forces in Independence, Missouri, Younger dressed as an “old apple-woman,” a disguise that nearly fooled the Union soldier until one of them noticed that Younger’s horse was better than one that an older peddler would have. Even though Younger’s identity was revealed and he killed a picket to escape, the costume allowed him access to an area that would have been off-limits to unknown men. Southern-supporting women were often forceful in demanding the protection they expected gender to provide them. According to William Strachan, who was in charge of arresting active Confederate supporters Mildred Powell and Maggie Creath, the two women had supplied ammunition and other essentials to guerrillas. These two women carried out their scheme under what Strachan referred to as “the petticoat flag,” which could mean that they hid the goods under their skirt, or, more generally, that

⁶⁹ Mrs. Maria J. Walker, “Were Not Allowed to Preach.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 246. Ustick, “An Incident of the Civil War.” *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri*

they took advantage of the Union army's reluctance to involve women in the War to sneak goods into enemy lines. Eventually, however, the Union Army caught on to this trick and began to invade the Confederate women's personal space.⁷⁰

The Union army began arresting women who actively supported the Confederate effort by smuggling goods and information. Early in the War, when only a few women like Powell were imprisoned, they were held under house arrest. As greater numbers of women were arrested, it was necessary to put them in more traditional prisons. Prison was a new and horrifying experience for these women. Because women were imprisoned separately from men, the Union army had difficulty finding adequate prison space. In a letter to Colonel J.P. Sanderson, J.M. Youngblood, a surgeon with the Union army, reported the unhealthy conditions at the Myrtle Street Prison in St. Louis: "there are now held in custody ten female prisoners in one room... The room does not contain more than 2,400 cubic feet of air, which is barely sufficient for three persons." Youngblood warned that under those conditions, disease would run rampant. Unsure of what to do, he inquired, "Shall we treat the cases [of illness] as they occur in the quarters they now occupy or remove them to hospital?" Sanderson referred Youngblood's letter to Gustave Heinrichs, a prison inspector, who offered a solution: "The so-called lower round room at Gratiot Street Prison seems to be the proper place. It is a large and airy room, and perfectly isolated from the other rooms." Union soldiers were concerned for the health of

During the Sixties, 39. Lindsay, "A Cold Way Home," *The War the Women Lived*, 56. Fremaux, "A Cap for Mrs. Worthy," *The War the Women Lived*, 192.

⁷⁰ Younger 20-21. *OR*,

the women, but they were also aware to the public relations nightmare that would occur if women died of disease while incarcerated.⁷¹

Rather than commenting on the physical surroundings of these prisons, women often spent more energy commenting on the behavior of the Union troops. Southern women expected Union men to behave poorly. One unidentified woman was so surprised at a generous Union soldier that she felt that she had to explain why she referred to him as a gentleman: "Please don't think that I intend to confuse a gentleman with a Federal uniform; 'tis a misnomer, I confess, but during my four years of war service I met three of these renegades." After her arrest, Lucy Nickolson Lindsay was constantly in conflict with the prison keeper at the Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis, a man named Masterson. When taking her to her cell, Masterson told Lindsay that he hoped she was not afraid of ghosts, because "... this is Doctor McDowell's dissecting room, and the floor and table are covered with blood." Lindsay replied that she "much preferred ghosts to Federals." Mildred Elizabeth Powell recalled how General McNeil was often "almost unconsciously drunk," even as the wives of the condemned Palmyra prisoners begged for their husbands lives. Union soldiers were aware of the low opinion that female Confederate Missourians had of them, and possibly tried to use the stereotype to their advantage.⁷²

Union officials probably hoped that at least the elite women they arrested would be so disgusted with prison life that they would quickly provide information. Confederate women, both in Missouri and the South, reported numerous examples of Union soldiers

⁷¹ J.M. Youngblood to Colonel J.P. Sanderson, St. Louis, August 20, 1864, *OR*, Series 2, Volume 7, 661. Gustave Heinrichs to J.M. Youngblood, St. Louis, August 21, 1864, *OR*, Series 2, Volume 7, 661.

⁷² Writer Unknown, "A Reminiscences of the War in St. Louis." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 46. Lindsay, "A Cold Way Home." Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 59-61. Ball, "Journal of Mildred Elizabeth Powell." *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, 161.

trying to unsettle them into giving up vital information. As her house was searched, Rose O'Neal Greenhow remained calm despite her inner turmoil about what the soldiers might find. According to Greenhow, her demeanor surprised the detectives, as "They had expected that, under the influence of the agitation and excitement of the trying position, I should have been found guilty of some womanly indiscretion by which they could profit." Lucy Nickolson Lindsay withstood similar pressures while being interrogated about her mission to deliver medicine to Price. Lindsay refused to answer the questions because "It would have gotten so many people in trouble. The drug store and everything would have been burned down, so of course I was not going to tell." Union soldiers probably operated under a common assumption that women were weak and would be unable to stand the pressure of interrogation and imprisonment. Obviously, some women did crumble under the pressure. Lindsay related an incident involving her cellmate in the Gratoit Street Prison, a Mrs. Lowden who was suffering from consumption. One day a Union guard told Mrs. Lowden that her baby had died, sending her into a hysterical coughing fit. Lindsay yelled at the guard for lying, and told he knew "that she was sick and had no grit." The guards tried a similar tactic with Lindsay, informing her that her brother had been shot. Lindsay did not take the bait, and in fact her brother was fine. The women most deeply involved in smuggling and spying were unshakeable because of the danger that they had already endured in serving their cause. But the women who assisted the guerrilla effort on a smaller scale were less prepared to deal with the trauma of arrest and imprisonment.⁷³

⁷³ Greenhow, "In Prison for My Country." Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 38-39. Lindsay, "A Cold Way Home." Sullivan, *The War the Women Lived*, 60-61.

Since only a small portion of the women actively assisting the guerrillas were involved in large-scale spying and smuggling, arresting only those women was not enough to stop guerrilla activity. Therefore, Union officials broadened the scope of their incarcerations. By the middle of 1863, Union officials began to arrest the female relatives of known guerrillas, on the assumption that these women were actively helping the rebels. This policy had a disastrous outcome in Kansas City. In an attempt to restore order in Jackson and Cass counties, centers of guerrilla activity that bordered Kansas, Union officials began to arrest the female relatives of guerrillas in July of 1863. In Kansas City, just as in St. Louis, the Union army had difficulties finding a building suitable to serve as a women's prison. The authorities first put the women in the Union hotel, but when the hotel became too crowded, the women were moved to a bank, which became unsanitary. Finally, the women ended up in a building that had formerly been used as a studio by artist George Caleb Bingham. By August, the building held ten female prisoners, all of whom were twenty or younger. Among those imprisoned were Nannie Harris McCorkle and Charity McCorkle Kerr, the sister-in-law and sister of Quantrill lieutenant John McCorkle. His account of the prison collapse created the connection between the "murder" of the guerrilla's female relatives and the Lawrence raid.⁷⁴

On August 13, 1863, the building collapsed while the women were incarcerated awaiting a military tribunal. Guerrillas and Confederate supporters, already deeply distrustful of a Union army that would imprison young women of good character, believed that the Union army had conspired to destroy the building with the women inside. To support his claim that Union officials intended to maim and kill the women, he pointed out

⁷⁴ Charles F. Harris, "Catalyst for Terror: The Collapse of the Women's Prison in Kansas City." *Missouri*

that the owners of store below the jail were clearing out their merchandise: "The girls had been uneasy by hearing the people on the floor below moving out their stock of groceries and whisky which they took to a safe place. The plastering had been falling all day and the girls were in a panic." In fact, Union officials were aware of the problem; the guard had called for an inspector and it was during the inspection that the building fell. Confederate supporters claimed that Union soldiers had compromised the integrity of the building. McCorkle related the story of Mrs. B.F. Duke, a cousin of Bill Anderson. Duke claimed that Union soldiers told her they had removed a portion of the foundation wall in an attempt to cause a collapse. Other rumors included that the collapse was caused by a windstorm, building a latrine, and pigs rooting around the foundation, all in attempts by the Union army to cause a collapse. It is highly unlikely that the Union soldiers caused the collapse; if they had wanted to kill the women, there would have been easier ways to do it. But the damage had been done. With four women killed and two seriously injured, the stage was set for a guerrilla reprisal.⁷⁵

The Union imprisonment of the guerrillas' female relatives in Kansas City angered the guerrillas, who believed that these women were innocent bystanders of the conflict. Although some of these women had done little more than feed the guerrillas, in guerrilla warfare even this simple act allows the resistance to continue. The guerrillas became even more outraged when the women's prison collapsed, killing some of their "innocent" relatives. Whether the prison collapse gave a reason for the deadly raid on Lawrence or if it provided an excuse for an action that was already planned, the guerrillas used the death

Historical Review 89, no. 3 (April 1995): 293-299.

⁷⁵ Harris, 300-301. O.S. Barton, *Three Years with Quantrill: A True Story Told by His Scout John McCorkle* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, (1914) 1992), 121-122.

and maiming of these women to justify their actions. The paradox that guerrilla warfare created for these men was that they needed to believe that their women were innocent, because protecting their households became an important psychological justification for their actions. However, to succeed they needed their women to not only to supply them with basic provisions, but also to smuggle them supplies and act as spies.⁷⁶

The exact catalyst for the raid on Lawrence, Kansas, has long been a matter of debate among historians. Nevertheless, its close timing to the Kansas City prison collapse allowed the guerrillas themselves to cite it as a reason. The reason for choosing Lawrence also had significance for those who claimed to be fighting in support of Southern rights. Lawrence was not only the home of some prominent Jayhawkers, like James Lane, it supposedly also benefited financially from profits from the property stolen by the Jayhawkers. John McCorkle voiced this justification in his memoirs: “Lane and [Charles] Jennison had made desolate the border counties of Missouri, pillaged and burned homes, murdered Southern men, insulted, outraged and murdered the wives and sisters of these men.” In the face of the actions of men such as Lane and Jennison, Quantrill and his men were justified in seeking retribution. McCorkle simply stated, “Quantrill and his command had come to Lawrence to be avenged and they were.” Lane himself survived the raid and many men who probably had little to do with the conflict fell in his place. But McCorkle showed little compassion for these innocent men, acknowledging only that “In this raid, a few innocent men may have been killed but this was not intentional.” In his and other

⁷⁶ Harris, “Catalyst for Terror: The Collapse of the Women’s Prison in Kansas City.” Fellman, “Women and Guerrilla Warfare.” *Divided Houses*, 147-149. Castel, *Winning and Losing in the Civil War*, 153

accounts, the guerrillas were quick to point out that, unlike their Yankee counterparts, they did not kill or injure any women.⁷⁷

The fact that the guerrillas did not kill any women was probably of little comfort to the women who watched their loved ones gunned down. In a letter to her parents in Massachusetts, Lawrence resident Sarah Fitch detailed the horror as the guerrillas burst into her home. Sarah's letter apparently supported the guerrillas' claim that they spared the women and children. But the guerrilla had no qualms about gunning her husband down in front of Sarah and her children: "He- the wrech- turned and saw my Edward-oh mother- so calm and so self possessed- and without a word the deadly aim was taken-shot after shot in rapid succession." In a scene that would have been familiar to many Southern supporting women back in Missouri, Sarah then begged in vain as the guerrilla set fire to her home. The guerrillas seemed incapable of acknowledging that even though they had not physically harmed women like Sarah, they had destroyed her life in many ways just the same. And even the guerrilla claim that they had not killed any women was suspect. Cole Younger slipped an incident in his memoirs that disproves the guerrilla claim. At first he toed the party line, claiming, "It was a day of butchery... But it is not true that women were killed." But in the next sentence, he recounts an incident involving an African American woman. According to Younger, this woman leaned out of a window to shout obscenities at the guerrillas. Before anyone noticed that she was a woman, one of the guerrillas shot and killed her. This incident clarifies exactly which women the guerrillas strove to protect. It is possible that the guerrillas did not realize this African American was a woman until too late, but if this was the case it would be logical that other white

⁷⁷ Barton, *Three Years with Quantrill*, 126.

women would have been killed in a similar accidental ways. Since this is not the case, it is more plausible that the guerrillas did not necessarily extend their vow to protect women to women of color. All in all, the guerrilla's claim to protect women seemed hollow after the events of the Lawrence raid.⁷⁸

The Lawrence raid gave the Union Army the perfect reason to enact harsh measures to eliminate guerrilla warfare. Even during a bloody and brutal war, details of what happened in Lawrence shocked the Union. Union Army officials in Missouri believed that the public would finally understand the action that needed to be taken to stop the guerrillas. General Thomas Ewing, Jr. asked President Lincoln for permission to issue Order Number 11, which in effect would exile all citizens living in the Missouri counties bordering with Kansas. These counties, including Jackson, Cass, Bates, and parts of Vernon were presumed to have supported guerrilla activity by providing Confederate guerrillas with comfort and information. Since targeting only family members of known guerrillas for arrest had not worked, Ewing planned now to clear the entire area. The order was issued on August 25, 1863 and the people in the effected counties had until the ninth of September to leave. Those who could prove their loyalty would be allowed to move to either Kansas or to within one mile of any Union Army post, but all other were exiled to outside of the military district.⁷⁹

The order had the desired effect for the Union Army. Quantrill's guerrillas were never again able to mount an attack like the one they did on Lawrence, and eventually

⁷⁸ Fitch, Sarah. Letter in *American Women's Diaries*. Segment 3, Western women, reel 35, 1-2. Younger, 43.

⁷⁹ Neely Jr., Mark E. " 'Unbeknowst' to Lincoln: A Note on Radical Pacification in Missouri During the Civil War," *Civil War History* 44, no. 3: 212-215. Younger, 44.

many of the guerrilla groups began to splinter off into roving attack groups. This splintering had to be in part due to the destruction of a substantial portion of their support base. Not only were many of their families gone, the affected counties were stripped of their productivity. Many of the families headed south into Texas to wait out the War. By the time these harsh measures had occurred, many Southern-supporting women wanted the War to be over, no matter what the outcome.

Despite the dedication that many Confederate Missouri women felt for their cause, the War eventually began to take its toll. The loss of male relatives was tremendously difficult for women, both economically and emotionally. Margaret J. Hays, the wife of partisan leader Upton Hays, was the target of Union raids early in the War. Margaret was strong enough to bear the frightening attacks on her property. But when she learned of her husband's death in battle, she fell apart. In a letter to her mother in California, she detailed her grief: "I have thought that I had my share of trouble but Mother my troubles have just commenced. When I wrote you last I had hopes that my husband was still alive but now I have to give up all hopes." As the mother of four small children, Margaret Hays had practical concerns about how to care for her family, especially because "Our property is all taken from us and I am left without a home...". But Margaret Hays had been caring for her family alone since the beginning of the War. She was much more distraught about never being able to see her husband again. Although she was touched by the glowing reports that Upton Hays' men had given of him, Margaret Hays told her mother, "Sometimes I think I can not stand it. All I asked for was his life... I cared not for all this; I did not care whether I had the second dress if his life could only be spared I would be so thankful." Margaret Hays lost her husband early in the War, so she was

devastated early in the fighting. After years of watching families torn apart, many other women became sick of the War. No matter how dedicated women were to the Southern cause, the destruction of family and neighbor networks that the women had worked so hard to cultivate before the War left many women struggling to make sense of their new lives.⁸⁰

The realities of War caused even the most rebellious Confederate women to long for an end to the hostilities. Bethiah Pyatt McKown, who early in the War had hoped “that the independent Missourians will rise in their majesty & might to crush out these *Vandal Lincoln hoards*, and restore our free sovereign State to the full enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of a free people,” was sick of the destruction that the War had caused by 1863. McKown’s family was divided over which side to support. In fact, her eldest son John, with whom she maintained a busy correspondence with during the War, had originally fought for the Confederacy but had switched to the Union in 1862. Rather than break off contact with this son, McKown continued to write him, and came to hate the War because of the strain it put on her family. In a letter to John, McKown bemoaned the strife the War had caused her family: “nothing but War War all the time, my heart sickens... and to know that my sons are engaged in it is *now*, my greatest sorrow, brother against brother oh it is awful.” As the War continued to drag on with no end in sight, McKown believed only God could end the hostilities and heal the nation: “I earnestly pray that God in Infinite mercy will once more let the light of his reconciled countenance shine on this Nation and say it is *enough*, and in deserved wrath remember mercy to us to us stay now oh Lord thy chastening hand, and grant us peace.” Because the War had

⁸⁰ Margaret J. Hays “Extracts from War-Time Letters” *Missouri Historical Review*, 104-105.

scattered her family, McKown did not have much hope of reuniting her family after the War. But she hoped that her family would be reunited in the afterlife, just as other pioneer women hoped when they left their families in the east. She believed that a meeting in St. Louis would be their last “until we meet at the Judgement [sic] bar of God, and I earnestly pray that we may *All meet There, an unbroken family* and hear the welcome plaudit of welldone good and faithful servants enter ye into the joy of your Lord.” The War in Missouri was so bloody and so personal that many women did not expect to be able to put their families back together, at least in their lifetimes.⁸¹

⁸¹ Bethiah Pyatt McKown, “The Civil War Letters of Bethiah Pyatt McKown, Part I” Ed. James W. Goodrich. *Missouri Historical Review*, 239. Bethiah Pyatt McKown, “The Civil War Letters of Bethiah Pyatt McKown, Part II” Ed. James W. Goodrich. *Missouri Historical Review* 67, no. 3 (Apr. 1973): 355-356, 365.

CONCLUSION

After the War, Missourians faced a daunting task in rebuilding their lives. The signs of destruction were everywhere. In urban areas such as the city of Lexington, travelers commented to the local paper, the *Lexington Weekly Caucasian*, that the city had gone from being a “beautiful and pleasant” place to a “dilapidated and ruined city.” Missourians in rural areas found their homes no better after the War. A young lady was shocked to find her family’s property in ruins when she and her family returned in September of 1865 after having been evicted under Order 11. Throughout the county, she found few structures left, only “now and then a lone chimney to tell the story of a fire.” Her family was comparatively lucky; they had “the walls of a brick house of two rooms left.” They made do with shoddy furniture and inflated prices, according to this young woman, because they were “so happy to return to their homes and to know that peace was restored once more.” Unfortunately, even though the War was officially over, turmoil still plagued Missouri.⁸²

As it had for the rest of the country, the Civil War spelled an end to slavery in Missouri. The state officially ended the institution on January 11, 1865 by approving an amendment to the Missouri Constitution. The institution of slavery had been severely

⁸² Hughes, 52

weakened during the War. A dramatic drop in the price of slaves, coupled with the fact that many slaves ran away during the War, shook confidence in slavery and eventually led to the emancipation of all Missouri slaves. However, the transition from slavery to freedom was not easy for any Missourian, black or white. Since many slaves were uncertain about their future, they crowded into Missouri's cities to try to scratch out an existence. This did not go unnoticed by the white populations of these cities, who were uneasy about how to control the black population after emancipation. In Lexington, the *Weekly Caucasian* resubmitted an old abolitionist idea by suggesting that African Americans should be resettled in Africa. In the Confederate South, former slaveholders looked for ways to force African Americans to work in their fields again. This was not the case in Missouri. White Missourians were more concerned about maintaining their social superiority; the loss of the slave labor force was not as crushing in Missouri where the use of slaves had always been scattered. Perhaps out of a fear of African Americans, some white Missourians resorted to violence to maintain their place in the social hierarchy. Many former slave owners and Southern supporters saw the Ku Klux Klan as a vehicle to intimidate not only freepeople but also Union supporters, especially Union Army veterans. Obviously, the divisions created by the War were not going to melt away as easily as some Missourians had hoped they would.⁸³

After the War, some of the Confederate supporting women hoped that the divisions created by the War could easily be mended. Bethiah Pyatt McKown wrote of her hopes of reconciliation in a letter to her son in Ohio. By the time the War finally ended, McKown no longer had the same fiery support for the Southern Cause that she

⁸³ Hughes, 52-59.

showed at the War's onset. Seeing her family split apart over the War was infinitely more painful for her. In expressing her relief that the War was behind them, she told her son "I hope... that brothers and friends... will let bye gones be bye gones, and when they meet if they ever do, it will be in love and friendship." Although Mckown's letters do not record whether her family and friends were able to repair their relationships, many other Missouri women were not optimistic. In looking back at the aftermath of the War, one Missouri woman recorded: "The feeling of animosity that was engendered during that strife never died out among those who were engaged in it. It takes the passing of generations to do that." This woman voiced an opinion that was likely shared by many Missourians on either side. The anger felt between the two sides could not be eliminated just because the hostilities were officially over, especially because so much of the violence in Missouri had been the result of unofficial hostilities.⁸⁴

Women themselves wanted to hold onto the ideal that they had before the War so they had something to hold onto in their chaotic new world. White women in Missouri had a unique sense of self. Many had developed both Southern and frontier sensibilities. They had complex relationships to the institution of slavery, which led them to support the Confederacy. But on a more personal level, frontier women had taken responsibility for the domestic sphere. Guerrilla warfare brought the Civil War into the homes of these women, and they saw it within their realm to defend the home life they had so painstakingly created. At first, Union soldiers were reluctant to threaten Confederate-supporting women. But as the guerrilla war in Missouri continued and worsened, many Union soldiers came to see just how important the women's support was in fueling the

⁸⁴ Bethiah Pyatt McKown, "The Civil War Letters of Bethiah Pyatt McKown, Part II" Ed. James W.

cycle of violence. The Union Army began to target Confederate-supporting women, which in turn drove more of the women to support the guerrillas.

Confederate-supporting women in Missouri had counterparts throughout the Confederate South. Women like Rose Greenhow were part of known Confederate spy networks, just as Lucy Nickolson Lindsay was part of a sophisticated smuggling network for the Confederate Cause in Missouri. Various other women in the South engaged in smaller-scale smuggling in their state, as Missouri women Mrs. Ustick did in her home state. Confederate-supporting women in Missouri differed from women in Confederate state in the fact that their state legally remained in the Union during the War. Therefore, they got an early start in working against the Union Army presence in their state. These women took advantage of the Union Army's squeamishness, especially early in the War, to punish white women, especially elite white women.

Although many women behaved in ways that were outside of their traditional gender role, they did not want to change the definition of what it meant to be a woman. Rather, they manipulated their understanding to fit with the changing world they faced during the guerrilla conflict. This manipulation was a conscious use of their gender role to protect them as they moved beyond it as well as way of keeping their identity in a world that required them to take on new responsibilities. Confederate-supporting women were active in a variety of ways in supporting Confederate efforts throughout the state. Their actions included smuggling goods and information to the guerrillas to providing meals to troops to speaking out against Federal policies. To show their support for the Confederate Cause, these women did not step back from the conflict and watch what the

men did. More often than not, the Southern guerrillas were unable to fulfill their claimed mission of protecting their innocent and weak female relatives.

Ironically, it was often women who stood up to the Union soldiers long enough for the guerrillas to make themselves scarce. Guerrilla warfare relies on quick strikes and secrecy. Because of this, guerrillas often could not make a stand to defend their families or property. The best they could hope for was to live another day so they could exact their revenge. The guerrillas needed the support and action of female Confederates. Since they were not immediately suspected of disloyal activities, they could acquire the goods needed by the guerrillas on either a large or small scale. But many of the women who assisted these men did not take credit for their action. It is hard to tell whether these women really believed they were weak and helpless, or whether they believed that in contrast with the actions of the men, their own activities were inconsequential. But in guerrilla warfare, it often becomes difficult to separate the activities of men and women, as both are so closely dependent on the other to be successful. Missouri folklore claims that Confederate guerrillas fought under a Black Flag. Now it is time to acknowledge the importance of Confederate supporting women who fought under the petticoat flag.

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