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FOR UNION, FOR CONFEDERACY, FOR SLAVERY:  
MOTIVATION FOR ENLISTING & SERVING  
AMONG KENTUCKY'S CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

By

James F. Osborne  
B.A., University of Louisville, 2009

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2011

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A Thesis Approved on

April 11, 2011

by the following Thesis Committee:

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Thesis Director

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“Abe Lincoln was playing it safe, easing along the way,” the Colonel said.  
“He knew nobody could come right out and tell a Kentuckian what to do.  
He was *born* in Kentucky.”  
“But Davis was born in Kentucky, too.”  
“Well,” said the colonel,  
“Seems to me I’ve read somewhere that God and the Devil both started out in heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

--Union Colonel Sidney M. Barnes, 8<sup>th</sup> KY Infantry

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<sup>1</sup> Maude Miller Barnes, *Dear Wife: Letters From a Union Colonel* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sheridan Books, 2001), 19.

DEDICATION

For Mom, Dad, William, and Andrew

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Of course, my biggest thanks goes to Dr. Thomas C. Mackey, who has been my mentor since I was a sophomore. Over the years, he has been more than generous with his time and knowledge. If this work possesses any redeeming qualities, it is due to his mentorship. I would also like to thank Dr. Daniel Krebs and Dr. Allison M. Martens for agreeing to be committee members and for bringing their expertise—military history and law and public policy, respectively—to bear upon this work. Dr. A. Glenn Crothers was an important influence on Chapter Two and without his knowledge and editorial eye, it surely would have suffered. Dr. Ann T. Allen granted me co-authorship and allowed me to aid her in the research and writing of what became my first published journal article; the experience was invaluable and I would like to thank her for giving me the opportunity. Jon-Paul Moody and Lee Keeling have been more than helpful with the administrative tasks of completing a master's thesis and degree—and a special thanks to Lee, who was more than willing to be a sounding board and read drafts. I would also like thank to the InterLibrary Loan staff at the University of Louisville's Ekstrom Library. My research required many elusive books and articles, and the ILL staff helped me get my hands on nearly all of them. I am convinced they are the unsung heroes of research at the University of Louisville. The archival staff at Filson Historical Society and Kentucky Historical Society helped point me toward overlooked primary sources and made no fuss over many copies I requested. To everyone else who I have not mention but who has assisted me along the way, thank you.



## ABSTRACT

### FOR UNION, FOR CONFEDERACY, FOR SLAVERY: MOTIVATION FOR ENLISTING & SERVING AMONG KENTUCKY'S CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

James F. Osborne

May 14, 2011

Beginning with Bell Irvin Wiley's 1943 *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, historians have produced many works describing the motivations for soldiers to enlist and serve during the Civil War. However, because they often set up an artificial North-South divide, while suggesting the North and South were homogenous units, the motivations of border state soldiers are not well represented in these works. This thesis starts to mend this oversight and it explores the motivations of white Kentuckians to join both sides of the conflict and remain at arms. This thesis also argues that slavery played a pivotal role in soldier motivations for both Union and Confederate Kentucky soldiers, a point not well developed by the few previous works on Kentucky Civil War soldiers.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: KENTUCKY'S CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

Considering the importance of the state of Kentucky during the Antebellum and Civil War eras of United States history, it is surprising that historiography of the state is not comprehensive or of the highest quality. One of the more significant gaps in the literature is lack of work on Civil War Kentucky soldiers. While historians have written several books about Kentucky soldiers, such as William C. Davis's *The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates Who Couldn't Go Home* (1980) and Kirk C. Jenkins's *The Battle Rages Higher: The Union's Fifteenth Kentucky Infantry* (2003), none move beyond a regimental or brigade history and much of the work done is narrative with little analysis. No historians have delved into the study of motivation to serve among Kentucky Civil War soldiers. Such a study, as this one proposes to be, will contribute greatly to the understanding of how Kentucky and Kentuckians fit into the larger picture of the Civil War.

E. Merton Coulter's 1926 *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* became the first defining work on Kentucky during the Civil War. Written by an unreconstructed Southerner, Coulter's book provides a slanted view of Civil War Kentucky which overstates the pro-Confederate sentiment in the state at the beginning of the war. Coulter claims that the main consideration for Unionism in Kentucky was due to economic ties

with the North, rather than any ideological attachment to the Union.<sup>1</sup> Coulter also dismisses the Unionist victory in the 1861 Congressional elections by suggesting Southern sympathizers “spurned the election and had stayed away from the polls generally” and the Unionism reflected in the votes did not represent attachment to the Union but a desire for neutrality in the coming conflict.<sup>2</sup> While *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* was a strong start for the historiography of Civil War Kentucky, its advanced age and crippling bias prevent it from being an acceptable modern authority on the subject. In 1975, Lowell Hayes Harrison published *The Civil War in Kentucky*, a slender volume covering the major events of Civil War Kentucky. While it does well to correct much of Coulter’s pro-Southern bias on the historiography by noting that Unionism was the prominent sentiment in Kentucky at the beginning of the war, the book’s short length detracts from any serious contribution made to the historiography.<sup>3</sup>

More recently, in 2000, Kent Masterson Brown published a collection of essays by himself and others as *The Civil War in Kentucky: Battle for the Bluegrass State*. While some essays in the book, such as Charles P. Roland’s “The Confederate Defense of Kentucky,” and John Y. Simon’s “Lincoln, Grant, and Kentucky in 1861,” are strong contributions, many of the essays are point-by-point battle accounts with little analysis. Though the essays discuss literal battles in the Bluegrass State, they did not discuss the actual battle for the loyalties of Kentuckians by both Federal and Confederate

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<sup>1</sup> E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1926), 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>3</sup> Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 13.

governments. Brown's *The Civil War in Kentucky* is a useful contribution to the historiography, but still leaves much to be desired. The modern common consensus on Kentucky Civil War history is voiced by another collection of essays, *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee*, published in 2009. Covering various topics, such as Kentucky sentiment, the causes of neutrality and its abandonment, and black Kentucky soldiers, *Sister States, Enemy States* represent the best work to date on the subject of the Civil War in Kentucky. However, despite the high quality of *Sister States, Enemy States* the need remains for a complete syncretic work on Civil War Kentucky which can replace Coulter's aging work with more modern scholarship.

Like the scholarship on Kentucky Civil War history, the literature on Kentucky Civil War soldiers is thin.<sup>4</sup> The first significant secondary source on Kentucky soldiers was William C. Davis's *The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates Who Couldn't Go Home*, published in 1980. Davis covers the military career of the First Kentucky Brigade, one of the more important units in the Confederate army, well-known for its steadfastness and bravery. Davis's book has a strong narrative and represents a robust first attempt on the subject of Kentucky Civil War soldiers, but it lacks substantial analysis. Much of the book is concerned with the movement of the troops and the battles fought across the country rather than any serious attempt to understand the men of the ranks. Because of the lack of primary sources from the soldiers of the First Kentucky Brigade, doing such analysis constituted a difficult task but a better attempt should have been made. Despite the faults, Davis's book was a strong first attempt on the subject of

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<sup>4</sup> The greatest lack is in statistical data for Kentucky Civil War soldiers. Enlistment, desertion, and reenlistment numbers, for instance, are either out-of-date or difficult to find, regimental histories being the only significant sources for statistical data by examining unit rosters.

Kentucky Civil War soldiers. Unfortunately, historians did not publish any more studies of Kentucky soldiers after Davis's book for some time. Not until the last ten years have historians published any substantial works on the subject. With the last decade, an explosion of books on Kentucky regiments has been written, by both professional and amateur historians. Some of the more professional works include Joseph R. Reinhart's *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry U.S.: The Boys Who Feared No Noise* (2000), Kirk C. Jenkins's *The Battle Rages Higher: The Union's Fifteenth Kentucky Infantry* (2003), William Michael Wilson's *History of the Eleventh Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment: Union Army* (2006), and Dennis W. Belcher's *The 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War: A History and Roster* (2009). Reinhart and Belcher's books are especially rich in analysis of soldier motivation and attitudes. If these works are any indication, the topic of Kentucky Civil War soldiers will continue to receive treatment from historians and perhaps soon a work covering the whole of Kentucky soldiers, rather than just a single regiment or brigade, will be produced; this thesis contributes to that goal. These newer works are also indicative that a much-needed shift is occurring in Kentucky Civil War studies. Because of the change in sentiment during the war from Unionist to Confederate, Kentucky developed a strong post-war Confederate bias. Because Kentuckians have written most of Kentucky's history, the literature on Kentucky has been defined by this pro-Confederate bias; thus, the study of Kentucky Unionism has been short-shrifted. This increased focus on Union regiments points toward a shift away from strong Confederate bias in the work on Kentucky Civil War soldiers.

On the question of what motivated Civil War soldiers to enlist, serve, and fight, historians have argued whether ideology or mundane concerns, such as family, peer pressure, and money, proved more influential. The first important works on Civil War common soldiers were Bell Irvin Wiley's *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (1943) and *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (1951). Previous to Wiley's works, historians had restricted their study of Civil War soldiers to leaders and commanders, ignoring the vast majority of men who made up the Civil War army. Wiley corrected this oversight by examining the common soldier and the minutiae of his life, such as food preparation and how they spent their free time, in his two volumes. On the topic of soldier motivations, Wiley claims that Confederate soldiers' eagerness to serve was the result of martial enthusiasm and mundane concerns rather than any ideological convictions.<sup>5</sup> As for the Yankees, Wiley argues that many of them enlisted because of the lure of adventure and desire for money instead of any sense of patriotism or ideological beliefs. Wiley maintained "that the great bulk of [Yankee] volunteers responded to mixed motives, none of which was deeply felt."<sup>6</sup>

Because both volumes gave the sense of comprehensiveness and because of the respect Wiley enjoyed in the historical profession, historians accepted Wiley's interpretations of Civil War common soldiers' motivation for several decades. Not until the late 1980s did new interpretations on the subject come forward. In 1987, Gerald Linderman published *Embattled Courage: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, which took a

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<sup>5</sup> Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943), 123-24.

<sup>6</sup> Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1951), 37-39.

post-Vietnam approach to the study of Civil War common soldiers.<sup>7</sup> Linderman argues that character, especially courage, compelled many Civil War soldiers to serve. One of the most powerful motivators for men to enter into service and stay in the ranks during combat and hardship was the need to prove their own personal courage. However, because of the changes in warfare and technology that occurred later in the war, a new, impersonal kind of fighting took over and convinced soldiers that courage was no longer a determiner in the victory; courage only increased the likelihood of death. Like the soldiers of Vietnam, Civil War soldiers became disillusioned with their pre-war values. However, unlike soldiers, civilians did not witness these changes and maintained their pre-war ideas of courage, creating a severe disconnect between the battlefield and the home front which further alienated soldiers.

Likewise, Reid Mitchell takes a post-Vietnam approach to the study of Civil War soldiers in his book, *Civil War Soldiers*, published in 1988. Writing against the work of Wiley, Mitchell argued that ideology compelled men to the service more than mundane concerns. However, like Linderman, Mitchell maintained that Civil War soldiers became disillusioned with the ideology and values that encouraged them to serve. Victimized by the war, soldiers' prewar idealism did not last on the battlefield, in the hospital, or inside prison. Both Linderman and Mitchell do well to emphasize ideology in soldier motivation, adding a large piece of the puzzle of soldier motivation that Wiley disregarded in his interpretation. However, both overemphasize the disillusionment that Civil War soldiers experience during the war. While no doubt exists that some soldiers experienced disillusionment, the primary sources from Civil War soldiers show that they

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<sup>7</sup> Post-Vietnam approaches are those influenced by the Vietnam War, which bears heavily on interpretation.



were a vocal minority, much as they were during Vietnam. It seems impossible for anyone to serve through a war, fight in battles, and kill other men without changing their beliefs or worldview in significant ways. However, primary sources demonstrate that the majority did not experience the kind of post-Vietnam disillusionment that Linderman and Mitchell describe in their works. This anachronism is not an egregious lapse in historical judgment as evidence does exist to support Linderman and Mitchell's arguments; they simply carried their arguments too far and tried to cover too many Civil War soldiers when their arguments only cover a fraction of them.

James M. McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* sought to overturn Linderman and Mitchell's disillusionment thesis. Published in 1997 and built on his previous work in *What They Fought For, 1861 – 1865*, McPherson, like Linderman and Mitchell, argues that ideology was the most important motivator for Civil War soldiers to enlist and serve, despite the duality in the title of his book. However, McPherson argues against the notion that Civil War soldiers became disillusioned with their ideology. McPherson takes Civil War soldiers at their word, believing that their letters, diaries, and journals were not filled with meaningless platitudes about God and Country but represented genuine feelings and beliefs. To do otherwise, as Linderman and especially Mitchell have, is to anachronistically inject modern conceptions of war onto nineteenth-century sources. Using a sample of 1,076 letters and diaries compiled to represent the demographics of Civil War soldiers as closely as possible, McPherson categorized the reasons given by the soldiers themselves for enlisting on either side of the war. McPherson then built his interpretations on those categories.

McPherson shows that while comradeship helped to inspire soldiers to enlist and stay in the ranks, the primary motivation came from the ideology soldiers carried with them into the service. Over the course of many battles, men lost their friends and comrades; if soldiers were solely or even mostly motivated by comradeship, McPherson argues, Civil War armies would have disintegrated over the course of the war. Hence, McPherson points to ideology as the primary reason Civil War soldiers remained in service despite the hardship and danger. McPherson also found it difficult to believe that soldiers on both sides could not have been aware of the greater issues surrounding the war; “How could it be otherwise? This was, after all, a *civil war*.”<sup>8</sup> The war did not occur in a vacuum as the nation had been racked by political turmoil over the question of slavery for many decades and this bedlam became especially acute in the 1850s. As McPherson argues:

When they enlisted, many of them did so for patriotic and ideological reasons—to shoot as they had voted, so to speak. . . . These convictions did not disappear after they signed up. Recruits did not stop being citizens and voters when they became soldiers. They needed no indoctrination letters to explain what they were fighting for . . .<sup>9</sup>

That ideology did not play a large role in motivating soldiers to enlist seems unlikely given the worldview of nineteenth-century Americans, who placed great emphasis on political matters. That ideology, McPherson argues, did not depart them during the war. While some became disenchanted, the vast majority believed their reasons for fighting were valid ones throughout the war. Civil war soldiers were not victimized by the war, as Mitchell argues, but endured the trials of the war because their ideological motivations

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<sup>8</sup> James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 91.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

allowed them to do so. Ultimately, the majority of Civil War soldiers did not become disenchanted with the values carried with them into the war, as they referred to duty, manhood, and honor in their letters and diaries over the course of the war.

In addition to these core works on Civil War soldier motivation, several other works have been published since. In 1997, Earl J. Hess published *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, which, as the title suggests, is an exploration of the coping mechanisms that allowed Union soldiers to manage the trials of war and battle. After providing detailed descriptions of the hardship that these soldiers faced in camp and on the battlefield, Hess argues Union soldiers coped because of ideology and comradeship, agreeing with McPherson's interpretation. He also agrees with McPherson that "[t]he soldiers of the Union were not victims, as twentieth-century authors [such as Mitchell] tend to portray soldiers in all wars, but victors over the horrors of combat."<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, Hess contends that "[t]he soldiers came to recognize the horrors of the battlefield but succeeded in retaining the faith in the ideals or motives that had impelled them to go to war," disagreeing with the post-Vietnam disillusionment interpretations of Linderman and Mitchell.<sup>11</sup>

In 1998, J. Tracy Power published *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox*, an exploration of the soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia towards the end of the war. Power shows that as the character of the war changed, the soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia began fighting a defensive war not to their liking, and disillusionment became rampant in the Confederate ranks.

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<sup>10</sup> Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), ix.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

Dissatisfaction and desertion raged as the fighting stagnated and Confederates took up the defensive. Power's arguments support Linderman's contention that soldiers became disillusioned as the character of the war changed, though a year or so later than Linderman believed. However, that disillusionment is mitigated by the fact that Confederate soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia, excepting those true-believers in the Southern cause, knew that the end was near. These were not soldiers who were dissatisfied by the realities of war as they were content when they achieved earlier successes; rather, they became disillusioned only when the tide of war turned against them. Power's book is a great portrait of an army collapsing as the ideology that brought men into the army could no longer sustain them in the face of near-certain defeat.

Lastly, in 2002, Steven E. Woodworth published *While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers*. In this book, Woodworth explored the religious views of Civil War soldiers on both sides as he seeks to overturn the long-held thesis that soldiers shed or disregarded their civilian religious life in the army camps of the war. Woodworth demonstrated that religion often played an important role in soldier motivation as soldiers often used religion themes to justify their participation in the war effort. Their religious worldviews also often defined how soldiers conceptualized the war by viewing it in terms of just cause and using biblical metaphors to define the war and their actions in it. Woodworth's book does well in demonstrating how religion played an integral part in motivating soldiers to enlist in what many saw as a righteous crusade.

While books describing Civil War common soldiers and their motivations to serve have already been done by many historians and are useful works on the subject, the

soldiers they describe do not exist. As Adrian Schultze Buser Willett argues in his dissertation, "Our House was Divided: Kentucky Women and the Civil War," a strong tendency exists in Civil War studies to make artificial divisions between North and South for clarity and simplicity, when historically the division was not so sharp and such a distinction leaves no room for border states.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the North-South divide suggests that a homogenous North and a homogenous South existed. Rather, no such places existed; the Northwest, Mid-Atlantic, and New England states did share some similarities, but they were also distinctly different from each other politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Likewise, the Piedmont, Upper South, and Deep South were alike, yet distinct. Because of this heterogeneity, no common Northern or Southern soldier existed that historians of Civil War soldier motivation describe. Though men are men and thus share some basic characteristics of humanity, the distinct regions they hailed from possessed their own separate cultures which no doubt influenced their motivations to serve in both armies.

This problem with previous work on Civil War soldier motivation is especially applicable to Kentucky soldiers. Because of the desire by historians to separate North and South into two distinct and separate entities, previous works do not describe the motivations of soldiers from Kentucky, which was neither fully Northern nor fully Southern in geography, loyalty, or culture. Even the staunchest Unionist Kentuckian had Southern qualities as did the Confederate Kentuckian and his Northern qualities. This thesis shores up this oversight and explores the motivations of Kentuckians to join either side of the conflict and remain at arms. Because it was a border state, a work on

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<sup>12</sup> Adrian Schultze Buser Willett, "Our House was Divided: Kentucky Women and the Civil War" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2008), 12-13.

Kentucky soldier motivations illuminates the motivations of soldiers from other border states to enlist as well. It also suggests a new methodology for further study into motivations to serve among Civil War soldiers by focusing on cultural regions—areas where the people share a particular worldview or set of values—rather than the North or South as a whole. A stronger local focus will bring sharpness to these shadowy figures and help illuminate their reasons for serving.

The soldiers to be discussed in this thesis are white Kentuckians, who made up the majority of soldiers from Kentucky on both sides of the conflict.<sup>13</sup> Non-natives, such as Germans, make up too few of the recruits from Kentucky and the sources are unfortunately lacking. Because their reasons for enlisting are different than the native, they deserve their own work detailing their motivations, some of which has already been done by historian Joseph R. Reinhart. Likewise, the reasons blacks enlisted in the Union army are distinct from those of whites, and this topic is receiving the attention it deserves from others. Overall, the reasons immigrants and blacks had for serving triumphed those of a more regional nature. Hence, these groups are excluded for the purpose of this study.

The principle evidence for this thesis comes from the primary sources produced by soldiers themselves: letters, diaries, journals, and, in some few cases, reminiscences from years after the war.<sup>14</sup> Sources from other family members will be used as well.

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<sup>13</sup> The reason for this selection was to focus on Kentucky soldiers that shared the same worldview as closely as possible, typically those born and raised, or at least majority-raised, in Kentucky.

<sup>14</sup> The primary source material in this thesis was found within publish primary sources, extracted from secondary sources, and in the archives of the Filson Historical Society of Louisville, Kentucky, and in the Kentucky Historical Society of Frankfort, Kentucky. Given time constraints and the limited scope provide in a master's essay, the primary

Numerous secondary sources will also be used to provide an interpretative framework on larger issues of which a single soldier did not have a full view or write down for posterity. The primary focus of this thesis, as it fits with the purpose of the thesis, is the differences that Kentucky soldiers had compared to those from other regions. While some similarities will be discussed, it is the differences that are of special interest in this thesis.

While the structure for this essay was planned before reading McPherson's works, this thesis was influenced by the organization and interpretation in McPherson's *Cause and Comrades*. Because the words of Civil War soldiers reflected genuine beliefs, they will be categorized and interpretations will be built upon them. Like McPherson, the words of pro-Southern Kentuckians will be treated with greater care because of the use and prevalence of Southern "code words" in their written records. Southern soldiers often describe themselves as defending Southern liberties, institutions, and its way of life. But, as McPherson and other historians have noted, these soldiers were really defending the existence of slavery in the South. This thesis pays attention to the role played by slavery and its defense in the soldier motivations of pro-Confederate Kentuckians, something that has not yet been done well. Much of the interpretation in this thesis agrees with McPherson's interpretation that ideology, especially in the highly-volatile border states like Kentucky, played the greatest role in compelling men to enlist in either army. This thesis also demonstrates that the vast majority of Kentucky soldiers did not

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source material presented in this thesis only represents a subset of all available sources from Kentucky Civil War soldiers, with much more available in archives outside of Kentucky, such as at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and at the National Archives in Washington, DC. For this project, though, this sample of letters, diaries, journals, etc., seems approximately large enough for interpretative work.

become disillusioned during the war, but that their ideology played a greater role in keeping them in the service.

Borrowing on the work of John A. Lynn, historian of the armies of the French Revolution, McPherson notes three different kinds of soldier motivation: initial motivation, sustaining motivation, and combat motivation. Initial motivation explains why men decided to enlist, sustaining motivation shows why men continued to serve in the army and not desert, and combat motivation demonstrates why men fought in battle rather than shirk. Because the nature of this thesis is to seek regional differences in soldier motivation, combat motivation will not be treated because regions have little to do with that type of motivation. Instead, initial and sustaining motivations will be the subject because those two motivations are dependent upon the soldier's worldview and attitudes which are dependent upon the region's culture and social norms from which he came. By studying these two motivations, the differences between soldiers from different regions of the United States will be illuminated.

Chapter Two, "More Necessary Than Evil: The Rejection of Emancipation," explores the development of antislavery ideology among elite Kentuckians from the 1790s to the 1850s. The antislavery ideas of David Rice, Robert J. Breckenridge, Cassius M. Clay, and others are covered, as well as the different forms antislavery thought took in Kentucky, such as colonization, gradual emancipation, and Clay's economic imperative. Most importantly, the mindset of the ordinary white Kentuckians will be explored in detail to show why antislavery failed to find support among common Kentucky voters, who rejected antislavery ideas at the polls three times over the course of the antebellum period. Kentucky was one of the few slave states with serious antislavery thought, but



the historiography has overstated its popularity and influence within the state, suggesting that Kentuckians possessed less than complete support for slavery. Antislavery thought moved primarily in elite circles and did not significantly influence the common Kentuckian. This chapter informs the following two because it shows how important and necessary white Kentuckians believed the institution of slavery was for the good of the commonwealth, despite the prevalence of antislavery thought in the state. It also sets up the idea that slavery played an important role in the initial and sustaining motivations of white Kentuckians on both sides of the conflict. Because the federal government abolished slavery during the course of the war, this influence of slavery on soldier motivation is especially pronounced on the Union side of the conflict. By understanding the views of antebellum Kentuckians, who later became soldiers, on the institution of slavery, much of their motivation to serve becomes comprehensible.

Chapter Three, “For Union, For Slavery: Kentucky’s Union Civil War Soldiers,” explores the initial and sustaining motivations for Kentuckians who enlisted in the Union army. This chapter will analyze where Kentucky Union soldiers came from within the state followed by a categorization of the various reasons to enlist and serve given by Union Kentucky soldiers in their letters, diaries, and journals. It will then explore the two greatest tests on Kentucky Union motivation: the Emancipation Proclamation and the mustering and arming of black soldiers. Both events challenged the worldview of the Kentuckians in blue as it attacked their beliefs in the rightness and necessity of slavery and their views on race. Though unpopular with Union troops at first, the majority of Northern troops came to accept and embrace these two war measures; Kentuckians, by and large, did not. The election of 1864 and reenlistment will also be examined to show

how other Northern soldiers got over those two unpopular actions, but Kentuckians never did because of their commitment to slavery. However, despite the deep dissatisfaction most Kentuckians held against the federal government's redefining of the war's aims and measures, the vast majority of Kentucky soldiers continued to serve in the Union army and did not desert.

Chapter Four, "For Confederate, For Slavery: Kentucky's Confederate Civil War Soldiers," explores the initial and sustaining motivations for Kentuckians who enlisted in the Confederate army. First, the chapter examines the various reasons why Kentuckians donned the butternut uniform despite the state not seceding. Because Kentucky's government made joining the Confederate army illegal, these men gave up almost everything to do what they thought right. The chapter then explores how the zeal to join the Confederacy army dissipated after the initial rush to join by examining the Confederate invasion of Kentucky in 1862 because it demonstrates at an early date how the desire to enlist in the Confederate army had weakened. Additionally, the differentiation between Confederate Kentuckians and those from other states are made as well. Because of the differences between Kentucky and other Southern states, soldiers from Kentucky had several idiosyncrasies that made them distinct from the rest of the Confederate army, such as their difficulties in their enlistment and their isolation from the state of their origin, which will be explored in this chapter.

Thus, this thesis suggests slavery played a central role in the soldier motivation of Kentucky soldiers in both armies. Kentucky Union soldiers found the ending of slavery during the war a difficult point to accept and affected their motivation to serve in a negative but ultimately not destructive way. Many Kentucky Confederate soldiers

enlisted to defend the institution of slavery in the state because they considered it right and necessary for the commonwealth. Slavery was not the only reason that many Union soldiers found service distasteful or the reason why many pro-Southern Kentuckians enlisted, but it is a significant influence that has not been well documented by the scant literature on the Kentucky soldiers. To understand the motivations of Kentucky soldiers to enlist and serve, the role of slavery has to be paramount in that discussion.

## CHAPTER II

### MORE NECESSARY THAN EVIL: THE REJECTION OF EMANCIPATION

Slavery defined Antebellum Kentucky from the days of its settlement to the Civil War. However, unlike the states of the Deep South, white Kentuckians did not always perceive slavery as a permanent feature of the state. From the adoption of the first state constitution in 1792, white Kentuckians debated the positives and negatives of the institution, developing an antislavery camp and a pro-slavery camp. However, the two sides of the slave question were not of equal influence, though the historiography has paid excessive attention to antislavery thought and advocates. Over time, the appeal of antislavery among white Kentuckians waned as it became clear that slavery could not be ended without serious economic and legal repercussions and because the desire for conservatism became more pronounced as national agitation increased over the question of slavery. Antislavery advocates also failed to persuade Kentucky slaveholders that emancipation was in their best interest as well as the state's. Whether they understood slavery as a positive good or more necessary than evil, by the 1850s most Kentuckians believed slavery constituted an essential institution in the state that they could not abolish but needed to defend.

The first important antislavery leader in Kentucky was David Rice, a Presbyterian minister from Virginia. Kentucky voters elected Rice to the constitutional convention of 1792, where he delivered his speech, "Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good

Policy,” which defined the arguments of the antislavery movement in Kentucky for years.<sup>1</sup> Slavery, Rice argued, was an injustice to blacks, but the institution also harmed whites. “When we plead for slavery,” he announced, “we plead for the disgrace and ruin of our own nature.”<sup>2</sup> Because of the injustices they suffered, slaves lived in a perpetual state of war and insurrection against their masters and the society that allowed the institution to survive. If slavery continued in Kentucky, Rice maintained, a permanently disgruntled population would reside within the state and threaten servile insurrection.<sup>3</sup> Slavery also degraded the morality and industry of whites. The institution encouraged “idleness; and idleness is the nurse of vice,” and it discouraged industry, which was tainted by association with slavery and blacks.<sup>4</sup> Rice also argued, perhaps hyperbolically but not without logic, that if a black man could be enslaved, nothing prevented a white man from taking another white man as a slave.<sup>5</sup>

After addressing the necessity of ending slavery, Rice attacked the three main objections to emancipation. First, he denied that ending slavery destroyed property; rather, emancipation returned the property of the slave to its rightful owner, the slave himself. Second, Rice attacked biblical defenses of slavery by arguing that if readers placed ostensibly pro-slavery verses in their historical context, they either argued against slavery as a perpetual institution or maintained that it should be done away with as quickly as possible. As Rice noted, slavery violated “that excellent precept laid down by

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<sup>1</sup> Lowell Hayes Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978), 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> David Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy, Proved by a Speech, Delivered in the Convention, Held at Danville, Kentucky* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1812), 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

the Divine Author of the Christian institution, viz. *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them.*"<sup>6</sup> This rule made it difficult to argue that the Bible endorsed slavery. Last, Rice turned to the "necessary evil" argument, which recognized slavery as an evil, but worried that its end would result in greater problems. Rice did not try to minimize the dangers of emancipation, but he believed that possible consequences should not stop emancipation in Kentucky. The year 1792, he argued, was the time to abolish the institution with the least difficulty and possible danger; waiting would only make the task worse.<sup>7</sup>

Rice's words fell on deaf ears. The majority of delegates at the 1792 Constitution Convention supported slavery and Rice's arguments failed to persuade them otherwise. The Constitution of 1792 allowed slaveholders to keep their slave property and prevented the legislature from emancipating their slaves without compensation, making the goal of ending slavery more difficult.<sup>8</sup> Despite the initial setback, antislavery proponents continued to advocate emancipation. In 1799, Kentuckians voted to call another state constitutional convention because of the unpopularity of the 1792 Constitution. Many slaveholders believed that the state legislature's ability to emancipate their slaves with compensation posed a threat to their property rights. The 1799 Constitutional Convention was the first test of whether Rice's words and arguments had any effect on the views of white Kentuckians. The vote to elect delegates to the convention reveals that they did not. Historian Lowell H. Harrison argues that the small number of antislavery delegates elected reflected the better organized campaigns of the pro-slavery

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<sup>6</sup> Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy*, 9-11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 20-21.

camp.<sup>9</sup> Emancipationists failed at the polls because their arguments failed to appeal to white Kentuckians. Though Rice's speech at the 1792 Constitutional Convention argued for emancipation, he provided no plan for dealing with the problems arising from emancipation. Rice's failure to address what most white Kentuckians perceived as the greatest danger of emancipation did not sit well with Kentucky voters, who wanted solutions to the problems they believed would occur if slavery ended.

The attitudes of white Kentuckians shaped their rejection of emancipation. Like most white Americans, Kentuckians believed blacks inferior to whites and viewed slavery as the natural outgrowth of that inferiority.<sup>10</sup> Many Kentuckians believed that this inferiority was a natural difference between the two races, but some antislavery advocates believed that black inferiority resulted from bondage, which had perpetuated ignorance and vice among the black population.<sup>11</sup> Both points of view reinforced the belief among Kentuckians that slaves were ill-prepared for freedom either forever or far into the future.<sup>12</sup> Most white Americans also believed that biracial social harmony was impossible. Borne of their experience with Native Americans and blacks, and from examples in Western history, most white Kentuckians did not believe two races could coexist in political, economic, or social equality.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the institution of slavery represented the best and safest method to control the black population of Kentucky.

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<sup>9</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy McKnight Russell, "Neutrality and Ideological Conflict in Kentucky during the First Year of the American Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., The University of New Mexico, 1989), 111-15.

<sup>11</sup> Harold Donald Tallant, *Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 76.

<sup>12</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 28.

Abolishing slavery would also unleash what white Kentuckians feared most: servile insurrection. Like slaveholders throughout the South, Kentuckians worried about the prospect of slave revolt. The bloody slave uprisings in Santo Domingo shaped the deliberations of the 1799 Constitutional Convention, just as the Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey revolts did in the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The proximity of Kentucky to the Ohio River and the free North also made Kentuckians nervous about slave escapes. In contrast to the Deep South, rebellious slaves had a good chance to make their way north to freedom and away from southern authorities, encouraging slave unrest. Writing to his brother in 1847, Archibald King of Franklin County wanted to establish a new home near the Ohio River, but was “fearful My negroes would Trouble me.”<sup>15</sup> Emancipation would also increase the free black population of Kentucky, which white Kentuckians maligned as troublemakers and ne’er-do-wells. These racist ideas led voting Kentuckians to reject Rice’s call for emancipation, and the 1799 Constitution protected slavery.

For antislavery to prevail and gain favor among a majority of white Kentuckians, it had to lay out a scheme for emancipation that satisfied the constitutional requirement to provide proper compensation to slaveholders and find a way to remove freed blacks from the state. Whites believed that if free blacks were not removed, they would find themselves unable to advance in a white-dominated society and would “sink into vice, burst into rebellion, or both.”<sup>16</sup> Colonization, which called for the transportation of free blacks to Africa after slaveholders emancipated their slaves, fit these two requirements

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<sup>14</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Archibald King to Jefferson V. King, October 1847, King Family Papers, Folder 10, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY [hereafter cited FHS].

<sup>16</sup> Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 13.



well. It became a popular position and delusion among antislavery proponents in Kentucky after the ratification of the 1799 Constitution.<sup>17</sup> The popularity of colonization increased across the Upper South after the 1831 Nat Turner's Rebellion, which further demonstrated to Kentuckians the dangers of emancipation without removal.<sup>18</sup>

The colonization movement in Kentucky consisted of both antislavery and proslavery advocates.<sup>19</sup> While all colonizationists agreed that free blacks should be removed from the state, they disagreed on why it was necessary.<sup>20</sup> Moderate antislavery advocates such as Robert Jefferson Breckinridge, a Presbyterian minister, believed that the removal of free blacks from the state would encourage manumissions among slaveholders in Kentucky, gradually leading to a completely white Kentucky.<sup>21</sup> Proslavery colonizationists, such as Robert Wickliffe, believed the only purpose of colonization was to remove free blacks from the state thereby helping to protect the institution of slavery from dangerous subversives. Eventually, Wickliffe and other slaveholders rejected colonization because they saw it as an antislavery movement.<sup>22</sup>

Breckinridge became one of the leading spokesmen for antislavery colonization during the 1830s and 1840s. Slavery, Breckinridge argued, was an injustice to blacks and injurious to whites. Removing blacks from the state and replacing slave with free labor would benefit whites and ensure a "hardy, happy, and laborious yeomanry."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>20</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Luke Harlow, "Religion, Race, and Robert J. Breckinridge: The Ideology of an Antislavery Slaveholder, 1830 – 1860," *Ohio Valley History* 6 (Fall 2006): 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 34.

<sup>23</sup> Robert J. Breckinridge, *Hints on Slavery* (Lexington, KY: n.p., 1843), 5-8, quoted in Harlow, "Religion, Race, and Robert J. Breckinridge," 7.

Colonization would also solve Kentucky's intractable race problem and create a stable and prosperous society.<sup>24</sup>

A lack of funds and the unwillingness of blacks to go to Africa help explain the failure of colonization in Kentucky and the nation. But as historian Harold Tallant points out, colonization also failed because colonizationist societies never gained much support from Kentuckians, though the idea remained popular. As Tallant notes,

“[c]olonizationism in Kentucky was less a unified movement represented by organized colonization societies than it was an imperative shared by a wide range of Kentuckians: the belief that if blacks were to be free, they should be removed from the state.”<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, the imperative was insufficient to motivate white Kentuckians into active participation in the antislavery cause. Colonizationist ideology allowed two courses of action: blacks could be freed and removed from the state or they could remain in bondage. The majority of Kentuckians believed in colonization ideology but found it far easier to pay lip-service to the idea and allow slavery to continue. As historian James C. Klotter notes, slavery was “ingrained and convenient.”<sup>26</sup>

Another problem with colonization lay in its leadership. Colonizationist leaders were a conservative lot, concerned with the order and stability of society. Despite their progressive ideas, colonization leaders' conservatism resulted in a paralysis of action.<sup>27</sup> Ending slavery in Kentucky was a large step no matter how gradually it took place. The conservatism of its leadership dampened the movement's energy. As Tallant argues,

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<sup>24</sup> Harlow, “Religion, Race, and Robert J. Breckinridge,” 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 28-30.

<sup>26</sup> James C. Klotter, *The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760 – 1981* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 63, quoted in Harlow, “Religion, Race, and Breckinridge,” 3.

<sup>27</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 61-62.

colonizationists “were trapped by the dilemma of conservative reform: the problem of eliminating one source of disorder without creating another one in the process.”<sup>28</sup>

Because conservatives dominated the antislavery movement in Kentucky throughout the 1830s and 1840s, antislavery thought had a difficult time gaining traction and translating into action.

Indeed, antislavery colonizationists grew even more complacent when they scored their first legislative success, the Non-Importation Law of 1833.<sup>29</sup> A major impetus for the passage of the law was the fear generated by the Nat Turner Rebellion and the desire to decrease the number of black entering the state.<sup>30</sup> From the antislavery perspective, the law appeared to be a step toward ending slavery in Kentucky as it promised to decrease the numbers of blacks within the state to a more manageable level, increasing the feasibility and effectiveness of colonization. Some proslavery Kentuckians also favored the law because it restricted supply and increased the value of the slaves they owned.<sup>31</sup> Overall, the law of 1833 had a debatable effect on the black population of the state.<sup>32</sup> As Tallant notes, it forced colonizationists to defend their legislative victory against proslavery advocates who deemed the law an unacceptable antislavery measure. Colonizationists also grew content and complacent with the victory, believing that time was on their side and they could put off winning broader public support to the future.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 62.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

<sup>30</sup> Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831 – 1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 130.

<sup>31</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 95-96.

<sup>32</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 97.

During the 1830s and 1840s, a few Kentuckians began advocating more radical antislavery ideas, rejecting colonization. James G. Birney of Danville began his antislavery career as a colonizationist advocate in 1826, but over time he became convinced that colonization could never end slavery. In 1833, he left the American Colonization Society and began to push for gradual emancipation in Kentucky. Influenced by northern abolitionists and his growing disenchantment with gradual emancipation, Birney embraced immediate abolition.<sup>34</sup> In correspondence with the Society of Friends, Birney explained why he thought colonization was a failure:

It has been my opinion, from the best and most impartial observation I could make, that the principles, measures, and doctrines entertained, pursued and inculcated by the advocates of “Colonization,” so far from having any “visible influence upon the system of slavery” for its removal, have rather tended to confirm and strengthen it. These propositions,—that slavery may be innocently continued till the slaves can be removed and comfortably provided for in Africa—the danger to the Colony, of removing many to it very soon—its slow growth, the great comparative increase of the slave population—have removed each particular slaveholder’s duty so far in advance of him, that in the distant haze, it becomes scarcely a discernable point. Besides this, it has tended in a great degree, as I believe, to raise up and strengthen prejudice against the free colored people of our country. The whites who are under the influence of this prejudice think, the free colored people ought to remove from the country of their birth—because *they* (the whites) wish it, and not because it is a desirable thing to *those who are called upon to act*.<sup>35</sup>

Wherever he spoke to crowds in Kentucky, Birney faced condemnation for his beliefs. When he decided to publish the *Philanthropist*, an abolitionist newspaper, in Danville, public pressure forced him to leave the state.<sup>36</sup> Birney’s ideas caused fireworks because white Kentuckians believed immediate abolition threatened servile insurrection.

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<sup>34</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 39-43.

<sup>35</sup> James G. Birney, *Correspondence between James G. Birney, of Kentucky, and Several Individuals of the Society of Friends* (Haverhill, MA: Essex Gazette Office, 1835), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 43-45.

Beginning in the 1830s, Kentuckians grew increasingly intolerant of abolition thought like that espoused by Birney; only moderate antislavery ideas, such as by colonization, received toleration in the state.

Birney's influence in Kentucky did not last, but Cassius M. Clay of Madison County dominated antislavery efforts in Kentucky during the 1840s. Unlike Breckinridge and other proponents of colonization whose racism and social conservatism defined their antislavery views, Clay considered the problem of slavery in economic terms. Clay believed that slavery should end because of the negative impact it had on Kentucky's economy. Clay argued that non-slaveholders, who lacked the economic protection slave ownership provided, felt the brunt of the poor economy. Unconcerned with racial harmony, Clay did not see colonization as necessary to end slavery and rejected it if it proved a hindrance to emancipation. Slavery retarded the growth of Kentucky's economy. The only way to prevent the state from languishing economically, Clay argued, was to end the institution of slavery as soon as possible. Kentucky could wait no longer to shake off the shackles of slavery.<sup>37</sup>

Clay was not an abolitionist, but he could never shake off the accusation.<sup>38</sup> Though he advocated gradual emancipation, his insistence that emancipation not be delayed into the future made him seem like an immediatist to more moderate Kentuckians. Clay was also well known for the intemperate public defense of his views, which aligned him closer to the rabid abolitionists of the North than the conservative colonizationists of Kentucky. In 1845, in Lexington, Clay began the *True American*, an antislavery newspaper. The newspaper contained many provocative articles that attacked

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<sup>37</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 116-121.

<sup>38</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 50.

slaveholders and called for emancipation sooner rather than later. Lexington officials and citizens soon had enough and forcibly removed Clay's press from the city and shipped it to Cincinnati. Clay continued to edit the *True American* from Lexington, though few in Lexington listened to what he had to say. However, Clay's message received a hearing among white workers in Louisville and other urban areas such as Newport and Covington.<sup>39</sup> Clay also called for a new constitutional convention to address the question of slavery in the state.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1840s and 1850s, some Kentuckians hoped that slavery would end in the state. Thomas Waring of Green County believed that "[a] large portion, if not a majority of the people of Ky will vote for a convention to change our state constitution so as to Relieve us *entirely* of *Slavery* as soon it may be practicable."<sup>41</sup> In 1849, Joseph F. Hedges of Bath County wrote to his brother and sister in a more pessimistic tone. "The Slavery question," he noted, "is very much agitated but I am feareful that Kentucky will not be extricated from that greate evil wich has ever bin a stumblingblock in hur way to wealth and true liberty and happiness."<sup>42</sup>

In 1847 and 1848, a majority of Kentuckians voted in favor of a new constitutional convention. Slavery was not the main issue that prompted the calls for a new constitution, but it became the most prominent subject.<sup>43</sup> Jinnie Pindell told her brother in 1848 that "[t]he Convention and Gradual Emancipation questions seem to be

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<sup>39</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 121-32.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Waring to D. W. Murphy, 4 December 1845, Brush Creek, Green County, Kentucky. Thomas Waring Letter, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky [hereafter cited KHS].

<sup>42</sup> Joseph F. Hedges to Brother and Sister, 29 June 1849, n.p., Hedges Family Letters, KHS.

<sup>43</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 136-37.

the most engrossing among the People of Kentucky.” She added that “[m]any of the finest men of Ky are for Emancipation.”<sup>44</sup> Both sides, proslavery and antislavery, established political organizations, newspapers, county conventions, and campaigned on behalf of their respective positions. Violence often attended the debates. In Paducah, Judge James Campbell killed his rival, Benedict Austin. Several of Squire Turner’s sons attacked Cassius Clay, leaving one son, Cyrus Turner, dead, and Clay critically injured. Despite their efforts, however, no emancipationist candidate was elected to the convention.<sup>45</sup>

White Kentuckians rejected the arguments of emancipationists for a variety of reasons. Cassius Clay’s ideas soured many Kentuckians on emancipation. Most Kentuckians believed Clay was too willing to rush ahead to free the slaves without providing a remedy to deal with the free black population. In his repudiation of colonization, Clay favored allowing free blacks to remain within the state, a possibility white Kentuckians rejected. Before a majority of white Kentuckians accepted emancipation, a plausible solution to the racial problem had to be found. Running pell-mell into emancipation, as Clay argued, was unacceptable to white Kentuckians.

Many Kentuckians also realized that colonization was no longer a viable option to solve the state’s racial problem. Removing the state’s slave population required far more resources than state officials could muster. In 1790, when Rice first preached antislavery ideas, Kentucky contained only 11,830 slaves. By 1820 and 1830, when support for

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<sup>44</sup> Jinnie Pindell to Brother [Bodley], 14 January 1848, Lexington, Bodley Family Papers, FHS.

<sup>45</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 56-58. Tallant claims that two emancipationist candidates were elected as delegates to the convention, while Harrison claims none. Either way, emancipationists were overwhelmingly rejected by white Kentuckians. Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 149.

colonization reached its zenith, 126,732 and 165,213 slaves resided within Kentucky's borders, respectively. At the time of the 1850 constitutional convention, 210,981 slaves needed to be transported out of the state.<sup>46</sup> By the 1840s, many Kentuckians recognized that colonization could not work. By the time of the constitutional convention, voters could see for themselves that colonization had failed. Indeed, between 1829 and 1861, the Kentucky Colonization Society, sent only 658 blacks out of the state.<sup>47</sup> The failure of the colonization societies was reflected in the state's large free black population and contributed to growing skepticism of colonization. That left only two options: allow slavery to continue or end slavery, allow free blacks to remain in the state, and suffer the consequences. The choice was easy for the vast majority of white Kentuckians.

Kentuckians also rejected emancipation because of a conservative reaction to northern abolitionism. As northern radicals became more vitriolic in their attacks on slavery in the 1830s and 1840s, Kentuckians who favored emancipation felt rushed into taking the momentous and possibly dangerous first step in ending slavery. Colonization promised emancipation in the far future; Kentuckians were willing to wait for that day and not rush the process. Northern abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, pressured white slaveholders to embrace immediate abolition, which undermined support for antislavery in the state. By pushing Kentucky forward against its will, abolitionists heightened Kentuckians' conservatism. Thomas Waring claimed that the majority of voters Kentuckians supported emancipation, but he also decried abolitionists' interference in the affairs of Kentucky:

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<sup>46</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. Tallant claims that the Kentucky Colonization Society transported 661 blacks to Africa. Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 29.



And if our Northern friends will only be quiet in less than 2 years this will be done!! mark what I say—We are not proslavery men in Ky, nothing of it. We only oppose those who come among us to light the torch of the Incendiary, & to whet the assassin's Knife under the [purchase?] of enlightening us on the subject of Slavery, which we do not need and to which Ky will *never submit*. All we ask & all we need, is to let us think & act for ourselves, And I know the North will see Ky make a move that will *astonish* both Sides of Mason & Dixon's line! So confident am I of the truth of what I say, that, if I could, I would beg upon my knees every man who desires this thing to hold his peace, Yea to stand still & see the salvation [of?] the Slave of Ky—But my D[ea]r. Dr. so long as the friends of Emancipation pursue the course which they *have pursued* towards the South[,] Ky will do nothing and ourselves & our slaves will remain just as we have been[.] I pray God to give both North & South wisdom, prudence, & forbearance towards each other upon this & every subject. Amen.<sup>48</sup>

What Waring predicted came true. Northern abolitionists hounded Kentuckians and so radicalized the issue of slavery that conservative impulses overcame the emancipationist feelings that some antislavery Kentuckians had. By the late 1840s, most white Kentuckians sought means to protect slavery. Writing after the August 1845 seizure of Clay's press, an anonymous author described the conservative reaction of Kentuckians to mounting abolitionist pressure:

The day that was to dawn upon Kentucky as a free state, has been anticipated; and too great haste to usher in that day has deferred its dawns. It was never more true than now, that "action and re-action are as inseparable from the progress of society as of nature," and this action to a change of State views and State policy has been mostly a powerful, if not a fatal re-action. Kentucky is far from being ripe for the abolishment of slavery. Though the institution be generally regarded as a civil and political evil, affecting society in all its ramifications, as prejudicial to morals and retarding our growth, yet it is too intimately incorporated with and clings too closely to the body politic to be easily shaken off. If the quiet and calm and candid discussion of the subject, not intemperate

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Waring to D. W. Murphy, 4 December 1845, Brush Creek, Green County, Kentucky, Thomas Waring Letters, KHS.

philippian [philippic] and harsh upbraiding language, will not gradually release its hold upon us, sudden and violent means never can.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Emancipationist Essay, 2 September 1845, FHS. Although the *True American* advocated gradual, rather than immediate, emancipation, the newspaper was considered unacceptable in pro-slavery Lexington. Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 50-51. The whole of this essay is worth quoting at length: We cannot but deplore—and the thinking patriot every where will agree with me—the unfortunate excitement growing out of the late difficulties at Lexington. . . . The feeling in Kentucky,—the universal feeling, alike partaken of by slaveholders and non-slaveholders,—is opposed to slavery. It does not partake of the fanaticism of the North, and yet is not free from the prejudices of the South. It is honest, politic, conservative feeling,—a feeling that for years has grown and spread and strengthened, up to the excitement growing out of the Lexington affair.

. . . The rabid anti-slavery—as impudent and short-sighted as they are rabid—papers of Ohio and some other of the free States, have violently assailed the motives and condemned the conduct of the actors at Lexington, and their fanatical sentiment have found echo in the hearts of still more fanatical readers. There are fruits, legitimate fruits, of this unhappy excitement.

The inference, then, is too plain to be denied. The day that was to dawn upon Kentucky as a free state, has been anticipated; and too great haste to usher in that day has deferred its dawns. It was never more true than now, that “action and re-action are as inseparable from the progress of society as of nature,” and this action to a change of State views and State policy has been mostly a powerful, if not a fatal re-action. Kentucky is far from being ripe for the abolishment of slavery. Though the institution be generally regarded as a civil and political evil, affecting society in all its ramifications, as prejudicial to morals and retarding our growth, yet it is too intimately incorporated with and clings too closely to the body politic to be easily shaken off. If the quiet and calm and candid discussion of the subject, not intemperate philippian [philippic] and harsh upbraiding language, will not gradually release its hold upon us, sudden and violent means never can.

Our advice then, is, to our contemporaries in Kentucky, to treat with silent contempt the animadversions of the milder, and the ravings of the more rabid portion of the Northern press. It is *our* interests that are [at] stake. Let them speculate, and recommend, and give praise or give blame; but let *us* hear it all only as the idle wind that passeth by and is gone. They cannot harm us, and in this cause are not of us, and are powerless to do us injury, if we heed them not. Our situation, as a border State, is one of tremendous responsibility,—and while we will not suffer foreign interference, we should be calm and considerate in all our movement at home. Agitation, such as that from which we are slowly emerging, can do us no good, and has already done positive harm. The time is not yet, but too great eagerness can only delay its coming. Ephraim is *not* joined to his idols, that all[?] should be let alone, but a new-boon[?] intemperate zeal on our part may cement that connection beyond any power, short of revolution to sever it.

Kentuckians were well-aware that the slavery question had become polarized between North and South and they grasped at the institution of slavery which they believed represented the only means to stave off race war.

The activities of abolitionists in and near Kentucky also turned many Kentuckians away from antislavery. Entering the state across the Ohio River, abolitionists, such as Calvin Fairbank and Delia Webster of Vermont, abducted slaves, angering slaveholders and non-slaveholders who viewed them as “despicable characters” who had no regard for Kentucky law or property.<sup>50</sup> Northern abolitionists also helped fugitive slaves make their way to freedom and complicated their capture, infuriating Kentuckians trying to recover their property.<sup>51</sup> Many abolitionists, such as John G. Fee, entered the state with the intention of rousing antislavery feeling and causing “agitation” to effect emancipation.<sup>52</sup> They also encouraged the settlement of Northerners in the state to overturn the institution and replace it with free labor. Fee asked, in January 1857, “Will not the same principle of action which prompts free state men to go to Kansas to *exclude* slavery, lead others to come to Kentucky to help *abolish* slavery?”<sup>53</sup> In addition, northern states often failed to respect slaveholders’ property rights or aid in the recovery of fugitive slaves leading to greater ill-will against the North and antislavery.<sup>54</sup>

Economic interest also played an important role in preserving slavery. While historians have argued slavery was not as economically viable in Kentucky as in the Deep South, the institution was an important economic system for the state. It contributed

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<sup>50</sup> Wallace B. Turner, “Abolitionism in Kentucky,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 69 (October 1971): 325-29.

<sup>51</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 87.

<sup>52</sup> Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South*, 94.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-123.

<sup>54</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 94.

substantially to the state's economy. Slaves produced cotton in southwest Kentucky and hemp in the Bluegrass region, both considered too laborious to attract white workers.<sup>55</sup> Because Kentucky had few large plantations, slave ownership was broadly distributed with a large middling population of owners rather than a few elite planters as was common in the Deep South.<sup>56</sup> In 1850, only Virginia and Georgia had more slaveholders than Kentucky and only Missouri, with 4.5 slaves per holder, averaged fewer slaves per slaveholder than Kentucky, with 5.4 slaves per holder.<sup>57</sup> Hence, more Kentuckians had a direct economic stake in the institution than in many other states and that influenced their vote. Slavery also proved resilient as slaveholders employed slaves in non-agricultural pursuits. Slaveholders also rented their slaves, increasing the number of Kentuckians who had a direct interest in slavery, or sold them through the interstate slave trade, which generated large amounts of capital for developing industry. In the southeastern mountain counties, site of the worst farming land in Kentucky, slaveholders put slaves to work in non-agricultural industries, such as timbering, mining, and smelting. Since movement was difficult in the mountains, slaves were often charged with moving goods to market as well, whether on river, rail, or foot.<sup>58</sup> Appalachian slaveholders also found the slave trade a lucrative enterprise and, as historian James B. Murphy argues, "[t]he mountains of Kentucky were singular in the decline of slavery, but the decline seems not to have

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<sup>55</sup> Ronald Ray Alexander, "Central Kentucky during the Civil War, 1861 – 1865" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1976), 5-12.

<sup>56</sup> Gary R. Matthews, "Beleaguered Loyalties: Kentucky Unionism," in *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee*, ed. Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickinson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 16-17.

<sup>57</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 2-3.

<sup>58</sup> Brian Dallas McKnight, *Contested Borderlands: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 17-19.

reflected antislavery sentiment.”<sup>59</sup> Although antislavery proponents liked to argue that slavery retarded the economic growth of the state and that slavery was an outdated labor system, such arguments applied to the state rather than to individuals and, when given the choice, individuals favored their economic wellbeing. Kentuckians’ economic interests in slavery contributed to the defeat of emancipation in 1850.

The institution of slavery also had the power of tradition in antebellum Kentucky. As Tallant argues, a few Kentuckians believed that slavery was wrong because “it violated the natural rights of humans,” but that they did not feel guilty owing slaves because the institution provided some good for the state, aiding in the development of a planter class and helping control the state’s black population. Instead of feeling morally accountable, they felt “discomfort or anxiety by being caught between the proverbial rock and hard place.”<sup>60</sup> White Kentuckians found it easier to allow slavery to continue than to emancipate the slaves, a costly and possibly dangerous enterprise. As Leeland Hathaway, later a captain in the Confederate Army, noted years after the Civil War: “Slavery came to Kentucky as heritage and Kentuckians accepted and held to it as part of their birth right. The negro came with our Virginia blood and we would as soon have questioned our right to one as to the other—We no more thought of wrong doing in holding and using slaves than in eating our hog and hominy or in breathing the air which swept across the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenies—we owned the negro.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> James B. Murphy, “Slavery and Freedom in Appalachia: Kentucky as a Demographic Case Study,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 80 (April 1982), 160-61.

<sup>60</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 12-13.

<sup>61</sup> Leeland Hathaway, “Civil War Reminiscences of Leeland Hathaway, 1893-94,” Leeland Hathaway Papers, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collections, quoted in Adrian Schultze Buser Willett, “Our House was Divided: Kentucky Women and the Civil War,” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2008), 69.

Slavery also had a profound influence on the social structure of the state. As historian Walter Johnson argues in *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, slavery was the foundation of the antebellum South. Southerners related to each other in terms of slave ownership; who owned more and who was the better slaveholder. A slaveholder's honor was wrapped up in his ability to control his slaves and run a plantation.<sup>62</sup> The acquisition of additional slaves was always forefront in the mind of the slaveholder and the means to buy slaves and move up the social ladder in that of the non-slaveholder. For slaveholders, slaves provided the basis of their elite status; slaves were a status symbol in the antebellum South. Losing their slaves threatened slaveholders' elite status, dropping them into the ranks of the middling and poor.<sup>63</sup> A leading Kentucky antislavery advocate, Joseph Underwood maintained that slaveholders who emancipated their slaves could no longer "associate upon terms of equality, with their former slaveholding associates, who retain[ed] their slaves."<sup>64</sup> Non-slaveholders also had a social stake in institution, as the "herrenvolk democracy" thesis argues. The idea that every white, no matter how poor, was part of the master race while blacks were held in bondage was a powerful motivator for non-slaveholders to support the perpetuation of the institution of slavery. The institution also enabled non-slaveholders to obtain the greatest economic and social accomplishment of the antebellum South: a plantation worked by numerous slaves. Non-slaveholders did not hold planters in contempt for their wealth; slavery promised the possibility of social advancement, something antebellum Americans

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<sup>62</sup> Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 106.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-88.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph R. Underwood, *Address Delivered to the Colonization Society of Bowlinggreen, on the 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1832* (n.p., 1832), 23, quoted in Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 101.

treasured as a social good.<sup>65</sup> Non-slaveholders viewed slavery as the best means to future wealth and social standing.

Many Kentuckians also believed that blacks benefited from the institution of slavery. Writing to Elisha Barlett, a physician in Rhode Island, John C. Darby of Lexington argued that

. . . the people of the free states do not care half as much about the welfare of the Negro as the people of the slaves states do. They have not a moiety of the sympathy for them that we have. As to Negro slavery itself, it is a fact admitted by many of the most intelligent and distinguished among the abolitionists that since the earliest records of the human family, the best condition in which the black man has ever been found is that of servitude. . . . The main difficulty with southern slave holders (though the north may never believe them) is what to do with the slave so *his condition* may not be worsted. If the abolition of slavery in Kentucky would make it a populous and thriving state, compared to what it now is, fitted with busy workshops and manufactories, what would in the meantime have become of the slave. He must be removed somewhere either before the passage of an emancipation law, i.e. his removal must be provided for in that law, or he will be removed afterwards. The free states will not admit him as a free Negro. The south will only remove him as a slave. . . . In Maryland, in Virginia, in Kentucky, and Tennessee, we can do without the Negro; we would rather have white men to till our lands and to tend our flocks and herds. But the Negro go where the white man neither will work nor can work, in the rice, cotton and sugar fields. Let him follow the law of his nature.<sup>66</sup>

Catherine L. Bragg , a transplanted New Englander living in Kentucky, echoed Darby's comments about the necessity of keeping slavery for the benefit of blacks:

Caroline, . . . if you are an *abolitionist* keep it to yourself so long as you have a sister in a slave state that sees how it is & tells you better & tell Edward the same. It is the duty of the favored & enlightened sons & daughters of N. England instead of cruelly railing against the poor slaveholders, to remember them in their *prayers*—they are more to be pitied than the slaves . . . I have heard slaveholders say that they would

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<sup>65</sup> Timothy McKnight Russell, "Neutrality and Ideological Conflict in Kentucky during the First Year of the American Civil War," 123.

<sup>66</sup> John C. Darby to Elisha Bartlett, 19 August 1848, Lexington, John C. Darby Letter, FHS.

willingly do their own work if they could get rid of their negroes without injuring the negroes themselves besides endangering the country & I believe it . . . .”<sup>67</sup>

By 1850, the majority of white Kentuckians supported slavery opposed any effort to end the institution in the state.

The results of the 1850 Constitution Convention dashed the hopes of emancipationists in Kentucky. The 1850 Constitution entrenched slavery further into Kentucky law and society, giving slave property a special status and greater protections. The new constitution also required freed slaves to leave the state within a certain date of their emancipation and forbade free blacks from entering the state’s borders.<sup>68</sup> The new constitution also made it far more difficult for antislavery proponents to enact plans for emancipation. White Kentuckians viewed slavery as a permanent feature of the state. Moderate antislavery advocacy and ideals were extinguished after the 1850 Constitution was ratified by a large majority of voters.<sup>69</sup> Facing greater legal restrictions on their ideas and greater public animosity, many of the state’s moderate advocates of emancipation drifted away from their previous positions or left the state. Breckinridge moved from advocating colonization to attacking immediate abolitionists and defending some aspects of slavery.<sup>70</sup> Antislavery thought in Kentucky decreased in popularity after the adoption of the 1850 Constitution.

But antislavery did not die completely in Kentucky in 1850. Clay still campaigned for emancipation in Kentucky, even after 1850. In a speech delivered at

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<sup>67</sup> Catherine L. Bragg to Caroline C. Gould, 13 January 1841, Lexington, KY, Catherine L. Bragg Letters, FHS.

<sup>68</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 59.

<sup>69</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 157-60.

<sup>70</sup> Harlow, “Religion, Race, and Robert J. Breckinridge,” 18.



Lexington, Kentucky, on August 1, 1851, Clay argued that the slavery question in Kentucky was not permanently settled:

It is urged that the question of slavery and emancipation has been once considered, and decided against us, by the people of Kentucky: and therefore it is ‘factious,’ again, to reopen it. . . .

The objective when stripped of its casuistry, means simply that we are in a minority. Now when so many men, even of first distinction, are ready to float with the popular tide into office, I regard it as a subject of pride, that we stand firm in the advocacy of what we conceive lies at the basis of all prosperity and safety to the State.

But the allegation is untrue. The question of emancipation never has been fairly discussed before, or decided upon by, the people of this State. The forty men—who met in Frankfort in 1848, all slave-holders, but still professing to represent all parties in the State, interested in the convention movement,—declared that so far as they were concerned, the then relations of *slavery should not be disturbed*. And again when the legislature met in the winter of that year, a resolution was passed that *slavery ought not to be discussed*.<sup>71</sup>

But though Clay continued his antislavery work, he began to shift toward national politics as he grew convinced that Kentuckians would never consent to end slavery.<sup>72</sup>

The Kentucky Colonization Society also continued its work during the 1850s. While the new constitution banned in-state manumissions, it did not ban the KCS’s work.<sup>73</sup> At the 1852 annual meeting of the society, Judge William S. Bodley argued that the new constitution was not a setback to their work, stressing the singular purpose of the society: “the removal of the free colored people to Africa.” The society, Bodley contended, needed to reach out to slaveholders to achieve its aims. He reassured members that

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<sup>71</sup> Speech of C. M. Clay, at Lexington, KY, 1 August 1851, Rare Books, .328.7302 S742 no. 45, KHS.

<sup>72</sup> Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 161.

<sup>73</sup> Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 128.

colonization was still a useful enterprise, but that the new constitution forced the society to reorient its goals.<sup>74</sup>

The events of the 1850s reinforced Kentucky's choice to maintain slavery. The deepening sectional crisis of the 1850s spurred white Kentuckians to grasp at any institution like slavery that promised safety and security. John Brown 1859 effort to spark a slave revolt at Harper's Ferry also confirmed many Kentuckians' suspicions that antislavery thought posed a danger to whites and society in general.<sup>75</sup> Though antislavery advocates attempted to work in Kentucky—most notably John G. Fee—their ideas gained no traction among white Kentuckians.<sup>76</sup> By the 1850s, Kentuckians had accepted slavery and defended it as an institution necessary for the well being of the state. Whether Kentuckians would have accepted emancipation on any terms is difficult to assess. Was there a solution that would have been acceptable given the limits created by white racism? A solution was unlikely in 1792 and only became more unlikely as time passed. Ordinary Kentuckians came to believe in the necessity of slavery and would not part with the institution.

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<sup>74</sup> William S. Bodley, "Address of the Hon. William C. Bodley, before the Kentucky Colonization Society in the City of Frankfort, February 23, 1852," (Frankfort: A. G. Hodges & Co., 1852), 5, Rare Books, 815 K37 v.4 1830-1861 no. 6, KHS.

<sup>75</sup> Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 84-85.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-78.

## CHAPTER III

### FOR UNION, FOR SLAVERY: KENTUCKY'S UNION CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

Kentuckians chose to enlist and serve in the Union army for various reasons. Some enlisted for personal reasons, such as to find adventure, travel away from home, and experience the excitement of the battlefield. Most enlisted for ideological reasons; they wanted to punish the traitors of the South and of their own state while fighting for the preservation of the Union they treasured.<sup>1</sup> However, when President Abraham Lincoln and the federal government changed the Union war aims and policy to exclude the preservation of slavery, Union Kentucky soldiers became demoralized. Slavery made up the foundation of Kentucky's politics, economics, and social structure and it constituted the fundamental component of the Kentuckian's worldview. The Union war policies of emancipation and black enlistment challenged everything Kentuckians believed about proper race relations and the correct way to structure a society. Lincoln's policies threatened to thrust Kentuckians unwillingly into a new world devoid of all familiarity with the antebellum. The reaction of Union Kentucky soldiers to emancipation and black enlistment proved complex. However, though these policies cut against everything they believed in, the vast majority of Union Kentucky soldiers remained in the Union army because the preservation of the Union remained the primary

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<sup>1</sup> James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 91-92.

motivator for them. They felt isolated and disturbed at how the Union war effort changed, but they stayed and did not desert.

Kentuckians who donned the blue Union uniform during the Civil War came from all across the state, though not equally. In *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, E. Merton Coulter argues that sentiment to either the Union or the Confederacy was tied to “the character of the soil itself,” and that “the hilly country and the thinner soil was the stronghold of Unionism, while the level land and the more fertile soil bred Southern sympathies,” making the connection between slave ownership and wartime loyalty.<sup>1</sup> This connection between agricultural productivity and sentiment was a common observation among Kentuckians at the time, and, though accurate in some regards, later research has shown it not to be entirely correct.<sup>2</sup> In 1973, James E. Copeland published “Where were the Kentucky Unionists and Secessionists?,” an exploration of Kentucky sentiment during the war. Using Kentucky Adjutant General D. W. Lindsey’s postwar report on Union enlistment, Copeland argues that the sentiment of Kentuckians in various counties can be inferred by examining Union enlistment in the counties; higher Union enlistment meant greater Union support and vice-versa. Copeland shows that the majority of Union Kentucky soldiers came from south-central and northeastern portions of Kentucky, along with Jefferson County, home to the great population center of Louisville, well known for its high Union fervor. The fewest number of Union soldiers came from the Jackson Purchase counties, the far-western Pennyroyal and Western Coal Field counties, and several of the Bluegrass counties. Traditionally described as predominately secessionist

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<sup>1</sup> E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-24.

in character, the Bluegrass was divided in sentiment, as was the Pennyroyal. Copeland also shows that slave ownership did not necessarily dictate the sentiment of a region, though a relationship between the two existed. While the heavily slave-owning Bluegrass had divided loyalty, the Jackson Purchase, the true hotbed of secessionism in Kentucky, had little slave ownership.<sup>3</sup> Thousands of Union soldiers came from Kentucky counties with high levels of slave ownership; for example, Fayette contributed 703 soldiers, Madison 539, and Marion 820. The six counties with the highest rates of slave ownership, Woodford, Clark, Scott, Shelby, Nelson, and Spencer, contributed a combined regiment and a half of soldiers to the Union cause, though most came from Shelby County.<sup>4</sup> While it should not be overstated, slave ownership did not automatically determine the loyalty of a Kentuckian. Half of the members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry came from Washington and Madison County, two counties with high slave ownership.<sup>5</sup> For many Kentuckians, no contradiction existed between fighting for the Union and wanting to preserve slavery. At least, at the outset of the war, one could have both Union and slavery; many thought that the institution might even be more secure that way. A strain of Unionist thought in Kentucky before the war was that slavery could be better protected within the Union, rather than outside of it, as the

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<sup>3</sup> For further information on slavery and secessionism in the Jackson Purchase, see Alan Bearman, “‘The South Carolina of Kentucky’: Religion and Secession in the Jackson Purchase.” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 76 (October 2002): 495-521. Bearman argues that Southern ancestry, regional disconnectedness, Southern economic ties, and, most importantly, evangelical religion explain the secessionism of the Purchase, rather than slave ownership.

<sup>4</sup> James B. Copeland, “Where were the Kentucky Unionists and Secessionists?” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 71 (October 1973): 344-63.

<sup>5</sup> Dennis W. Belcher, *The 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War: A History and Roster* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009), 3. Unless otherwise stated, all military units mentioned were Federal regiments.

Constitution provided many protections for the institution, which would be given up if the state seceded.<sup>6</sup> Kentuckians, slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike, joined the Union army for various reasons.

The firing on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, and the martial excitement it produced around the country sent many young men into Federal service.<sup>7</sup> However, that enthusiasm became dampened for many in Kentucky because the majority of Kentuckians wanted to avoid warfare and sought ways to stay out of the conflict. Following this wish, the state legislature enacted the Kentucky Declaration of Neutrality on May 16, 1861, delaying profession of the state's loyalty to either side of the conflict and adopting a state of armed neutrality.<sup>8</sup> When the legislature discarded its neutral stance in September 1861, many Kentuckians began enlisting in the Union army, the fever of Fort Sumter still burning. Despite his family's Confederate sentiments, in the fall of 1861, Henry Clay Weaver of Bracken County helped to organize and joined the 16<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Company D.<sup>9</sup> Elijah Tucker of Green County was still "[f]lushed with war fever" on September 20, when he enlisted in Company E of the 13<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher M. Paine, "Kentucky Will be the Last to Give up the Union': Kentucky Politics, 1844 – 1961" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1998), 273.

<sup>7</sup> James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 16.

<sup>8</sup> For further information on Kentucky's adoption of armed neutrality and subsequent decision to support the Union, see Thomas C. Mackey, "Not a Pariah, but a Keystone: Kentucky and Secession," in *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee*, ed. Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickinson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 25-45. Mackey argues that though Kentucky might have wished to stay neutral through the conflict, the state was too important geographically, politically, and militarily to the Union and Confederacy for either to allow the other to have it, and thus Kentucky was eventually forced to drop its neutral stance and choose a side.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Clay Weaver, "Georgia Through Kentucky Eyes: Letters Written on Sherman's March to Atlanta," ed. James M. Merrill and James F. Marshall, *Filson Club History Quarterly* 30 (October 1956): 324.

Kentucky Volunteer Infantry along with his brother Harding.<sup>10</sup> The war fever did not dissipate as some parts of the country still burned to enlist as late as the summer of 1862. Despite his ill health and being warned he could not endure it, Thomas Speed joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry in August 1862 because “there was an urgent call for troops, the whole country was in a full blaze of excitement and I determined to enter the service.”<sup>11</sup>

Their belief that the war was going to be short intensified the martial excitement that gripped many young Kentuckians, and most Americans, in the early years of the war. Had these soldiers known the war was going to last more than months and cost more than a few lives, some may have reconsidered service. Woodcock recalled that at his enlistment he “learned that the Company was being made up for three years instead of two; but I did not care for that for I felt very confident that the war would terminate ere six months, and moreover that I could not indure [*sic*] the fatigue of camp life for even *two* years and would ere that time be dead or discharged for disability.”<sup>12</sup> William N. Morin implied his belief that the war would be over before his enlistment was up if not sooner in a letter to his brother, written in January 1862; “I have Vollenteered in the army for three years and therefor you cannot expect to see me befor the war is over but as soon

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<sup>10</sup> Elijah Tucker, “‘My Life Has Not Been a Blank’: The Autobiography of Captain Elijah F. Tucker of Greensburg, Kentucky,” ed. Bruce Curtis, *Filson Club History Quarterly* 64 (April 1990): 266.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Speed, “The Civil War Memoirs of Captain Thomas Speed,” ed. James R. Bentley, *Filson Club History Quarterly* 44 (July 1970): 237-38.

<sup>12</sup> Marcus Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue: The Memoir of Marcus Woodcock, 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Infantry (U.S.A.)*, ed. Kenneth W. Noe (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 17-18.

as I can I shall be most happy to come and see you . . .”<sup>13</sup> Even as late as April 1862, Lewis R. Dunn, a lieutenant in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky Cavalry, thought that “it will be but a short time before I will have the privilage of seeing you all again if I live, a person that leaves home and gose to war knows what an affection Mother is or at least I do, but, yet I feel it my duty stay and help beat down the Rebellion which will be don shortly . . .”<sup>14</sup> “I was in hopes of passing this 4<sup>th</sup> with my friends and relatives in Kentucky,” reflected Samuel Kennedy Cox, a private later captain of the 17<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, in 1862, “but alas, this cruel war has lasted much longer than anyone anticipated, and Heaven only knows when it will end now. We hope, however, that it may close soon and that we may once more meet friends at home.”<sup>15</sup>

Many Union Kentucky soldiers voiced in their letters and diaries that their enlistments were required as they felt a sense of duty or needed to defend their personal honor. Born in Macon County, Tennessee, on the south-central Kentucky border, Marcus Woodcock attended school in Gamaliel, Monroe County, Kentucky. The southern portion of Monroe County and northern portion of Macon County, Tennessee formed a single community of which Woodcock was a part.<sup>16</sup> For a time, Woodcock served in the Gamaliel Home Guard, but then he felt a greater obligation and decided to enlist in the Union army. “With a heavy heart,” wrote Woodcock, “and a mind filled with doubt and perplexities, and my physical system almost prostrated under the immense exertions it

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<sup>13</sup> William N. Morin to Brother [John Morin], 13 January 1862, Paducah, Kentucky, MSS C M, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky [hereafter cited FHS].

<sup>14</sup> Lewis R. Dunn to Sister, 19 April 1862, Dunn Family Papers, MSS A D923, Folder 3: Correspondence, January – June 1862, FHS.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Kennedy Cox, *Civil War Diary, 1862 – 1865, of Captain Samuel Kennedy Cox*, ed. Richard J. Reid (Olaton, KY: R. J. Reid, 199?), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, xiii-xvi.



had recently been called upon to make, and nevertheless with a feeling of consciousness that I was doing my Duty, I secretly invoking the mercy of a Divine Providence, mounted my horse and set out . . .”<sup>17</sup> After the war, that sense of fully discharging his duty still remained with Woodcock; “I felt that I had done what every loyal citizen of the United States should do.”<sup>18</sup> Woodcock also admitted that a desire for personal honor and glory also compelled him to fight because he “*did* to some extent cherish a desire to obtain with my own arms a right to distinction while I should be defending my Country’s rights.”<sup>19</sup> Another soldier, Arnold Williams, wrote to his uncle and aunt in November 1862 and apologized for not telling them that he had joined the army but excused himself as he “thought that it was the duty of every young man to go and help put down this Rebellion as soon as possible. although there is some in my neighbor hood that could of leave as well as I could and a little more so . . .”<sup>20</sup> Captain George W. Gallup of the 14<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry wrote to his wife in June 1862, requesting that “If in tomorrow’s struggle I should fall, tell my boys I fell as falls the patriot and lover of his country, for before my God I would sooner fall upon the field defending my country’s honor than to live to say I took no part in this great struggle for the suppression of this rebellion.”<sup>21</sup> Some soldiers felt that honor not only compelled them into the uniform but also to stay in it during the whole of their enlistment. By September 1864, Henry Clay Weaver was more than ready to end his service at the end of his three-year enlistment and

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<sup>17</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, 15-16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold Williams to Uncle and Aunt, 6 November 1862, Camp near Covington, MSS. C A, FHS.

<sup>21</sup> George W. Gallup to Wife, 16 June 1862, In Camp at the Foot of the Cumberland Mts., George W. Gallup Papers, 1828 – 1881, MSS. C G, FHS.

told his daughter that he would fight his command to leave the ranks at that time and stay no longer. When questioned by his daughter as to why he had not left earlier, Weaver appealed to the maintenance of his honor, replying, “You desired to know why I did not quit the army when dangers & vicissitudes beset us on all sides. Now Dearest, it would have been bad for me to leave my command & go home while bullet & shells were flying like hail, & every body would have called it base cowardice in me, & this is an epithet I do not desire.”<sup>22</sup> Duty was one of the reasons Lieutenant Thomas Brooks Fairleigh of the 26<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Company G remained in service late into the war. Rejoining his veteranized regiment, Fairleigh wrote in his diary on May 12, 1864, that he had “fixed up my ‘every trap’ for the front and am really ready, willing and I go believe anxious to go. It is not because I seek danger or wish to participate in a fight or have myself or my men killed—not because I have an unusual amount of courage, but merely and solely because I feel it my duty as a soldier.”<sup>23</sup> Although disagreeing with the decisions of the Union command, Benjamin S. Jones, a corporal in Company F of the 21<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Infantry, wrote to his sister in June 1864 that “when I know that all is well at home I am contented for know then that I am doing my duty dening my country and my *family*.”<sup>24</sup>

Pressure from family and friends no doubt compelled many young men to enlist as well. Later colonel of the 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry and even later a Supreme Court justice, John Marshall Harlan debated enlisting in the Union army, unsure if doing

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<sup>22</sup> Weaver, “Georgia Through Kentucky Eyes,” 335-36.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Brooks Fairleigh, diary, Thursday, 12 May 1864 entry, p. 66, MSS. A F172, FHS.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin S. Jones to Sister, 29 June 1864, Near Marietta Georgia, Union Soldier Letters 1861 – 1865, MSS. C U, FHS.

so was the right decision. He joined after receiving encouragement from his mother to do so.<sup>25</sup> Long ties of friendship compelled many men to enter the service when many men of a community had joined up. Having been life-long friends, the men of Dexterville, Butler County, enlisted *en masse* into the 12<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Cavalry in August 1862 even though most were married and many had children.<sup>26</sup> Societal pressures also forced many men into uniform despite their ideological convictions. As more men of a community enlisted, the community exerted greater pressure on those remaining to do so as well. Brothers and friends also pressured brothers and friends into joining.<sup>27</sup> The group which exerted the greatest pressure on the bulk of Union soldiers, young unmarried men, was young unmarried women, who used threats of perpetual bachelorhood to induce men to enlist.<sup>28</sup>

However, in some cases, family and peer pressure worked to keep men out of the ranks. Well ensconced in a group of schoolmates, Woodcock remembered the day of his enlistment, writing, "Several gay fellows stepped into lines and took the step, and finally I in defiance of urgent remonstrations of my best friends, stepped into line from which, strung the path of honor, there is no stepping back."<sup>29</sup> Though women, especially those of the young, unmarried kind, influenced many men to enlist, other women, especially mothers, were key to keeping others out. The state's period of neutrality allowed mothers and families to keep fathers, sons, and brothers out of the army in hope of a peaceful

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<sup>25</sup> Belcher, *The 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Barry D. Goodall, *Glory Gone Forgotten: The Untold Story of the 12<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Cavalry* (n.p.: B. D. Goodall, 2004), 48.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph R. Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, U.S.: The Boys Who Feared No Noise* (Louisville: Beargrass Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 87-88.

<sup>29</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, 17-18.

settlement to the secession crisis.<sup>30</sup> Even after neutrality ended, many mothers and women tried to keep relations and friends from entering the war on either side as it complicated their social relations which polarized into Union and Confederate sympathizers. The fear that family members and friends would meet on the opposing sides of the battlefield and be forced to shoot at each other compelled many Kentucky families and friends to discourage enlistment despite the national pressure on them to do so.<sup>31</sup> Hence, from a statistical point-of-view, family and peer pressure in Kentucky may have been equal for and against enlistment, but, on the individual level, it played a significant role for many prospective soldiers in their decisions to enlist.

Other kinds of communal pressure also compelled men to enter the Union army. Many Union-sympathizers residing within communities comprised mostly of Confederate-sympathizers often joined the Union army to avoid attacks and seizure by these Confederate-sympathizers. Living in Hopkinsville, Samuel McDowell Starling, a Union-sympathizer, unpopular among his many Confederate-sympathizing neighbors, slept in the woods for nearly a month to avoid capture. He joined the Union army in his fifties, eventually becoming a captain in the 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Cavalry, to remove himself from the constant threat of reprisal from his Confederate neighbors.<sup>32</sup> Although he had already joined the Union army, Woodcock, two months later, had been drafted by Confederacy and would be tried as a deserter if caught. Paradoxically, service in the Union army was a safer place than most for Woodcock and others in the same

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<sup>30</sup> Adrian Schultze Buser Willett, "Our House was Divided: Kentucky Women and the Civil War" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2008), 128-29

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>32</sup> Samuel McDowell Starling, "A Federal Officer Pursues John Hunt Morgan," ed. Lowell H. Harrison, *Filson Club History Quarterly* 48 (April 1974): 130-31.

predicament as him.<sup>33</sup> Federal authorities also allowed criminals, who faced punishment for minor crimes, to enlist in the army to avoid those penalties.<sup>34</sup>

Many Union Kentucky soldiers voiced a desire to fight against the treason and the traitors of the South who had dared to sever the compact between the states. In addition as an initial motivator, this desire also functioned as a sustaining motivation for many, growing over time as they met their enemy on the battlefield. Along with his feelings of duty, George Gallup also desired revenge against the men whose treason caused families and the land to suffer. Writing to his wife in June 1862, Gallup described to his wife the condition of the Cumberland Valley: "Oh the heart-rending tales of sorrow and distress we meet in the valley! Men old, men who have been absent from their homes for 10 months leaving wife & daughters to insult & often wrong, all because they went for their country. Oh God, if I could fight, fight forever to avenge them. 'Onward, Onward' is my motto, rebellion and [?] must and shall go down. God in his infinite goodness and wisdom will bring disaster and defeat upon them."<sup>35</sup> A corporal in Company D, 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Terah Sampson wrote to his father and mother in April 1863, assuring them that though he was enjoying the soldier life as well as he could, but

the ider of a nation fighting against one another is what tryes me But I am here as I always was at home ur eny other place I never would get into quarles or fights or anything of the sort as long as I could help it But if such things are forced on me and I cant get out of it onerably then I will give them the best I have got Just so I am by the rebels I have not got a grain of mercy on them We pleaded for peace and we rased our hands and asked for peace and they would not here us here is and now I am in

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<sup>33</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, 43-44.

<sup>34</sup> Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 87-88.

<sup>35</sup> Gallup to Wife, 16 June 1862, Cumberland Mts., Gallup Papers, FHS.

for Carring them the fool [*sic*] extent of the law as the saying is . . . When I get into a fight I wish I could do the work of one hundred men”<sup>36</sup>

Some made a connection between the former threat of British and the present one of the South as Benjamin Stevenson, surgeon of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Regiment, did in a letter to his wife celebrating the fall of Vicksburg. He argued that the Fourth of July would “now be sanctified to the lovers of freedom as the day of a second deliverance of the land from a danger greater, more potent and more to be dreaded than any our British progenitors threatened us with.”<sup>37</sup> Many Kentucky Union soldiers complained of treasonous speech from Southerners when they occupied Confederate-sympathizing territory. Thomas Fairleigh complained of such talk in March 1864 when stationed in areas of Kentucky heavy with Confederate-sympathizers while on guard and scouting duties, writing, “There is nothing doing at all here—the people & affairs quiet. I’m glad to see that the Rebels have quit talking, *publicly* at least, their infernal treason. They have now hushed up—around us, and it is good for them. It would be well if all rebels could follow suit at once.”<sup>38</sup> However, he, like many of Kentucky’s Union soldiers believed that most Southerners had been hoodwinked and demagogued into supporting secession, remarking that the war was evidence of “How much suffering ambitious men can force on a country.”<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the Confederacy as a whole, many Union Kentucky soldiers harbored desires for revenge against specific Confederate leaders from Kentucky, viewed

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<sup>36</sup> Terah Sampson to Elizabeth Sampson and Jerome T. Sampson, 26 April 1863, Camp at Readyvill Tenn, Terah W. Sampson Letters, MSS. C S, FHS.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin F. Stevenson, *Letters from the Army* (Cincinnati: Robert Clark & Co., 1886), 243.

<sup>38</sup> Fairleigh, diary, Thursday, 3 March 1864 entry, p. 31, FHS.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, Sunday, 8 May 1864 entry, p. 64, FHS.

as especially egregious traitors. The desire to dole out that justice motivated many Union Kentucky soldiers. Simon Bolivar Buckner was the biggest target as he was considered the most important and knowledgeable military officer in the state, entrusted with the office of inspector general for the state and the control of the state's militia, and his defection to the Confederacy was seen as a gross breach of the public trust.<sup>40</sup> The *Louisville Journal* captured the ire of many Union Kentucky soldiers in its September 27, 1861 printed attack on Buckner and his actions:

“Away with your pledges and assurances—with your protestations, apologies and proclamations, at once and altogether. Away parricide, away and do penance forever—be shriven or slain—away! You have less palliation than Attila—less boldness, magnanimity and nobleness than Coriolanus. You are the Benedict Arnold of the day. You are the Catiline of Kentucky. Go then miscreant.”<sup>41</sup>

Kentucky Unionists, soldiers included, also believed that the State Guards, who were well known to be pro-Confederate, had been corrupted by Buckner, who then led the most of the state militia to serve in the Confederacy after his defection.<sup>42</sup> Union Kentucky soldiers voiced their anger towards those important state leaders that had betrayed their trust. Writing in January 1862, Corporal Ben Foster of the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry was suffering from the acclimatizing sickness common in newly-mustered regiments but was hoping “to be Able soon to Go Doen to Dickseys [Dixie] land to Joine My Dear Comrads in fixing to kill Buckner and the Balance of the

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<sup>40</sup> Kirk C. Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher: The Union's Fifteenth Kentucky Infantry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Louisville Journal*, 27 September 1861, quoted in Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 120n42.

<sup>42</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 120.

Secesh.”<sup>43</sup> Reflecting on the news of the January 1862 Battle of Mill Springs, which occurred five days earlier, Terah Sampson wrote, “they have wiped old zoly [Zollicoffer] over the line and I think he will Come no more and that is the way we are a going to do old Buckner if he dont watch out”<sup>44</sup> Other turncoat state leaders besides Buckner were subjects of the Union Kentucky soldiers’ vitriol as well. Colonel Sidney M. Barnes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry related to his wife the condition of his command in April 1862: “Our regiments are as indifferent as ever to danger. They hardly believe from their actions that they are in an enemy country. I am encamped in 100 yards of Genl J C Breckinridge headquarters when he was here. By the way, it is reported that he was captured by Genl Buells Division in the late terrible fight [Shiloh]. Our men are rejoiced to hear the news, but they would be better satisfied to hear of his death, as they think he caused many our great national and state troubles.”<sup>45</sup>

Although all the previous reasons played important roles in getting men to enlist in the Union army, no other motivator was written of more often or more passionately than to preserve the Union, the sacred bond between the states which had been sundered by secession. Kentuckians had a deep traditional affection for the Union, promoted by Kentucky’s leading politician, Henry Clay.<sup>46</sup> Kentuckians also felt they had a contract with the Founders to preserve the Union that generation had fought to establish. Many men enlisted without regard to any other issue than the dissolution of the Union.

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<sup>43</sup> Ben Foster to Miss Rebecca Horine, 16 January 1862, quoted in Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Terah Sampson to Elizabeth Ann Sampson and Jerome T. Sampson, 24 January 1862, Sampson Papers, FHS.

<sup>45</sup> Maude Barnes Miller, *Dear Wife: Letters from a Union Colonel* (Ann Arbor: Sheridan Books, 2001), 38-39.

<sup>46</sup> Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, xiii-xiv.



Sounding the paramount issue at hand, a “private” had his letter published in the *Louisville Journal* on October 7, 1861, arguing that Union Kentucky soldiers “are not Lincolnites, no Abolitionists, Black Republicans, submissionists, we are Union men, we are opposed to secession, we are for sustaining the actions of our Legislature, we are for the Constitution and the enforcement of the laws, we are for the Union now and forever, one and inseparable, and we are willing to die in defense of our principles.”<sup>47</sup> The Union was not only an heirloom of the Founding Fathers, but also represented the best government on Earth, worthy of protecting, fighting for, and dying for. John T. Harrington enlisted in Company A of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in November 1861 to “fight for the Union and the Constitution.”<sup>48</sup> In December 1861, William T. McClure of the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry wrote home to his sister, registering his displeasure that his brother was attempting to steal his sweetheart while he was “away from home getting ready to fight for his country.”<sup>49</sup> While Samuel Starling joined the army to gain relief from the threats of his Confederate-sympathizing neighbors, he also “believed the disintegration of the Union the great danger of Government.”<sup>50</sup> John Foster of the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry wrote to Rebecca Horine in January 1862 that “If I get killed in this war, just consider that one true Kentuckian has Died for his Country

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<sup>47</sup> *Louisville Journal*, 7 October 1861, quoted in William Michael Wilson, *History of the Eleventh Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment: Union Army* (Bowling Green: Landmark Association, 2006), 15.

<sup>48</sup> John T. Harrington, “‘I Have Seen War in All Its Horrors’: Two Civil War Letters of John T. Harrington, Twenty-second Kentucky Union Infantry Regiment,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 105 (Autumn 2007): 657.

<sup>49</sup> G. Glenn Clift, ed., “Civil War Letters of Brothers William T. and Joseph T. McClure of the Fifteenth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 60 (July 1962): 209-10.

<sup>50</sup> Starling, “A Federal Officer Pursues John Hunt Morgan,” 130.

and for thee for I am gone to fight for my Country And for the Ladies.”<sup>51</sup> Writing to his father, Colonel Sidney Barnes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Thomas Barnes related the effects of the firing on Fort Sumter on the students at his school and on himself. Almost all the boys of Centre College were pro-secession, save himself and his roommates, who wished that “If die they must they want to perish under the Stars and Stripes—and at home in defense of their fathers hearths.” Thomas was not yet ready to enlist because of his poor health and reluctant to give up his studies, but he informed his father that “when a call does come I stand ready to sacrifice my poor life upon the alter [sic] of my country. I want ‘no nobler winding than the old flag’, no nobler than a patriots grave!”<sup>52</sup> Reassuring his wife, Gallup wrote “Do not be uneasy about me, our men [of the 14<sup>th</sup> Kentucky] are brave and trustworthy, knowing their cause is just, that they fight for an outraged country, for his noble and free institutions, her time-honored and glorious old flag, they will brave danger and death and dear will be the victory.”<sup>53</sup> Corporal Samuel W. Pruitt of the 25<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry expressed his displeasure with his daughter’s desires for peace in a letter written in April 1863.

Demonstrating his strong Unionism, Pruitt wrote:

you say you would like for the war to end and you seem to write as tho you would rather acknowledg the independance [sic] of the Southern traitors than to have the war go on, wel that is not my sentiments and I am sorry that my daughter entertain such principles I suppose I think as much of my family as any other man and altho I have suffered all the hardships and prvations [sic] of camp life and have been exposed to many dangers for about a year and a half I would never be willing to give them one inch

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<sup>51</sup> John Foster to Rebecca Horine, 16 January 1861, quoted in Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 21.

<sup>52</sup> Miller, *Dear Wife*, 10-12.

<sup>53</sup> George W. Gallup to Wife, 20 June 1863, In camp at Widow Laynes, 6 miles above Prestonsburg, Ky., Gallup Papers, FHS.

I would fight them ten years if need be before I would submit to a dissolution [*sic*] of this glorious old government<sup>54</sup>

Some Kentuckians recognized the dangers of the dissolution of the Union and the disorder produced from such a severing would affect everyone. Alfred Sampson, brother of Terah and member of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, believed that individual liberty was at risk because of Southern secession; “To the friends of the union and the lovers of there country hour task is hard our labor is great but the thought of A once hapy and free people A people that act freely without being molested or harmed to think that those priveliges are taken away is a enough to rouse the feelings of every true heart.”<sup>55</sup> In a January 1863 letter to his wife, Barnes reflected on the disaster the severing of the Union had caused, calling those days under the Union “happy days.” If the Union was not restored and soon, then “before the was [*sic*] is ended perhaps the entire civilized world will be engaged. Or some great military Chieftan will rise up—some one of our Generals, who he is or will be I cannot venture to predict—and backed by the army overthrow the constitution and build upon the ruins of our great and powerful government a great military despotism. And then taxation and standing army will be the order of the day, and then farewell to freedom and happy days.”<sup>56</sup> Issac N. Johnston, captain of Company H, 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, gave the best summary of the desire to preserve the Union on the motivation to serve of Kentucky Union soldiers. In 1864, Johnston published *Four Months in Libby, and the Campaign Against Atlanta*, an

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<sup>54</sup> Samuel W. Pruitt to Bettie, 20 April 1863, Camp Brentwood, Tenn., Samuel W. Pruitt Papers, 1863 - 1899, MSS. C P, FHS.

<sup>55</sup> Alford Sampson to “dear friends,” 29 December 1861, Terah W. Sampson Letters, MSS C S, FHS.

<sup>56</sup> Miller, *Dear Wife*, 64-66.

account of his service in the Federal army. Describing his reasons for joining the army,

Johnston wrote:

My own reasons are those of thousands of others, but they are not those of the mere politician; they are the reasons of the man and the patriot who loves his country with an unselfish love, and loves his country most, not in the days of peace and prosperity, but when the clouds are darkest and perils and trials beset her round. A milder, freer Government than ours the world never saw; we knew not that we had a Government, by any burdens that it imposed on us; it was only by the constant flow of blessing we enjoyed that we were conscious of its existence. Our history, though short, was glorious; our future full of the brightest promise, and the hopes of the toiling and oppressed millions of Europe were bound up in our success.<sup>57</sup>

Union Kentucky soldiers did not typically use religious language or give religious reasons for enlisting and serving in the Federal army, but it is clear they viewed the Union as a God-ordained institution that promoted the well-being of the nation and that had to be fought for and protected from dissolution. This civil religion increased the fervor of those Kentuckians entering the Union ranks and those already there. Often Union Kentucky soldiers made references to the Founding Fathers and the desire to protect what those that came before them had established. Sampson declared to his father and mother that “I want to live under the flag of George Washington the flag of our four fathers or not at all.”<sup>58</sup> Johnston also referenced the Founders and the sacredness of the Union they established in his reasons for enlisting:

Though not an adept in the theory of government, I could not be blind to its practical workings; though no politician, I could not be insensible of the manifold blessings which it secured. I remembered the wisdom of those men who gave shape to our institutions; I remembered the price at which independence was purchased; I remembered that it was not without

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<sup>57</sup> Isaac N. Johnston, *Four Months in Libby, and the Campaign Against Atlanta* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1893), 15-18.

<sup>58</sup> Terah Sampson to Elizabeth Sampson and Jerome T. Sampson, 26 April 1863, Camp at Readyvill, Tenn, MSS C S, FHS.

blood that those blessings were gained; and now that all that the wisdom of a Franklin, Hancock, and Adams had devised—all that of which a Washington had fought, for which Warren had bled, was in jeopardy, I felt that in such a cause, and for such a country, it would be sweet even to die.<sup>59</sup>

Woodcock also reflected on his childhood readings of the life of Washington, the Revolutionary War and its American heroes, and the creation of the United States, which “cherished an ardent feeling of love and admiration for my country.” “And now,” Woodcock wrote of his enlistment, “I felt that I was but doing justice to my self, to my country, to my forefathers, and to future generations.”<sup>60</sup> Some Union Kentucky soldiers felt that fighting for the Union was itself a sanctified act. Barnes considered himself unlikely to go to Heaven based on his own merit, but believed his fighting for country and for the Union would suffice. “I don’t fear much to die, especially in the line of duty,” wrote Barnes to his wife, who fretted over the state of his soul, “for in that even, God, being just and merciful to man, will not punish me in after life. . . . My conviction is that a good honest soldier killed in battle goes straight to Abraham’s bosom, a mean

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<sup>59</sup> Johnston, *Four Months in Libby*, 15-18. Further describing his reasons for enlisting, Johnston continued: “No love of war and bloodshed led me to the field; the charter of our independence was sealed in blood, the very blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy I felt to be purchased by noble lives freely given; and to preserve them for generations let to come I felt to be worth as great a sacrifice. God grant that the effort may not be vain! God grant that the fierce struggle which has filled our land with weeping may be following by all the blessing of a lasting peace!”

Under the influence of the sentiment just expressed, no sooner was the flag of my country insulted, and an attempt may by bold, bad men to pull down the fairest fabric ever devised by human wisdom and cemented by patriot blood, than I determined to do my utmost to uphold the starry banner; and seeking no position save that of one of my country’s defenders, I volunteered for three years. Nearly one hundred young men, mostly from my own locality—Henry county, Ky. —enrolled themselves at the same time, and became soldiers of the Union. We all had much around us to render life pleasant, and home dear; but the call of our country in her hour of need of need sounded in our ears, and we could not permit her to call in vain.”

<sup>60</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, 23.

unfaithful rascal direct to hell, and I don't claim to belong to the latter . . .”<sup>61</sup> Given the strength of their convictions and motivations, it is clear that the most significant reason why Union Kentucky soldiers entered the Federal service was to fight to preserve the Union.

However, in September 1862, the Union war aims changed with Abraham Lincoln's promulgation of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all slaves within the Confederacy if those states did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, dealing a serious blow to Union Kentucky soldier motivation. Lincoln's announcement was not the first time emancipation had been declared by a Union official. On August 30, 1861, General John Frémont issued his own emancipation proclamation, freeing all slaves in Missouri. The reaction to the proclamation in Kentucky and among Kentucky soldiers was recorded by General Robert Anderson in a letter to Lincoln, claiming that Frémont's order “is producing most disasterous results in this State, and . . . if not immediately disavowed and annulled Ky will be lost to the Union—I have already heard that on the reception of the news from Miss[ouri] this morning, a Comp[an]y, which was ready to be sworn into the Service, disbanded.”<sup>62</sup> Like Frémont's proclamation, Lincoln's executive order did not affect the slaves of Kentucky or those of the other slave border states that had remained in the Union, but Kentuckians knew that slavery could not be maintained if it existed only in a few border states. Additionally, in the eyes of Kentuckians, Lincoln had wrongfully claimed the right to end slavery where

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<sup>61</sup> Miller, *Dear Wife*, 82-4.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Anderson to Abraham Lincoln, 13 September 1861, Robert Anderson Letters, MSS C A, FHS.

he wished, threatening the existence of the institution in the state.<sup>63</sup> Lincoln tried to be tactful with his proclamation, but few Kentuckians were fooled into thinking the institution of slavery was safe.<sup>64</sup>

The reaction to the Emancipation Proclamation among Union Kentucky soldiers was mixed, but, overall, negative. Few were like Commissary Sergeant Thomas W. Parsons of Company D, 14<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, who when asked why he was in the army, replied, “I remarked that Slavery or emancipation was not in my mind, that I went into it for the preservation of the Union”; however, for most Union Kentucky soldiers, the Emancipation Proclamation had a direct impact on their motivation to serve in the Federal army.<sup>65</sup> Few of them were outright in favor of the act, but some grudgingly accepted it as a necessary measure to end the war as quickly as possible. In a letter, written on April 23, 1863, Private Wilbur Condit of the 17<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Company H, wrote to his parents that

I still feel that my cause is good, even if it is not wholly just it is surely nearer so than the cause of our enemies and they seem very little inclined to yield for their most radical and destructive policy and we must hold on for no other reason than to guard our beloved Kentucky home from being destroyed as the lands around our beloved state and only awaiting the withdrawal of our forces to consummate their purpose of forcing us to accept such terms of admission into the Confederacy as they are pleased to grant. So we will stand to our colors and defend our cause to the end extremity. Ever remembering that of the two evils take the lesser, if we must suffer either still I am determined not to serve an evil faction of their extreme party; neither will I submit to my enemies and return to my home

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<sup>63</sup> Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 93.

<sup>64</sup> B. Franklin Cooling, “After the Horror: Kentucky in Reconstruction,” in *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee*, ed. Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickinson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 347.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas W. Parsons, *Incidents & Experiences in the Life of Thomas W. Parsons, from 1826 to 1900*, ed. Frank Furlong Mathias (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 127.

with any discord on me for having enlisted to defend what I honestly thought to be a just cause.<sup>66</sup>

A Louisvillian who became a lieutenant in the 10<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry, Alfred Pirtle had threatened to resign should the federal government attack slavery in any way. However, by September 1863, Pirtle had accepted the Emancipation Proclamation as the lesser of two evils, writing to his sister that “The ‘inexorable logic of events’ is rapidly making practical abolitionists of every soldier . . . I am afraid that [even] I am getting to be an Abolitionist. All right! Better that than a Secessionist.”<sup>67</sup> By 1864, some soldiers no longer cared much about the subject or did not feel it was worth discussing in light of the main of the war: to preserve the Union. In September 1864, Gallup was only focused on his motto, “Down with the Rebellion,” leaving the racial question aside “to the good sense of the people for future adjustment.” “I cannot,” Gallup wrote, “annoy myself with the prospect of negro equality for only those who desire it will be annoyed.”<sup>68</sup> A year after the letter to his daughter, Samuel Pruitt wrote another diatribe against disloyalty to the government and law and advocating peace with the Confederacy, this time against John and James Glenn, rather than his daughter:

You may say John and James Glenn think that it is time was should stop and any man that would fight any longer under Old Abe Lincoln is an abolissionst is it possible that so soon as their pockets begin to feel the effects of the war they turn against the Government what would they do, acknolage the independance of the South if they do, slavery is dead so they will not gain any thing by that for the leaders of the rebellion admit that slavery is bound to go down now I started out to fight to sustain the Government and put down the rebellion and I have neber regretted

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<sup>66</sup> Beth Chinn Harp, *Torn Asunder: Civil War in Ohio Country and the Green River Country* (Georgetown, KY: Kinnersley, 2003), 35-36.

<sup>67</sup> Alfred Pirtle to Sister, 3 August 1863 and 8 September 1863, quoted in McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 126.

<sup>68</sup> George W. Gallup to Wife, 12 September 1864, Decatur, Georgia, Gallup Papers, MSS C G, FHS.



because we do not like the President or agree with him in all things is no reason that we should turn traitor to the Government we should unite our energys the stronger to put down the rebellion and restore Peace to our destracted country and then put old Lincoln down at the ballot box I am just as I was at the beginning of the war I am for my country before every thing else . . . .<sup>69</sup>

Some soldiers, like Lewis Dunn, accepted the necessity of the Emancipation Proclamation and placed the blame for its necessity on the South. Soldiers who took this position often found emancipation more acceptable than those that did not. Telling his father about the Union men of Christian County, Tennessee, in April 1863, Dunn wrote that they were

uncomplaining men they Say that if no polacy by that Sustain the union but to free the Negros let them go before we would let this Glourious Cause that we are fighting for fall. Father this is my views on this great Subject. The South has made the first Start even before old abe had taken his Seat as pesident of the Unites States [The] secession ordance was adopted the 20 of Dec 1860 three months before the president took [h]is seat I think that if they had waited untill the would have Lern wheather old abe would have give them holt to find falt but instead of that they jumped in to the fire at the start & now I say let them get out the best they can and Suffer the Consiquences let them be what they may. I Suppose that old Grayson is Still hamering on Honest Abe I fear that Some of them will loos their loyalty if they havent already. For my part I am apose to the President[’s] Views on that subject but if no other polacy but his will do I am for it . . . .<sup>70</sup>

Like Dunn, Terah Sampson blamed the South for the necessity of the Emancipation Proclamation, but the policy still unsettled him and none of his letters demonstrate any acceptance of the policy. “Mother,” wrote Sampson in January 1863,

I neve thought that I would fight to free the nigro when I inlisted but hoo must we blame the northen men or the southern men I consiter that the blame all lais on the sourtherners for if they had of staying in the union as

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<sup>69</sup> Samuel W. Pruitt to Daughter, 25 April 1864, Six miles from Cleaveland [sic], Mcdonalds Station, Tenn., Samuel W. Pruitt Papers, MSS C P, FHS.

<sup>70</sup> Lewis Dunn to Father, 14 April 1863, Hopkinsville, KY, Dunn Family Papers, MSS A D923, Folder 5: Correspondence 1863, FHS.

they ought to a done what could Linkion have done he could not have one Thing but they flring Trach Thoughted all the power in the Abolishings and now have to [is or so] blame but if every I get out of this I would like to see the man that would get men in another army not that I am agetting dishearten or eny thing of the Sort but this is not what I come in the army for to free nigros I dont consider that I am a fighting for eny princible eny union or eny thing els I am here to shoot at men and to be shot and that is about all<sup>71</sup>

Some soldiers were willing to accept emancipation as well, so long as it did not affect them directly, which remained possible so long as the Emancipation Proclamation was not extended into Union-controlled areas like Kentucky. If their private property was threatened, emancipation lost all acceptance among these Union Kentucky soldiers. A private in Company F, 17<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Virgil Bennett wrote in February 1863 about the regiment and himself, describing the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry as “death on abolish.” Continuing, Bennett elucidated his own opinions, saying,

I am like a was before I like Lincoln about as well as I ever did, he has not surprised me in the least but I think he has surprised several in our regiment for there is Dick Stevens, he used to be a strong supporter of old Abe but he is a stronger secesh now than old Dr. Rowan ever was, it is not worth my while to write my views on the subject for you can read old John h. McHenry[’s] speech to his son Col. McHenry. I stand just on his platform and I think that no man can object to it. I am no secesh but if I could speak in tones of thunder I would say to al the world I far from being a abolitionist I allow to stand by the Union and Constitution as long as I live and I want you to do the same . . .

Despite his strong words on his commitment to the Union cause, Bennett made it clear it was conditional, concluding with “and if Tome is taken from you I shall quit the service if I have it to do at the risk of my life and thousands of my fellow soldiers will do the same.”

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<sup>71</sup> Terah Sampson to Elizabeth Ann Sampson, 9 January 1863, In camp near Murfreesboro, Tenn., Terah W. Sampson Letters, MSS C S, FHS.

In contrast to the few soldiers who, on one level or another, accepted emancipation, the great balance of Union Kentucky soldiers opposed emancipation as an additional war measure. “The great masses of the Kentucky people were opposed to secession, and the overwhelming majority of the whites were willing and ready to fight for the Union,” wrote Malvina Shanklin Harlan, wife of Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan, “but they were slow in reaching the point where they would have been willing to fight for the freedom of the negro.”<sup>72</sup> Most Union Kentucky soldiers never reached that point. John W. Ford of the 7<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry wrote to his family, saying that he and his fellow soldiers had “volunteered to fight to restore the Old Constitution and not to free the Negroes and we are not a-going to do it.”<sup>73</sup> Kentuckians saw Lincoln’s decision to make emancipation a Union war aim as a betrayal of earlier promises made to keep the restoration of the Union the only war aim and also as an attack on what they perceived as proper race relations. The institution of slavery was the foundation of Kentucky’s political, economic, and social structure and the Emancipation Proclamation threatened to upheave all sources of stability and prosperity for the state. Rather than blame the South, many Union Kentucky soldiers were bitter and disgusted and blamed Lincoln, believing that emancipation was immaterial, and most likely harmful, to the war effort.

An Irish emigrant, Captain William G. Halpin of Company K, 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry noted the early speeches and talk about emancipation had

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<sup>72</sup> Malvina Shanklin Harlan, *Some Memories of a Long Life, 1854 – 1911* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 53-54.

<sup>73</sup> John W. Ford to family, Ford Letters, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, quoted in McPherson, *For Cause and Comrade*, 122-23.

created so much dissatisfaction in the army that men and officers swear that, if [Lincoln's] recommendations become a law, they will throw down their arms, or turn them against the miserable Abolition faction that is daily entailing such miseries on the country. Such unanimity among the troops I never knew on any subject before. They justly say that they did not take up arms to carry out the behests of the demi-gods of Abolitionism, and sooner than be the anti-slavery propagandists of Abraham Lincoln, they will ask Jeff. Davis to hoist the American flag, and receive them under his banners. As sure as Congress passes any law touching the abolition of slavery, the great army of the Union will change sides or go to pieces, never to organize again. How terrible are the calamities this eternal meddling with that does not concern them have the agitators of the question of slavery brought on the country?<sup>74</sup>

On September 22, 1862, the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky became uneasy and angry when the news of Lincoln's preliminary proclamation reached them as they neared Louisville.<sup>75</sup> After the Emancipation Proclamation went to effect on January 1, 1863, fifteen officers of the regiment tendered their resignation in late January, though Union General William S. Rosecrans rejected their resignations; most of them were later allowed to be discharged for medical reasons.<sup>76</sup> Given the timing of their resignations and the number of them, it is clear that they were in protest of the Emancipation Proclamation. A Confederate sympathizer in the Bluegrass, Mattie Wheeler made noted of an officer rebelling against the administration in her journal. On October 12, 1862, she recorded that "Smith Hunt (Lieutenant Colonel) of Brack Grigsby's regiment ordered his men to stack arms & not fight any more for Lincoln after his proclamation, & he was taken to Washington and imprisoned."<sup>77</sup> Lincoln's policy was unpopular among both officers and enlisted men.

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<sup>74</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 3 April 1862, quoted in Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 33-34.

<sup>75</sup> Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 53.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 120 and 143.

<sup>77</sup> Frances L. S. Dugan, ed., "Journal of Mattie Wheeler," *Filson Club History Quarterly* 29 (January 1955): 127-28.

Union Kentucky soldiers often argued that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was an unconstitutional action and a betrayal of the true reasons for the war.<sup>78</sup> John T. Harrington of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry wrote to his sister in early January 1863, describing his encounters with captured Confederate soldiers after a battle. "Jennie," he wrote, "bear in mind these men where [*sic*] over powered but no conquered. I spent over an hour among them that night and on the word of a soldier they are *men*; and men of the order of the days of `76; men who have their hearts enlisted in their cause who believe God is with them and ever willing to favor and defend them from the hand of oppression." Harrington explained that his sympathy and admiration for the captured Confederate soldiers, "a singular confession for a Federal soldier," resulted from the changed Union war aims, aims he no longer appreciated or could identified with. "I enlisted to fight for the Union and the Constitution," Harrington expounded, "but Lincoln puts a different construction on things and now has us Union men fighting for his Abolition Platform, and this making us a hord of Subjugators, house burners, negro thieves, and devastators of private property." Harrington hoped that in time "The Lord . . . [will] make a breach by which I shall escape this throldon . . . in the *Lincoln Army*."<sup>79</sup> Other Union Kentucky soldiers felt the same, believing that the new emancipation war aim doomed the whole Union war effort. Barnes wrote to his wife that Lincoln's proclamation "will do no good and I fear will greatly complicate our difficulties and will entail great miseries and wrongs in the end. Defeated or successful in this war I greatly fear . . . that our government is of short duration and that we are entering upon a strange

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<sup>78</sup> Jacob F. Lee, "'The Union as it was and the Constitution as it is': Unionism and Emancipation in Civil War Era Kentucky" (PhD diss., University of Louisville, 2007), 39.

<sup>79</sup> Harrington, "'I Have Seen War in all Its Horrors,'" 662-65.

and eventful period in our history which will work a complete revolution in everything and destroy every vestige of hope for freedom and uniform and stable government.”<sup>80</sup> A Union soldier serving near Vicksburg, W. F. Wickersham wrote, “I don’t believe that our army will hold together under the circumstances as Mr. Lincoln had made them for our army is not a going to fight to free the Negroes.”<sup>81</sup> In a February 1864 letter to his brother, Benjamin Jones claimed that the war was now “unholy,” and that “I dont think the *leading* men is going according to the Constitution.”<sup>82</sup> Writing to another brother in March 1864, Jones promised that “if I had my way at the abolitionist party I would kill every one of them I would not let one of them live in the world lemuel I am a Striat out union and Constitutional man I am not for freeing the negro and I have no use for any man that is in for any Sutch thing”<sup>83</sup> Unlike the majority of soldiers in the Federal army, who gradually came to accept its wisdom, most Union Kentucky soldiers never accepted the necessity or usefulness of emancipation; it was unacceptable to the antebellum Kentucky worldview these soldiers carried with them into their military service.

If the Emancipation Proclamation tested the motivation of Union Kentucky soldiers, the federal black enlistment laws strained them. The idea of allowing blacks to enlist in the Federal army began with debates in Congress in the summer of 1862. The concept proved to be unpopular with Union troops of all states as it was believed to be

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<sup>80</sup> Miller, *Dear Wife*, 61-62.

<sup>81</sup> Wickersham to Father, 6 February 1863, Wickersham Family Papers, quoted in Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Benjamin S. Jones to Brother [William C. Jones], 12 February 1864, Camp at Cleveland, TN, Union Soldier Letters, 1861 – 1865, MSS C U, FHS.

<sup>83</sup> Benjamin S. Jones to Mr. Lemuel Jones, 9 March 1864, Camp at Chattanooga, *ibid.*

unnecessary and attacked the national belief in white supremacy.<sup>84</sup> Nowhere was this truer than among Kentuckians and Union Kentucky soldiers. Kentucky Congressman John J. Crittenden voiced the common Kentucky revulsion to the idea of black soldiers when he said, “I would rather see our young men brought home corpses than see them saved by such unsoldierlike means.”<sup>85</sup> Serving with black troops was an abhorrent prospect for Union Kentucky soldiers because it flew in the face of all social and racial conventions they believed in concerning proper race relations. Giving arms to black men predestined racial violence in the minds of white Kentuckians, leading to race riots that threatened to destroy everything whites held dear. Despite their vocal protests, black recruiting began in May 1863, and came into full effect in Kentucky in March 1864.<sup>86</sup>

The vast majority of Union Kentucky soldiers suffered collective apoplexy when the recruitment and arming of black soldiers was mentioned. Wilbur Condit related on May 8, 1864, his fear “the old 17<sup>th</sup> [Kentucky Volunteer Infantry] will do bad for our best soldiers here swear by they will not fight with niggers. There are niggers (a few only) here and if the boys see them they will be as good as their word.”<sup>87</sup> On March 14, 1864, Thomas Fairleigh recorded in his diary that his associate “[Dr.] Owings is as determined a Union man as ever but wonderfully down on the Administration about enrolling the negroes. Bill Burton, the enrolling officer in that District flatly refused to do it.”<sup>88</sup> Marcus Woodcock recorded the great negative “excitement” in the 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky

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<sup>84</sup> Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1951), 191-20.

<sup>85</sup> Frankfort *Commonwealth*, 18 May 1863, quoted in John David Smith, “The Recruitment of Negro Soldiers in Kentucky, 1863 – 1865,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 72 (October 1974): 366.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, “The Recruitment of Negro Soldiers in Kentucky, 1863 – 1865,” 378.

<sup>87</sup> Harp, *Torn Asunder*, 35-36.

<sup>88</sup> Fairleigh, diary, Monday, 14 March 1864 entry, p. 37, FHS.

Volunteer Infantry created by the authorization to enlist black soldiers. Fearing this issue would dissolve his regiment, Woodcock took up the argument for allowing blacks to enlist in the Federal army, despite his own opposition to black soldiers. In time, Woodcock convinced himself of the usefulness and wisdom of allowing black enlistment with his arguments, it is clear he failed to convince the others of his regiment.<sup>89</sup> Woodcock recorded that many in his regiment threatened to desert in response to black enlistment, and he believe two later desertions on February 24, 1863, were fulfillments of that promise.<sup>90</sup> More evidence of the regiment's distaste for black soldiers came after their enlistments expired. On November 25, 1864, the men arrived in Louisville to be mustered out when they nearly rioted after discovering they were slated to share quarters with black soldiers."<sup>91</sup>

Individual soldiers also registered their disapproval of black enlistment in their letters. Referencing Frank L. Wolford, colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, who condemned black enlistment and was later dishonorably dismissed for his outspoken criticisms, Captain Cincinnatus Condit of Company C, 12<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry related his own disgust with black enrollment in letters to his father. Condit complemented Wolford for his "boldness to speak out in defense of their principles although conflicting with a corrupt and odious Administration which would deluge our nation in blood and bankrupting the world if possible rather than failing in accomplishing their ambitious designs." Condit then related his own feelings upon the subject:

In my humble opinion, this war can not cease till the spirit of conservatism is imbibed by the people of our nation generally. This rebellion I think

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<sup>89</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, 147-48.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.



cannot be put down by subjugation and conquest irrespective of right and justice. I believe that under the present programme of things the rebels would find the means to fight us for ages. I cannot think their crimes yet made them deserve extinction: and they would be baser than I can conceive it possible for Americans to be if they submit alive to conditions which would degrade them below their very slaves. Such a union would be revolting to all but their [words missing] who are seeking and who would rejoice at their complete destruction. The thought of assisting such a [word missing] has ever been repulsive to my feelings: and the consciousness that I am doing it brought me to the determination to quit the army as soon as possible on the best terms I can. There is no dishonor to be greater than a sacrifice of my principles and I'd rather suffer death or exile than do it. My conclusion has not been hastily decided nor will it be changed.<sup>92</sup>

In July 1864, Condit also discouraged those still at home to remain so if it was possible, citing the army was no place for building or maintaining morals but it is clear that it had more to do with his disagreements with Union war policy.<sup>93</sup> Announcing his resignation to his father on August 24, 1864, Condit explained that it was based on his “disapproval of the present policy of the war.” He believed “that hatred and savagery, ambition and part are principles entirely too prevalent in our authorities and in the army. . . . Under such circumstances I cannot fight with a will, I cannot throw my soul into it. I cannot lead and encourage men as I should when I have the most serious doubts and misgivings myself. My view is this, if the present policy is ‘right’ than I am unworthy of the position . . .”<sup>94</sup> Captain James M. Elms of the 11<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry echoed Condit’s sentiments in a drunken fit in a “Public House,” claiming that “it was more honorable to be dishonorably dismissed than to serve as the war is now conducted,” believing that

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<sup>92</sup> Cincinnatus Condit to Father, 4 April 1864, Paris, KY, quoted in Harp, *Torn Asunder*, 20-21.

<sup>93</sup> Cincinnatus Condit to Harve, 31 July 1864, In Camp in Front of Atlanta, quoted in Goodall, *Glory Gone Forgotten*, 97-98.

<sup>94</sup> Cincinnatus Condit to Father, 31 July 1864 and 24 August 1864, Atlanta, GA, quoted in Harp, *Torn Asunder*, 21-2.

“when the administration acted unconstitutionally as it had done we ought to rebel!”

Elms later apologized for his speech when punishment was threatened, blaming drunkenness, but no doubt drink allowed him to express his true sentiments and beliefs about the war.<sup>95</sup> Soldier Benjamin F. Buckner felt “grossly deceived by the President” and believed that “all men of decency ought to quit the army” because of black enlistment.<sup>96</sup> Benjamin S. Jones also expressed his displeasure at black enlistment in vivid terms which would have likely been met with cheers from many Union Kentucky soldiers. “[W]ell Brother,” Jones wrote on February 12, 1864, “I Saw Something at Shelmound that I did not want to See I Saw a regiment of negros that is Something that I dont want to See any more if I Can help my Self but I reckon that the negros will be freed before this war is ended and then old abe Lincoln will be Satisfied I wish that he had to Sleep with a negro every night as long as he lives and kiss ones ass twice a day”<sup>97</sup> Reeling from the sights of racial equality, Jones later wrote, “I Can See negros every Day with guns and they Stand guard as Same as I do”<sup>98</sup> Hardy U. Jagers also saw the equalizing power in the uniform for blacks, writing, “I dont like to be Eaqueled with a big Buck Nigger.”<sup>99</sup> In an undated letter, William C. Jones, brother of Benjamin S. Jones, also related his distaste for serving with black soldiers, saying “I heard to day they

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<sup>95</sup> Wilson, *History of the Eleventh Volunteer Infantry Regiment*, Elms, James M. entry, 292.

<sup>96</sup> Benjamin F. Buckner to Miss Helen Martin, 11 July 1863, Benjamin F. Buckner Papers, University of Kentucky Library, quoted in Smith, “The Recruitment of Negro Soldiers in Kentucky,” 369-70.

<sup>97</sup> Benjamin S. Jones to Brother [William C. Jones], 12 February 1864, Camp at Cleveland, TN, Union Soldier Letters, 1861 – 1865, MSS. C U, FHS.

<sup>98</sup> Benjamin S. Jones to Brother [Lemuel Jones], 9 March 1864, Camp at Chattanooga, TN, *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Hardy U. Jagers to E. L. Jagers, 23 August 1864, Hardy U. Jagers Letters, Private Collection of Christy Bennett, Cecilia, KY, quoted in Lee, ““The Union as it was and the Constitution as it is,”” 68.

Was enrolling the negroes in Barren Co if they Want mee to fight they had Better keep the negroes Back”<sup>100</sup> Some soldiers believed that the primary use of black soldiers, garrison duty, was a bad idea if used in Kentucky. Although apathetic about black equality, George Gallup believed that using black soldiers to guard the Big Sandy, a trouble region of Kentucky, “will make matters worse. I think Labe will be on the Sandy. He does not like the idea of having his slumber guarded by negroes (a joke), I declare.”<sup>101</sup>

Unlike the vast majority, some Union Kentucky soldiers did find limited acceptance for black enlistment if it proved to hasten the end of the war. Though “The policy of recruiting negroes is all wrong,” Thomas Fairleigh argued, “the best in the emergency that could be done has been done, and we have to wait patiently the results. I do hope they may be favorable to the success of our aims and the restoration of our country—a consummation devoutedly [*sic*] to be wished!”<sup>102</sup> Some Union Kentucky soldiers believed, like the Emancipation Proclamation, the South was responsible for creating the necessity to enlist black soldiers. In his memoirs, Thomas Parsons recorded an exchange with a captured Confederate soldier after they both sighted a group of black soldiers:

“There is what I hate.”  
“What?” I asked.  
“Those [damned] Smoked Yankees,” he said.  
“Who is to blame for that?” I asked  
“Why you Yankees,” he answered.  
“No my f[r]iend,” I replied.  
“Well who do you say?” said he.  
“You Rebels” I said.

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<sup>100</sup> William C. Jones to Moses P. and Sarah Jones, Bennetts Ferry, Jackson County, TN, Union Soldier Letters, 1861 – 1865, MSS. C U, FHS.

<sup>101</sup> George W. Gallup to Wife, 29 July 1864, In Front of Atlanta, George W. Gallup Papers, 1828 – 1881, MSS. C G, FHS.

<sup>102</sup> Fairleigh, diary, Monday, 18 April 1864 entry, p. 54, FHS.

“How can you make that out?” he asked.  
 “Did you not go into rebellion against the U.S. Government?” I asked.  
 “Yes,” said he.  
 “Well” said I, “you make it necessary for the Government to call these people into the army to suppress that rebellion.”  
 He stood as if in contemplation for a moment and then said,  
 “These Kentuckians are the [damnedest] people out of [hell].”  
 “What Kentuckians?” I asked.  
 “Why the Southern men. In the beginning of the war they sent their sons out to fight for the South, and then before the war was over they sent their Negroes out to kill their sons,” said he, and I thought I had never heard the situation better expressed.<sup>103</sup>

As with the Emancipation Proclamation, believing that the necessity of enlisting black soldiers was the fault of the South increased the acceptability of the war measure among white Kentuckians. Some Union Kentuckians also gave a greater measure of acceptance to the enlistment of black soldiers after witnessing their effectiveness in action. Henry Clay Weaver was critical of the Emancipation Proclamation and black enlistment, which he believed represented “the wicked and unconstitutional usurpation of power assumed by Mr. Lincoln.”<sup>104</sup> However, regardless of how right or wrong the measure was, he grew impressed with the fighting ability of black soldiers. “I saw the 16<sup>th</sup> Colored regiment yesterday,” Weaver wrote to his daughter in December 1864, “. . . They did good fighting on the left, at Nashville. I understand, at one place where the darkies carried the enemies works, that they cried ‘Fort Pillow’ & made the gray Jackals suffer . . .”<sup>105</sup> Later, in February 1865, Weaver wrote again to his daughter on the subject,

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<sup>103</sup> Parsons, *Incidents & Experience in the Life of Thomas W. Parsons*, 143-44.

<sup>104</sup> Henry Clay Weaver to Cornelia, 26 December 1863, Henry Clay Weaver Papers, Library of Congress, microfilm in University of Kentucky Library, quoted in Smith, “The Recruitment of Negro Soldiers in Kentucky,” 369-70.

<sup>105</sup> Henry Clay Weaver, “The 16<sup>th</sup> Kentucky and the End of the War: The Letters of Henry Clay Weaver,” ed. James M. Merrill and James F. Marshall, *Filson Club History Quarterly* 32 (October 1958): 338.

reporting that “A portion of the 24 Corps is here also a portion of the 25<sup>th</sup> (colored). The negroes fight desperately, which is more than I expected . . .”<sup>106</sup>

Though Union Kentucky soldiers despised black soldiers, their enlistment was a useful measure to end the war sooner and relieve them of dangerous or odious duties; hence, black enlistment received a greater measure of acceptance from Union Kentucky soldiers than from Kentucky citizens. However, the acceptability of black enlistment should not be overstated; it was still an unpopular act among Union Kentucky soldiers. Union soldiers in the aggregate came to accept black enlistment, like emancipation, as a useful tool for ending the war. Black soldiers typically performed the most laborious of soldier tasks, such as garrison duty, and proved themselves able soldiers. White soldiers also recognized that a greater pool of soldiers, everything else remaining equal, increased their odds of surviving the war.<sup>107</sup> However, despite its advantages, the majority of Kentuckians, citizens and soldiers alike, never accepted black enlistment. Because of their antebellum worldview, the idea of equality between the races was anathema. To them, giving blacks guns was worse than giving them freedom, and freeing them was a vile act on the part of the federal government. As the Union war aims had shifted greatly over the course of the war, most Union Kentucky soldiers felt isolated from the Union cause and grew frustrated with their service.

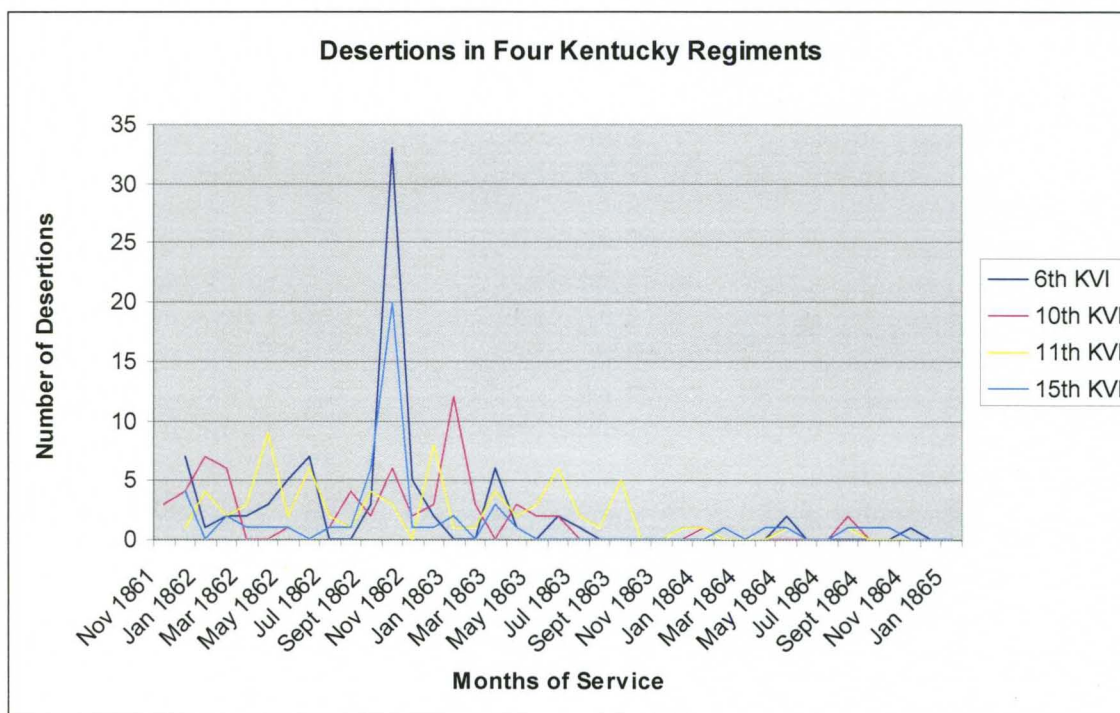
However, despite their immense dissatisfaction with the changed Union war aims, little evidence suggests that this resentment translated into desertion. Although Union Kentucky soldiers threatened to vote with their feet and desert in protest of emancipation or black enlistment, the great majority did not. The 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry no

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<sup>106</sup> Weaver, “The 16<sup>th</sup> Kentucky and the End of the War,” 342.

<sup>107</sup> Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank*, 119-21.

doubt gave pause when Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, but it did not cause any substantial difficulties in the regiment.<sup>108</sup> The 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry also remained committed to war despite their distaste for the policies of the federal government.<sup>109</sup> By and large, the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry also remained in service.<sup>110</sup> The statistical data for desertions also suggest that changing Union war aims had little effect on the desertion rates for the regiments that such data is available.<sup>111</sup>



<sup>108</sup> Belcher, *The 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War*, 59.

<sup>109</sup> Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 143.

<sup>110</sup> Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, 176.

<sup>111</sup> The data upon which this graph is assembled was taken from these sources: for the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, see Appendix 4 in Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, 370-404; for the 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, see Belcher, *The 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War*, 14, 35-36, 41-42, 54-55, 71-72, 96-97, 115, 199-20, 127-28, 142; for the 11<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, see Appendix G in Wilson, *History of the Eleventh Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment*, 265-376; and for the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer see the Biographical Roster in Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 289-406.

While there is a sizeable number of desertions between September 1862 and March 1863, corresponding to the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and two months after the issuance of the full Emancipation Proclamation, it is difficult to maintain that these desertions are only attributable to changing Union war aims. All four of these regiments participated in the October 1862 Battle of Perryville, a bloody engagement that took place in the heart of Kentucky. Historian Joseph R. Reinhart notes that equal numbers of soldiers from the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry deserted before and after the battle, suggesting the battle itself was a factor in the decision to desert.<sup>112</sup> Another significant factor is that these soldiers were close to home, as these regiments were either in Kentucky or Tennessee during these months of high desertion, and they may have taken a French leave and went home to help with the harvest or to take care of their families. The graph shows that as the war progressed and these regiments marched farther away from Kentucky, the number of desertions plummets. Of course, this pattern could also correspond with the idea that those who were disgusted enough with the changing war aims to desert had already done so, leaving only those who found those war aims acceptable enough not to desert or those who were unwilling to desert. However, despite the difficulty of interpreting these statistics, they do show that desertion was not as large a problem as the sentiments from Union Kentucky soldiers' letters and diaries against emancipation and black enlistment suggest. While even the desertion of a single soldier was an unacceptable loss of manpower to Union officials, no massive walk off by Kentucky Union soldiers took place which their comments suggested would occurred. A comparison of the number of desertions versus the number of white soldiers from each

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<sup>112</sup> Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, 136.

state shows that Kentucky had a substantial percentage of desertions comparatively but that it was not an absurd number of them.



### A Comparison of Desertion Among the States<sup>113</sup>

State	Enlistments	Desertions	Desertion %
Maryland	33,995	5,328	15.67
<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>51,743</b>	<b>7,227</b>	<b>13.97</b>
New Jersey	67,500	8,468	12.55
Delaware	11,236	1,384	12.32
California	15,725	1,855	11.80
New Hampshire	32,930	3,648	11.08
New York	409,561	44,913	10.97
Kansas	18,069	1,922	10.64
Connecticut	51,937	4,720	9.09
District of Columbia	11,912	912	7.66
Pennsylvania	315,017	24,050	7.63
Michigan	85,479	6,525	7.63
Rhode Island	19,521	1,384	7.09
Illinois	255,057	16,083	6.31
West Virginia	31,872	1,982	6.22
Ohio	304,814	18,354	6.02
Massachusetts	122,781	7,352	5.99
Missouri	100,616	5,743	5.71
Vermont	32,549	1,578	4.85
Indiana	193,748	8,927	4.61
Wisconsin	91,029	3,415	3.75
Maine	64,973	2,370	3.65
Iowa	75,797	2,627	3.47
Minnesota	23,913	576	2.41

<sup>113</sup> For this chart, the number of enlistments for each state was taken from the White Troops column of the Summary of Troops Furnished by the Several States and Territories During the War of the Rebellion chart provided in Frederick H. Dyer's *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines, IA: Dyer Publishing Company, 1908), 11. The number of desertions for each was taken from Table IV of Ella Lonn's *Desertion during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 234-35. So to avoid prejudicing the comparison between the final percentages, states and territories that furnished fewer than 10,000 enlistments are excluded from the chart. States which were primarily Confederate but furnished a substantial number of soldiers to the Union, such as Tennessee, are also excluded. The numbers from both of these sources are out of date and likely somewhat inaccurate, but the percentages they provided are likely close enough to the real numbers to give a rough idea of what desertion was like for the soldiers of each state.

Fourteen percent desertion is undoubtedly high, but, as the chart shows, it is not out of the ordinary compared to other border states that shared a similar dislike for emancipation and black enlistment.

Given their strong disgust with the new Union war policies, why did Union Kentucky soldiers not fly from the Federal armies and from Union service in far greater numbers? No doubt fears of facing a firing squad kept some in the ranks. Soldiers feared getting caught in the act of deserting or arrested after successfully leaving the army and having to suffer serious consequences for it. Executions for desertion were rare in the Union army, but they were always threatened and deserters who were caught were almost always forced back in the ranks with a loss of pay and additional service time to make up for the time lost while deserting. They also had to deal with the shame and loss of honor among their comrades and those at home. Many soldiers also viewed their enlistment as a contractual obligation with either the federal government or with the Founding Fathers that could not be broken on their part. Their belief in carrying out their duty or respecting their obligation to the service kept them from deserting. Following nineteenth-century American norms, many soldiers feared the charge of desertion which would reflect poorly on their character. As Civil War soldiers typically served with others from the same neighborhoods, towns, and regions as their own, a soldier's desertion would be reported back home by others in the company or regiment, and the charge of desertion would follow him long after the war, perhaps for the rest of his life. Hence, many soldiers did not desert to avoid a life-long stain on their character. Others simply went along with emancipation and black enlistment once it became clear how seriously Union

officials were about implementing these policies.<sup>114</sup> Most importantly, however, the great majority of Union Kentucky soldiers enlisted into Federal service to fight for the preservation of the Union and they were determined to stick with it despite the disagreements they had with the policies of Union officials. The soldiers knew their desertion would hurt the federal war effort to save the Union. They also felt a strong sense of duty to their country that had been with them since the beginning of the war. The lack of desertion by Union Kentucky soldiers shows that they continued to believe in the cause even if they disagreed with the means used to achieve that end—Union victory.

Yet, Union Kentucky soldiers were not silent in their protests against emancipation and black enlistment. These soldiers registered their disapproval in two visible ways: by their votes in the 1864 Presidential Election and in their decisions whether to re-enlist at the expiration of their original enlistment, most of which were up in 1864. The 1864 Presidential Election was the first election in which soldiers operating outside their home state would be allowed to vote. Not all states allowed soldiers to vote in the 1864 Election (Indiana, Illinois, Delaware, New Jersey, and Oregon did not), but Kentucky did.<sup>115</sup>

President Abraham Lincoln and General George B. McClellan, the popular former commander of the Army of the Potomac, comprised the two selections for voters. Lincoln represented everything distasteful to Union Kentucky soldiers, emancipation and black enlistment. McClellan represented something more complex. McClellan himself,

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<sup>114</sup> Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank*, 120.

<sup>115</sup> John C. Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln: The Battle for the 1864 Presidency* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1997), 339-40.

as put forth in his “Letter of Acceptance to the Democratic Nomination Committee,” favored a peaceful settlement with the Confederate States of America so long as the Union was maintained in that peace. Peaceful separation was unacceptable to McClellan. If the Confederacy refused to return to the Union as a condition of peace, “the responsibility for ulterior consequences will fall upon those who remain in arms against the Union. . . . the Union must be preserved at all hazards. I could not look in the face of my gallant comrades of the Army and Navy, who have survived so many bloody battles and tell them their labors, and the sacrifice of so many of our slain and wounded brethren had been in vain—that we had abandoned that Union for which we have so often perilled [*sic*] our lives.”<sup>116</sup> McClellan’s position was popular with Union soldiers from all states, but his position was tainted with the peaceful separation rhetoric of the Democratic Party’s Chicago convention under which he ran as a candidate. This tie between McClellan and the Democratic Party undid McClellan’s appeal in the eyes of Union soldiers, many of whom believed that McClellan had become the tool of the Copperheads and Peace Democrats. Despite his popularity among the soldiery, many Union soldiers avoided voting for him on Election Day.<sup>117</sup>

Some Union Kentucky soldiers were in favor of Lincoln’s election. In trying to defend the candidacy of McClellan to his family and home relations, Marcus Woodcock converted himself to a Lincoln supporter after failing to develop some significant objection to Lincoln’s election. “I saw the untenability of my position,” recalled

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<sup>116</sup> George B. McClellan, “McClellan’s Acceptance Letter to the Democratic Nomination Committee, Orange, New Jersey, Sept 8, 1864,” quoted in David E. Long, *The Jewel of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln’s Re-election and the End of Slavery* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008), Appendix A, 275-77.

<sup>117</sup> Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln*, 342-43.

Woodcock, “yet I determined if possible to hold my ground, and closed my address by saying that ‘I cannot assert that Lincoln has, as yet committed any very objectionable act towards the people, but we must not vote for him for fear he any very objectionable act towards the people, but we must not vote for him for fear he *may* do something wrong.’” After thinking what McClellan might do when elected, Woodcock tore up the address and became a Lincoln supporter, though a mute one because of the McClellan’s popularity within his regiment.<sup>118</sup> Thomas Speed recollected his vote in the election, writing “I remember with pride, that the first vote I ever cast was for Lincoln in 1864 while in the service in the field, and furthermore that nearly the whole of my old company ‘A’ also voted for Lincoln, the other companies being nearly a unit the other way.”<sup>119</sup> The supporters of Lincoln among the Union Kentucky soldiers convinced themselves to vote for Lincoln because McClellan’s association with the Copperheads and Peace Democrats of his party made him too unattractive to vote for. A first sergeant in the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, Martin Coder stated his own opinion on the election to his family when asking for their opinions:

As for myself I would support McClelland if I knew that he would not truckle to Traitors in arms or Traitors North for I don’t like the Idea of soldiering three years and then giving the rebels all they ask and more than they dare to ask now. I had some doubt about McClelland and my own opinions correspond with thousands of soldiers in this army. I am not much of a politician but have been taught to believe in Democracy but if the Democratic party is a Peace party I am not a Peace man until we can conquer a peace that will be lasting and the only way I can see to do that is to fight until the rebels submit for I will never live under a government of their or their friends making if I can help it.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, 272-73.

<sup>119</sup> Speed, “The Civil War Memories of Captain Thomas Speed,” 256.

<sup>120</sup> Martin Van Buren Coder to Sister, 1 October 1864, quoted in Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 246-47.

Likewise, Henry M. West, a soldier in the 17<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, wrote to his father on September 10, 1864, about the upcoming election with the same concerns and beliefs as Coder:

You said in your last letter that you was opposed to Lincoln & in favor of McClellan. I cant say that I am in favor of either of them. I am in favor of a man who will prosecute the ware to the last. And I allso want peace I want an honorable peace. I don't want to acknoleag the independence of the South for the sake of peace no never am I willing to acknowledge the Sothern independence. I had rather see the war continue 3 years longer. . . . Well we know that Lincon will finaly put down the rebellion if he is re elected it is tru he has don some things during his administration that dont suit me exactly though I never fell out with him as much as some men. I dont think he has bin any to hard on Rebbels or rebel Simpathisers. I like McClelan as a man & as a soldier though if he should excep that Chichaggo nomination I shall be bound to think he gon astray and got in bad company. . . . Now if McClelan should accept the nomination move by such men as those what reason so we have to believ that he is any truer to the union than they are is it reasonable to suppose the if he is elected by them he will chose his cabinet from among ther number. And I cant afford to fight Rebbels 3 years & then vote with them and I had just as soon my vote wold be poled with Jeff Davis next November as to be poled with Vallandingham.<sup>121</sup>

Despite the misgivings of some, the majority of Union Kentucky soldiers embraced the candidacy of McClellan. Upon reading McClellan's acceptance letter, Samuel Cox wrote in his diary that "It's a sound document and suits me exactly."<sup>122</sup> "The vote" of the regiment, he later recorded on November 8, "stood 179 for McClellan and 51 for Abe Lincoln. Voted for McClellan myself."<sup>123</sup> Henry Weaver had spent his time before the election defending "George B. McClellan as a candidate for the next president, against the feeble assaults of his less feeble adversaries."<sup>124</sup> Voting in

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<sup>121</sup> Henry M. West, "Henry M. West's 'Political Letter,' September 10, 1864," ed. Edward M. Coffman, *Filson Club History Quarterly* 30 (Oct 1956): 340-42.

<sup>122</sup> Cox, *Civil War Diary*, 47.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>124</sup> Weaver, "Georgia Through Kentucky Eyes," 337.

Nashville on November 8, Weaver wrote to his daughter that “The 16<sup>th</sup> voted 198 for McClellan, & 120 for Lincoln, being a majority for Little Mac of 78. There were 48 men in the Regiment, some being too young, & others refusing to vote. The most of those who refused to vote were McClellan men. For my part I voted for the hero of Malvern Hill, Fair Oaks, Antietam & Chicago.” Weaver also recorded that he “understood that the 11<sup>th</sup> Ky cast but a dozen votes for Lincoln, while nearly 500, were cast against him.”<sup>125</sup> The 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry also voted for McClellan as well.<sup>126</sup> The results of the election among all soldiers of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry are not known, but if the votes of Company D are any indication (19 for McClellan, 1 for Lincoln), the majority of the 6<sup>th</sup> voted for McClellan.<sup>127</sup>

In the end, when the votes were tallied, Union Kentucky soldiers gave 2,823 votes to McClellan and 1,194 to Lincoln, though many of the soldiers’ votes were included in the state’s general canvass, which sat at 64,301 for McClellan and 27,786 for Lincoln.<sup>128</sup> The overall soldier vote sat at 33,748 for McClellan and 116,887 for Lincoln, meaning Lincoln captured 77.6% of the soldier vote, while he only captured 55.1% of the citizen

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<sup>125</sup> Weaver, “Georgia Through Kentucky Eyes,” 338.

<sup>126</sup> Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 248-49.

<sup>127</sup> Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, 347.

<sup>128</sup> Numbers taken from the “Result of the Presidential Election of 1864” chart in Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America During the Great Rebellion* (Washington, DC: Philip & Solomons, 1865), 623. According to Edward McPherson, Kentucky soldiers who were in camp within the state had their votes counted in the state’s general canvass rather than in the separate soldier vote for those outside of the state, resulting in less accurate numbers for the soldier vote. Fortunately, the ratio between McClellan and Lincoln votes in both canvasses are nearly identical (70.28% for McClellan in the soldier vote and 69.83% in the general state vote), and so even if the exact soldier vote is not known or can never be known, it is likely that Union Kentucky soldiers were 70% in favor of McClellan.

vote (1,802,237 for McClellan and 2,213,665 for Lincoln).<sup>129</sup> Except for Union Kentucky soldiers, Union soldiers in general were much more in favor of Lincoln than the general citizenry population.

Why did Union Kentucky soldiers champion McClellan and reject Lincoln in the 1864 Presidential Election when the rest of the Union army overwhelmingly favored Lincoln? While, at least vocally, McClellan favored a quick peaceful settlement to the war, it is unlikely that the desire to end the war and go home sooner was any higher among Union Kentucky soldiers as it was among the soldiers of other states. It is also improbable that Union Kentucky soldiers wanted to end the war with a peaceful separation of the two sections and have all their time and effort in the military be wasted. Nor is it likely they were willing to give up on preserving the Union when it is clear how strongly they voiced the desire in their letters and diaries. The most likely explanation for this difference in voting lies in the rejection of emancipation and black enlistment by Union Kentucky soldiers. Voting in the election allowed them to air their grievances against the policies of the Lincoln Administration without doing material harm to the Union war effort that their desertions would have caused. And Union Kentucky soldiers still fumed about those policies up to the election, suggesting this dislike of Lincoln and his policies dictated their vote. A Quaker soldier in the 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry, William Garrigues Bentley noted this strong anti-Lincoln sentiment among Union Kentucky soldiers around election time. In September 1864, Bentley wrote that

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<sup>129</sup> McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America During the Great Rebellion*, 623. James M. McPherson uses different vote totals in *Battle Cry of Freedom*, but the resulting percentages, 78% of soldiers for Lincoln and 53% of citizens for Lincoln, are close. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 804.



There was a time when [McClellan] was very popular with the army but that has passed away and he has but a few admirers in this army at least, and they are the poor, ignorant trash who can only say against Lincoln that he freed the niggers. . . . This is all the fault they find with him but that, in the eyes of Kentuckians particularly, is the most grievous sin he could have committed. We have 3 KY Regiments in our Brigade, and I will venture to say that not over [one-tenth] of them ever owned a negro, as nearly all the troops in our army from that state belong to the class commonly known as “poor whites” who everyone know, who has ever traveled through the south, are looked down upon even by blacks. These poor whites are raving over the idea of the nigger being raised (or lowered, which ever you like) to a level with them. This is what might be expected of persons raised in the slave states.<sup>130</sup>

This dislike among Union Kentucky soldiers for emancipation, black enlistment, and, ultimately, Lincoln translated into votes for McClellan in the 1864 presidential election.

Union Kentucky soldiers also conveyed their disapproval of the changing Union war aims with their decision not to reenlist after their original three-year enlistment expired. As previously mentioned, Benjamin Jones declined to reenlist in the veterans’ service because he did not think that Union officials acted constitutionally in their emancipation and black enlistment policies.<sup>131</sup> His objection to these policies no doubt represented the main reason why Union Kentucky soldiers rejected reenlistment. Noting the near full reenlistment of the 19<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Marcus Woodcock recorded that reenlistment “never got a right start among our boys.” If he had been healthier, Woodcock claimed he would have better “attempted to induce Co. B to ‘go veterans[.]’” However, Woodcock lamented, “I also expect my efforts would *not* have

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<sup>130</sup> Barbara Bentley Smith and Nina Bentley Baker. *“Burning Rails as We Pleased”: The Civil War Letters of William Garrigues Bentley, 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2004), 116.

<sup>131</sup> Benjamin S. Jones to “Brother” [William C. Jones], 12 February 1864, Camp at Cleveland, TN, FHS.

been crowned with success.”<sup>132</sup> Thomas Fairleigh spent much of the early part of 1864 trying to convince his men of the 26<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry to reenlist. Fairleigh was confident in late January that there would be few problems getting the regiment to veteranize, believing that at least three-fourths would reenlist.<sup>133</sup> Ultimately, such a lack of desire to reenlist existed within the ranks of the 26<sup>th</sup> that it was necessary to consolidate it other Kentucky regiments, such as the 33<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky, and then fill the gaps remaining with draftees.<sup>134</sup> According to Jenkins’s roster for the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, only twenty-three men of that regiment reenlisted.<sup>135</sup> On January 5, 1864, 180 of the 41<sup>st</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry reenlisted with eight declining to do so; only twenty-one of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry reenlisted.<sup>136</sup> Ultimately, out of all the men of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky, thirty-nine members voluntarily reenlisted while seven were forced to do so to make up for lost service time.<sup>137</sup> Because of lost paperwork, the 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry was mustered out without the opportunity to reenlist.<sup>138</sup>

In the end, 5,407 veteran Union Kentucky soldiers reenlisted in the Union war effort at the end of their original enlistments.<sup>139</sup> This number is low compared to the national average rate of reenlistments. Of all veterans that had the opportunity to reenlist, approximately 136,000 chose to do so while roughly 100,000 did not, meaning 57.63% of

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<sup>132</sup> Woodcock, *A Southern Boy in Blue*, 249-50.

<sup>133</sup> Fairleigh, diary, Thursday, 28 January 1864 entry, p. 13, FHS.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, diary, Wednesday, 9 March 1864 entry, p. 34, and Wednesday, 11 May 1864 entry, p. 66, FHS.

<sup>135</sup> Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 289-406

<sup>136</sup> Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, 270.

<sup>137</sup> Numbers taken from Appendix 4 in Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, 370-404.

<sup>138</sup> Belcher, *The 10<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War*, 143.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860 – 1865* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907), 308.

Union veterans from all states veteranized.<sup>140</sup> Comparatively, only 5,407 Union Kentucky soldiers out of 51,743 reenlisted, meaning that only 10.45% of Union Kentucky soldiers reenlisted.<sup>141</sup>

Once their enlistments ended, the majority of Union Kentucky soldiers wished to serve in the army no longer. The Union cause had changed so greatly from the time when they had enlisted that they could not reconcile their beliefs with it anymore. The Union policies of emancipation and black enlistment ran too much against their antebellum worldview which cherished slavery and considered the institution essential for the well-being of society. While these soldiers wished for the Union war effort to be successful, justifying all their hard work and losses while in the army, the great majority of those that did not reenlist believed they had fulfilled their duty and done their part for the cause. They owed nothing more.

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<sup>140</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 720. Historian James W. Geary placed the number of reenlistments at 136,507. James W. Geary, *We Need Men: The Union Draft in the Civil War* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), 81.

<sup>141</sup> Along with the number of reenlisting veterans, Speed placed the total number of Union Kentucky soldiers at 66,868 (72,275 total enlistments minus 5,407 reenlistments to avoid double-counting), which is 15,125 more than Dyer's count. Using Speed's count, we get an even lower 8.09% reenlistment rate among Union Kentucky soldiers. Regardless of which number is used, reenlistment among Union Kentucky soldiers was far below the national average.

CHAPTER IV  
FOR CONFEDERACY, FOR SLAVERY: KENTUCKY'S CONFEDERATE CIVIL  
WAR SOLDIERS

Southern-sympathizing Kentuckians entered the Confederate army for various reasons, some mundane in nature while others were more ideological. Some enrolled for the chance to travel and adventure and others did so for pay or for a chance to better their own personal circumstances. However, most Kentuckians entered the Confederate service because they wanted to fight to protect their homes, institutions, and way of life, all of which revolved around the institution of slavery. Though they may not have written about it, the preservation of slavery constituted the paramount reason for their donning of the butternut uniform. Like Union Kentucky soldiers, Confederate Kentucky soldiers valued slavery because formed the basis of Kentucky politics, economics, and culture. They could not see a Kentucky that would not suffer if the institution of slavery was lost. They also fought to establish a new Southern nation, which reflected their own feelings of Southern distinctiveness and promised the best method of protecting slavery. Confederate Kentuckians fought for these goals until the end of the war as they believe it was the only way to save the only world—one based on slavery—that they knew.

Like their Union counterparts, Confederate Kentucky soldiers came from all parts of Kentucky, but not in equal measure. In 1926, historian E. Merton Coulter argued in *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* that the primary Southern-sympathizing

regions of Kentucky were the Bluegrass and the southwest, though the Bluegrass Region is where “strong Unionism found its most sterile ground.”<sup>1</sup> Coulter based his observations on the comments of Kentuckians at the time as well as the supposition that the richer the fields, the greater the need for slavery, which gave those men in Bluegrass and southwest greater incentive to be sympathetic with the South.<sup>2</sup> To some degree, later research has supported Coulter’s theory. In “Where were the Kentucky Unionists and Secessionists?,” historian James E. Copeland took the number of enlisted Union soldiers from each Kentucky county as representative of that county’s Union-sympathizing sentiment. He then argued that those areas with low Union enlistment must correspond with high Confederate sympathy. Copeland’s analysis demonstrated that the Bluegrass and the western portion of Kentucky were the highest areas of Confederate sympathy, as Coulter argued, but rather than the Bluegrass, a region of split loyalty, it was the Jackson Purchase and western-most Pennyroyal and Western Coal Field counties that were most devoted to the Confederacy.<sup>3</sup>

While the Bluegrass was well known for its large number of slaveholders and slaves, the Jackson Purchase had far fewer of either. The secessionist character of the Jackson Purchase cannot be explained by the economic need to preserve slavery; even with a high level of slaveholding, the Bluegrass divided itself in sentiment and the

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<sup>1</sup> E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-22.

<sup>3</sup> James E. Copeland, “Where were the Kentucky Unionists and Secessionists?,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 71 (October 1973): 344-50. Copeland argues that the greatest secessionist counties, those he names Class One counties, are: all the Jackson Purchase counties, Livingstone, Trigg, Caldwell, Hopkins, Webster, Union, Henderson, Logan, Woodford, Shelby, Spencer, Bourbon, Nelson, Carroll, Owen, Trimble, Scott, Meade, Clark, Morgan, and Letcher.

Jackson Purchase, with a much lower level of slaveholding, was devoted to the Confederate cause.<sup>4</sup> How can the high Confederate enlistment in these counties be explained?<sup>5</sup>

In “‘The South Carolina of Kentucky’: Religion and Secession in the Jackson Purchase,” historian Alan Bearman argues for a multi-faceted explanation for the Purchase’s secessionism. Purchasers felt isolated culturally, politically, and economically from the rest of the state because the Jackson Purchase was the last region of Kentucky to be settled; they never quite fitted in the political, economic, and cultural framework already set up by other Kentuckians. Purchasers moved to Kentucky from Tennessee or other southern states, and identified themselves as Southerners and so looked to other Southerners for guidance. Purchasers also held greater political and economic ties with Nashville and Memphis than with the North or the rest of Kentucky.<sup>6</sup> Most of all, Bearman argues, evangelical religion in the Jackson Purchase argued for a Southern pro-slavery theology, maintaining slavery was a good and just institution. Hence, though the Jackson Purchase lacked a significant number of slaveholders, its Southern worldview compelled men of that region to enlist in the Confederate army to protect slavery.<sup>7</sup>

By and large, Southern-sympathizing Kentuckians had a more difficult time enlisting in the Confederate army because they lived in a Union-controlled state, as were

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<sup>4</sup> Copeland, “Where were the Kentucky Unionists and Secessionists?,” 348-49.

<sup>5</sup> Berry F. Craig placed the number of Confederate enlistments from the Jackson Purchase at around 5,500 compared to just 650 Union enlistments. Berry F. Craig, “Jackson Purchase Confederate Troops in the Civil War,” *Jackson Purchase Historical Society Journal* 2 (1974): 4.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Bearman, “‘The South Carolina of Kentucky’: Religion and Secession in the Jackson Purchase” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 76 (Oct 2002): 500-505.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 520.

other border states. On October 1861, the Kentucky legislature enacted several laws to prevent Confederate enlistment among Kentuckians: any Kentuckian who joined the Confederacy and then invaded the state was to be jailed one to ten years, any Kentuckian who enlisted or aided a Kentuckian in enlisting in the Confederate army was subjected to a thousand dollar fine or six months in jail, and, later, Kentuckians who aided the Confederacy in any way were subject to expatriation.<sup>8</sup> Those Kentuckians who wished to join the Confederate army had to make their way through hostile territory, evade guards and sentries, and get to the Confederate lines, sometimes in other states. In Louisville during September 1861, when he decided to enlist, Johnny Green, later of the 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, had to go south to Bowling Green to join up with other Kentuckians enlisting in the Confederate army. However, the Unionist Home Guards controlled Louisville and permitted no suspected Southern-sympathizers to go south. In order to leave the city, Green and others hid their weapons in a farm wagon, covered in hay and manure, and made their separate ways south, the wagon guided by a fellow soldier dressed as a farmer. They reunited at Muldraugh Hill and continued south to the Confederate lines.<sup>9</sup> Lieutenant Lot D. Young of Company H, 4<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry came close to detection on his way to Confederate lines. Before leaving Paris, Kentucky, for Louisville, Young had exchanged his pumps for more soldier-like brogans. Sitting in a hotel in Louisville, a man Young thought to be a detective hunting Kentuckians traveling to enlist in the Confederate soldier approached him, but turned out

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<sup>8</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 139-40.

<sup>9</sup> John Williams Green, *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade: The Journal of a Confederate Soldier*, ed. Albert Dennis Kirwan (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), 9. Unless otherwise stated, all military units mentioned in this chapter were Confederate units.

to be a Tennessee captain who was assisting Kentuckians in getting through to the Confederate lines. He cautioned Young to hide his shoes as they were a dead giveaway of his intentions. Later, on board a train heading south, Young barely escaped detection by the train's sentries; the train left before two others and him had been searched at the rear of the train.<sup>10</sup> Given the great dangers and difficulties that Kentuckians experienced in their quest to enlist in the Confederate army, their words and motivations to enlist and serve demonstrate a genuine and deeply felt need to participate.

Confederate Kentucky soldiers provided many reasons for enlisting in the Confederate service. The excitement produced by the April 12, 1861 firing on Fort Sumter encouraged many to join the Confederate service.<sup>11</sup> James Henry Dorman, who would later join the 4<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, wrote in his memoir that in April 1861, "politics ran high and the whole Country was in a nervous state of anxiety. And soldiers from both sides were on us, and running to and fro, and everything was feverish, and nothing but [war] was talked or thought of."<sup>12</sup> Though Kentucky's state legislature declared neutrality on May 16, 1861, that declaration did not stop many Kentuckians from making their way to Confederate enlistment camps in Southern states. Three hundred Kentuckians headed to Nashville on April 25 and 480 more went to Harper's Ferry on May 5.<sup>13</sup> Camp Boone in Tennessee formed a popular destination for those wanting to enlist, and by July 25, fifty companies of Kentuckians had applied for

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<sup>10</sup> Lot D. Young, *Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Orphan Brigade* (Louisville: Courier-Journal Job Printing Company, 1918), 12-15.

<sup>11</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 47-49.

<sup>12</sup> James Hervey Dorman, "'In Everything Give Thanks': A Journal of the Life and Times of James Hervey Dorman," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 60 (April 1962): 95.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.



Confederate service. On July 21, 1861, the First Battle of Manassas, to Southern eyes the first great Confederate military victory, exhilarated the state's Southern-sympathizers and led to many more Confederate enlistments.<sup>14</sup> When the state legislature declared the state for the Union, the majority of the State Guards led by Simon Buckner, a home defense force prominently Confederate in its sympathy as was Buckner, headed south and enlisted in the Confederate army.<sup>15</sup>

Some Confederate Kentuckians enlisted in the Confederate army out of a desire for adventure.<sup>16</sup> Most Kentuckians did not have the opportunity to travel far from their homes and enlistment in the army promised a chance to go and experience a world they had not yet seen. Few could pass up such an opportunity. John S. Jackson, a private often also clerk of Company B, 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, wrote of his quick decision to enlist in the Confederate service in the September 26, 1861 entry of his diary:

Late in the afternoon [I] left home with the intention of making my way to Green River, where the advance of the Confederate army was then encamped. My mind was made up to undertake this journey almost instantly. On the evening mentioned I walked down to the Depot, about car-time, to get the daily papers, and as I was passing in, W. S. [William Stoner] said to me, "Let us go to Bloomfield to-night, and join the party going through to Dixie!" or something to that effect. I had scarcely thought of such a thing before; but in an instant my mind was made up, and I answered, "All right." I immediately returned home and put on a heavy suit of cloths, and tried to slip off from the folks, but they divined my purpose. I told them I would only be gone a few days—that I was going to see Bro. Jo and would be back. (My mind was not fully made up to join the army, when I left home—I was not satisfied my health would permit me). Taking nothing with me but a traveling shawl, I mounted and

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<sup>14</sup> Dorman, "In Everything Give Thanks," 105-6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>16</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 119.

joined W. S. at his home. We were soon on the road, two modern Don Quixotes starting out to seek adventure.<sup>17</sup>

Another Confederate Kentucky soldier, Private Gervis D. Grainger of Company I, 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, had escaped capture and returned home, remaining there for some time before the call of adventure compelled him to return to his unit. “Despite its hardships and dangers,” Grainger wrote, “there is a strong fascination about war life, and when a heart, especially a young heart, has once been fired by the peal of the cannon, roar of musketry and shouts of contending forces, it soon chafes under the monotonous quiet of home.”<sup>18</sup> The desire for excitement and adventure influenced many Kentuckians into entering Confederate service and played a role in keeping them in the ranks throughout the war.

Like their Unionist counterparts, many Confederate Kentucky soldiers enlisted with the expectation that the war would be short in length and, therefore, would not require much time and effort thereby encouraging enlistment. Jackman’s desire for adventure increased because of his belief the war would be done with quickly and he could return home soon after experiencing a little of the world. Three years later, when his enlistment expired, he remarked, “When I joined the army, I little thought the war would last so long.”<sup>19</sup> Henry L. Stone of Company D, 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry enlisted in September 1862, believing the war would end by that Christmas. Even after

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<sup>17</sup> John S. Jackman, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier: John S. Jackman of the Orphan Brigade*, ed. William C. Davis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> Gervis D. Grainger, *Four Years with the Boys in Gray* (Franklin, KY: Favorite Office, 1902), 32.

<sup>19</sup> Jackman, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 147.

Christmas passed, he continued to believe the end of the war was always at hand.<sup>20</sup> John Lafferty, first enlisted in Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cavalry Kentucky later Company K, 9<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, reflected in his memoirs that he felt easier leaving his family and enlisting because “When I went into war in 1861, we thought it would be of short duration and I left plenty of food stuff to supply my family until the time I expected to return.”<sup>21</sup>

Little evidence exists that demonstrates the promise of pay for military service allured Confederate Kentucky soldiers and contributed significantly to their desire to enlist. However, for a few who had trouble finding work, the opportunity to make a living as a soldier and help support their families convinced them to enlist. William T. McClure, a Union Kentucky soldier in the 15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry (U.S.A.), recorded his February 1862 meeting with a wounded Confederate Kentucky soldier during the seizure of Bowling Green, Kentucky, in a letter to his mother. “He asked me,” McClure wrote, “to sit down on his bed by him, and [he] seemed delighted to see a Kentuckian . . . . He said he joined them because he was down here and had no other way of making a living. He said he was better than he had been.”<sup>22</sup> The effect of pay on motivation to enlist and serve should not be overstated, but it was another motivator for Southern-sympathizing Kentuckians to enlist in the Confederate service.

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<sup>20</sup> Henry L. Stone to Father, 13 February 1863, Camp near Liberty, Tenn., Stone Family Papers, MSS A .S878 1, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY, [hereafter cited FHS].

<sup>21</sup> John Lafferty Civil War Narrative, 1905, p. 16., 99SC13, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky, [hereafter cited KHS].

<sup>22</sup> G. Glenn Clift, ed., “Civil War Letters of Brothers William T. and Joseph T. McClure of the Fifteenth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 60 (July 1962): 212-16.

Some Kentuckians saw Confederate service as a way to avoid criminal charges against them. Later to become an infamous guerilla, Champ Ferguson enlisted in the Confederate army because he believed if the Confederate cause succeeded, the murder charges against him might be dropped or forgotten.<sup>23</sup> Such men who had, for whatever reason, poor prospects under the current government had every incentive to support the establishment of a new government.<sup>24</sup> Some Southern-sympathizing Kentuckians also fled to Confederate service to avoid arrest or seizure by state officials or Unionist groups. Later governor of Kentucky, Union Colonel Thomas E. Bramlette ordered the Lexington Rifles, a military group operating as part of the State Guard, to be arrested because of its obvious Southern-sympathies. Many members of the Rifles fled to enlist in the Confederate army to avoid seizure by Union officials. Thomas F. Berry, one of the Lexington Rifles who left Kentucky for Confederate service, recorded in his memoir that Bramlette's order had produced "intense excitement throughout the state. Many Southern sympathizers had left and joined the army in the South; many were leaving under serious difficulty."<sup>25</sup> Like Berry, N. S. Offutt, later a lieutenant in the 5<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, also fled the state and enlisted into the Confederate service. He recounted his escape in a December 1863 letter to his father:

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<sup>23</sup> Brian D. McKnight, "'Time by the forelock': Champ Ferguson and the Borderland Style of Warfare," in *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee*, ed. Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickinson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 140-41. For additional reading on Champ Ferguson, see Brian D. McKnight, *Confederate Outlaw: Champ Ferguson and the Civil War in Appalachia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Ella Lonn, *Desertion during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas F. Berry, *Four Years with Morgan and Forrest* (Oklahoma City: Harlow-Ratliff Company, 1914), 9-10 and 26.

As I am now on my way to my adopted home I will trouble you with a condensed history of myself since I last saw you which was in the early part of August 1862. The latter part of same month upon learning that my arrest was decided upon . . . After acertaing the fact in regard to the matter and having formerly entered any declaration that if the Yanks [are?] designed to molest me my only place of refuge was in the ranks of the Confederate State Army I met my friend James C. a day or so after learing these facts discussed but a few moments the propriety of trying our hands in the Blockade-running business when we decided upon leaving for the C.S. lines as soon as we could muster a squad of sufficient strength for personal safety. After consummating all necessary preliminaries we started . . . We of course felt some little apprehension for Our Scalps as the Federals and the Homeguards were scouring the country, they having received notification of our passage through the country by citizens on whom we necessarily depredated in the way of changing stock . . .<sup>26</sup>

In time, Offnutt and those with him made it to Confederate lines and enlisted in the Confederate army. For Southern-sympathizing Kentuckians, threats of arrest and seizure motivated many to enlist in the Confederate army that may have rather decided to wait and watch from the sidelines. The hunting of these men by Union officials many have, ironically, contributed more Kentucky soldiers to the Confederate cause than leaving them alone would have done.

Though many mundane reasons to enlist in the Confederate army existed, such as seeking adventure and looking for pay, the most important, longest-lasting motivators were ideological in nature. Confederate Kentucky soldiers repeated these ideological reasons numerous times in their letters and diaries. The primary reason these soldiers cited for enlisting in the Confederate army is their desire to defend the South, its institutions, and its way of life. Homeland protection constituted the most common reason stated by Confederate Kentuckian soldiers for enlisting in the Confederate service. Historian James M. McPherson contends that Virginians expressed the strongest desire to

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<sup>26</sup> N. S. Offnutt to Father, n.d., n.p., N. S. Offnut Letter, 92SC04, KHS.

protect their homes as that state was on the front line of the war, but Confederate Kentuckians were just as adamant about their desires to protect their homes from a Northern invader and occupier.<sup>27</sup> James E. Paton of Company G, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry recorded in his journal that he had enlisted in the Confederate army in July 1861 because “I could not resist my country’s call and at once volunteered to give all the aid I could in the cause of freedom from Northern tyranny and despotism, and to help drive back the invader, and despoiler of Southern homes . . . .”<sup>28</sup> A soldier of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, W. E. Minor echoed these sentiments, writing to a friend, “the North don’t understand our spirit. They mistake for what we are fighting. They had as well try to quench the fire of life—as to try to subjugate those who are satisfied they are fighting for their mothers, fathers, sisters, kindred, and the tender ones of their hearts.”<sup>29</sup> Captain Daniel E. Turney of Company G, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry claimed he had enlisted to “go to assist to drive back the Northern hordes and base marauders who had invaded Southern soil & are desolating Southern *homes* . . . .”<sup>30</sup> Along with marauders, Confederate Kentucky soldiers also called their Northern enemies Vandals, believing Union soldiers desired not only to conquer but to rape and pillage the South as well. An unknown soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry wrote in the regiment accounting

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<sup>27</sup> James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 22.

<sup>28</sup> James E. Paton, “Civil War Journal of James E. Paton,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 61 (July 1963): 220.

<sup>29</sup> *The Weekly Courier*, 30 April 1862, quoted in Joseph Allan Frank and George A. Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*”: *Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel E. Turney, *The Civil War Journals of Captain Daniel E. Turney: Company G., Hamilton Guards, Second Kentucky Infantry Regiment, the “Orphan Brigade,”* (Kentucky?: s.n., 19??), 1. [Located in the Library of Kentucky Historical Society (call no. 973.782 T942)].

book on Christmas 1861, “The birth day of Christ our redeemer finds our country Struggling in the holy cause of liberty with the vile horde of Robbers & assassins sent to burn and destroy by their master Abraham Lincoln who occupies the chair at Washington.”<sup>31</sup> At next year’s Christmas, he lamented the continuing war; “for more than two years we have been combating the Vandal horde . . .”<sup>32</sup> At Christmas 1863, he remarked, “. . . *another* Christmas has come and gone, and we are still combatting with the Vandal horde; Are likely to be doing that same this time next Christmas. What a pity”; he wrote nothing on Christmas 1864.<sup>33</sup> A clerk for Confederate General Humphrey Marshall, Edward O. Guerrant often referred to Union forces in his diary as the “Vandal Hordes of Lincoln,” and, remarking on a call for more Union soldiers, Guerrant wrote, “Lincoln calls out 300,000 more Vandals.”<sup>34</sup>

As Kentucky was occupied early in the war—from a Confederate Kentuckian point of view—the desire to liberate Kentucky from Union-control and allow the commonwealth to join the Confederacy was a strong motivator to enlist in the Confederate army for many Kentuckians. Many of these soldiers believed Kentucky belonged in the Confederate States of America and its interests—slavery—would be best served if it left the Union. A soldier in the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry swore as he left for the Confederate lines that “the Usurper’s minions shall never plant their unholy

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<sup>31</sup> William C. Davis, *The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates Who Couldn't Go Home* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 57.

<sup>32</sup> Davis, *The Orphan Brigade*,” 148.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Edward O. Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant*, ed. William C. Davis and Meredith L Swentor (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 65 and 99.

feet upon [Kentucky's soil]."<sup>35</sup> "I am here," wrote First Sergeant Nathan Parker of the 4<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Cavalry, "for the purpose of assisting in relieving Kentucky from Northern Rule."<sup>36</sup> Parker felt so strongly about his purpose that he left home for the mustering fields without telling his wife, children, and other family members; he did not want to be dissuaded.<sup>37</sup> Learning of a supposed march on Bowling Green then Lexington, Turney wrote, "Oh! what would I not give for an opportunity to help drive the foul Marauders from our soil."<sup>38</sup> Released from prison after his capture at Fort Donelson, Turney re-pledged himself to the Confederate war effort, writing, "We expect to fight upon the sacred soil of our native State—Ky is the choice field for us to act—we prefer defending our own home and bathe, if necessary, our own soil with our life's blood, and there to redeem our heretofore *most honored* state. *She must be redeemed.*"<sup>39</sup>

In addition to fighting in defense of their homes and lands, Confederate Kentuckians and Confederates in general claimed they were fighting to preserve their Southern institutions and Southern way of life. Along with fighting for "Southern homes," Paton claimed to be fighting to save the South's "institutions and to battle for those inestimable and priceless rights which were fought for, and obtained by our forefathers and bequeathed to us."<sup>40</sup> Turney hated to think of leaving his home, his family, and his friends, but he claimed that his honor and principles demanded his

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<sup>35</sup> *The Louisville Daily Courier*, 2 December 1861, quoted in Joseph Allan Frank and George A. Reaves, "*Seeing the Elephant*": *Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Nathan Parker, *Civil War Journal: 1861 – 1862*, 15 December 1861 entry, 96SC21, KHS.

<sup>37</sup> Parker, *Civil War Journal*, 19 October 1861 entry, KHS.

<sup>38</sup> Turney, *The Civil War Journals of Captain Daniel E. Turney*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-64.

<sup>40</sup> Paton, "Civil War Journal of James E. Paton," 220.



enlistment into the Confederate army as the North was set on “the destruction of our institutions and the Subjugation of our Southern Brethren.”<sup>41</sup> Defense of constitutional principles or states’ rights was also another popular reason Confederate Kentuckians gave for entering the war. Dorman “thoroughly imbibed” Jefferson’s states’ rights and state sovereignty arguments and claimed to be “ever . . . ready to live and die by and for these principles. . . . I have always been a true and unflinching Jeffersonian Democrat and will live and die in the faith of these political Doctrines.”<sup>42</sup> Although Dorman never explicitly wrote that these beliefs led him into the Confederate ranks, it is clear it did; he believed that the North had not respected the rights of the Southern states and he, therefore, had to fight for those rights. Green felt as Dorman did. “I had learned to love the Union,” from his mother, Green wrote in his memoir,

& earnestly hoped that dissolution might be averted, but looked upon the coercion as fratricidal and unconstitutional & when Abraham Lincoln issued his proclamation calling for men & money as he said to enforce the laws I knew it was for unconstitutional coercion & sad as it made me to take up arms against the country that I loved I recognized that my first duty was to the cause of Constitutional government & I made arrangements as soon as possible to give up my situation & enlist in the Confederate army to fight for the right of a state to govern itself; as there was no right given or implied in the constitution to coerce a state to remain in the Union, as much as I loved our country I could not reconcile the coercion of a sister state with Self Government. The South claimed only the right for each state that so desired peaceably to withdraw. The other states had full power to continue as they were.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, Guerrant claimed to have entered the Confederate service for the cause of “constitutional freedom.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Turney, *The Civil War Journals of Captain Daniel E. Turney*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Dorman, ““In Everything Give Thanks,”” 92.

<sup>43</sup> Green, *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade*, 7

<sup>44</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 256.

Confederate Kentucky soldiers, indeed Confederate soldiers in general, failed to ever define what these institutions, states' rights, and other constitutional principles they fought to defend were. As Leah D. Parker argues in "Confederates from the Bluegrass State: Why Kentuckians Fought for the Confederacy," Confederate Kentucky soldiers shared an unspoken collective consciousness of what these terms meant and what they were fighting for in joining the Confederate service. Ultimately, they fought to preserve slavery.<sup>45</sup> As McPherson notes in *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, it was a common practice among Southerners to avoid speaking explicitly about slavery, instead using code words or euphemisms, such as Southern institutions and the Southern way of life, as the only significant institution not shared between the North and South was slavery. This practice was continued into the war in the letters and diaries of Confederate soldiers.<sup>46</sup> In addition, slavery was not a controversial issue for Confederate soldiers. They had no reason to talk about it as it was part-and-parcel of the South and its way of life, and it is not surprising that most Confederate soldiers did not do so in their letters and diaries. The institution of slavery was one of those parts of the South's collective consciousness that required no discussion. It is also telling that out of all the letters and diaries of 429 Confederate soldiers McPherson analyzed, not a single one spoke against slavery.<sup>47</sup> While the desire to preserve slavery may not have been the sole reason many Kentuckians joined the Confederate cause, it was undoubtedly the most important one.

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<sup>45</sup> Leah D. Parker, "Confederates from the Bluegrass State: Why Kentuckians Fought for the Confederacy" (master's thesis, Texas Christian University, 2006), 51-52.

<sup>46</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 107.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

Given their worldview, Confederate Kentuckians had numerous reasons for wanting to defend slavery. They believed slavery drove the prosperity of the South. Should slavery end, the South's economy would be destroyed, given that it was primarily agricultural and driven by slave labor. Slavery formed the foundation of the culture and worldview of Southerners; to destroy slavery was to destroy the only world that Southerners knew. Most importantly, Southerners, Confederate Kentuckians included, believed that the North and the Union army wanted not only to liberate their slaves but also encourage them to rebel. "And Southerners could not," argues historian Reid Mitchell in *Civil War Soldiers*, "imagine abolition unaccompanied by slave insurrection—a holocaust that would murder thousands of whites and destroy the Southern social order. Nothing could be more savage than that." Southerners also believed that the North wanted to impose equality of the races on the South which threatened the Southern interpretation of proper race relations.<sup>48</sup> Preservation of white supremacy was a powerful motivator to enlist and serve for many Confederate soldiers, Confederate Kentucky soldiers being no exception. While many white Southerners may not have owned slaves, McPherson argues, "their white skins . . . put them on a plane of civil equality with slaveholders and far above those who did not possess that property," establishing a herrenvolk democracy of which they were a part of despite their lack of wealth.<sup>49</sup> The virulent racism of Southerners made the idea of equality among the races abhorrent. Though written by a Louisiana soldier, his words would no doubt be greeted with huzzas by Confederate Kentucky soldiers: "I never want to see the day when a negro

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<sup>48</sup> Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988), 4 and 27.

<sup>49</sup> James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861 – 1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 52.

is put on an equality with a white person. There is too many free niggers . . . now to suit me, let alone having four millions.”<sup>50</sup>

Like this Louisianan, not all Southerners used code words or euphemisms to express the reasons for why they fought. In particular, Confederate Kentuckians expressed themselves clearly about their reasons for fighting. It is possible that given the tenuous nature of slavery in Kentucky and the debate it engendered even in the 1850s made the subject of slavery easier to talk about and reduced the need for euphemisms and circumlocutions. Lunsford Yandell Jr., a soldier in the 4<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, wrote in April 1861 that he and his fellow Kentuckians were “fighting for our liberty, against tyrants of the North . . . who are determined to destroy slavery.”<sup>51</sup> This willingness to speak openly about slavery is especially noticeable after the Emancipation Proclamation, which thrust the topic of slavery out into the open. Writing to his cousin in Woodford County, S. H. Anderson sought common ground with the Unionist family member, writing, “I heard that you were union but I know that you do not Sanction the many atrocities practised on us by the abolishonist of the north and I trust ere this you have seen the error that have been committed by that party and have forsaken them.”<sup>52</sup> Given that this letter was written in March 1863, that unnamed error could only have been the emancipation. Henry Stone was even less roundabout in his attacks on the Emancipation Proclamation. Writing to his father in February 1863, Stone lauded the

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<sup>50</sup> Geroge Hamill Diary, n.d. [probably March 1862], in private possession of Pat Knobloch, quoted in McPherson, *What They Fought For*, 52.

<sup>51</sup> Lunsford Yandell Jr. to Sally Yandell, 22 April 1861, and Lunsford Yandell Jr. to Father, 22 April 1861, Yandell Papers, FHS, quoted in McPherson, *What They Fought For*, 51.

<sup>52</sup> S. H. Anderson to Cousin, 20 March 1863, Grand Gulf, MS, David S. G. Silcock Collection, 98SC139, KHS.

issuance of the January 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation because, “Lincoln’s Proclamation is worth three hundred thousand soldiers to our Government at least. Besides it shows exactly what the war was brought about for and the intention of its damnable authors.”<sup>53</sup> From Johnson’s Island, a Union prisoner-of-war camp in Ohio, Colonel Benjamin E. Caudill of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mounted Rifles, later designated the 13<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Cavalry, wrote a January 1864 letter to his niece, Margaret, explaining the reasons why he and others had joined the Confederate service, attempting to effect some reconciliation as their relationship had become strained. “Margaret,” Caudill wrote,

you cannot amagin the maney desires I have for peace so that the rest of us pore solders could be discharged and return to our loved ones at home and be goverened with such a government that our forefathers left us, but political demagogs has destroyed that form of government and braut on this uncalled for war, and now a military despotism rules the people and forces the brother to spill the brothers blood when the majority of the people north and south is opposed to the war. and if the people was permitted to speak at the poles, this war would cease and the constitutional union restored.

Margaret, the subgigation of a free people never can be affected. As we fite fore all that makes life desirable, we want our lands and property, and espically our liberty and the suspencion of the right of habas corbas and pasage of the confiscation bill. Then after we went into armes to defend our homes and property, next comes the proclimation of the liberating all of the slaves in certain states and calles on the army and the navy to defend and protect the slave in every effort he would make to obtain his freedom indevering to excite survill [servile] incerection [author’s emphasis].

With these extremes tha have united our people that if tha could have been protected with ther rites the war would have been over and the union restored long since, but till eavil is checked time will only reveal the end. God grant some meanes may be devised to bring all to ther sences and that and honerable peace may take place.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Henry L. Stone to Father, 13 February 1863, Camp near Liberty, Tenn., Stone Family Papers, FHS.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin E. Caudill to Niece [Margaret A. Jinins], 27 January 1864, Johnsons Island, Ohio, quoted in Benjamin E. Caudill, *Surrender Hell: The Diary of Col. Benjamin E. Caudill, C.S.A.: His Life and Times*, ed. Shirley Combs (The Dalles, OR: S. Combs, 1997), 7.

As Caudill maintains in his letter, Confederate Kentuckians believed they were fighting for their homes and for their property—slaves and slavery, a God-given institution that they believed guaranteed the prosperity of Kentucky and the South. Because of this view, Confederate Kentuckians claimed their fight a “just cause,” transforming it into a crusade. After his initial one-year enlistment expired, Lafferty and his comrades believed that “All the issues between the North and South had been well defined by then and well known to all and we felt our cause was a just one, so we willingly pledged our services anew to the Confederate Government to fight to the end of the war.”<sup>55</sup> In September 1861, Ezekiel F. Clay, son of Kentucky Representative Brutus J. Clay, left for the Confederate army in the middle of the night without telling his parents, only leaving behind a note “I leave for the army tonight. I do it for I believe I am doing right. I go of my own free will. If it turns out I do wrong I beg forgiveness.”<sup>56</sup> Turney arose on September 21, 1861, in “fine spirits,” claiming, “Oh! what a glorious thing ‘tis to have a clear conscience caused by a knowledge of doing *right* and that too for my country. I am perfectly happy & contented—am resolved in the cause I have enlisted.”<sup>57</sup> Parker also felt this sense of righteousness in his enlistment. “It may be my lot of fall,” Parker wrote, “and if I do I am Satisfied my life could not be laid down in a better cause.”<sup>58</sup> Writing in his diary after two major Union victories, Green wrote,

Our reverses at Vicksburg & at Gettysburg were severe blows, but not to our faith. Our cause is just & will surely prevail. We must have been a little too puffed up with pride & confidence in our own powers; justice

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<sup>55</sup> John Lafferty Civil War Narrative, 1905, p. 8-9, KHS.

<sup>56</sup> Cassius M. Clay, ed., “Selections from Brutus J. Clay Papers, 1861 – 1865,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 23 (January 1958): 4.

<sup>57</sup> Turney, *The Civil War Journals of Captain Daniel E. Turney*, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Parker, *Civil War Journal: 1861 – 1862*, 15 December 1861 entry, KHS.

may be delayed but it will come; we have enlisted for thirty years or during the war. I trust we may yet gain our independence in less than 30 years but if we have to fight the whole time we may remember that others have struggled that time to gain their independence. We need scarcely hope to achieve our independence in less time than our Revolutionary Fathers had to struggle for freedom from Great Britain. The boys are all of one mind. Fight on until death.<sup>59</sup>

Reflecting on his time as a soldier, Dorman wrote, “Such are the vicissitudes of the active soldier life. One day flushed with Victory, and the next day chagrined by defeat, ups and downs. One day pushing the enemy, the next day fleeing from them. And the enemy pushing you. The hardships of numerous and vicisitudes [*sic*] are many. Keep out of war unless your cause is a righteous one.—Like ours—”<sup>60</sup>

Religion played an important role in the “just cause” theology of Confederate soldiers, as it did among Confederate Kentuckians.<sup>61</sup> Parker mourned the necessity of leaving his family and friends behind as he entered the army, claiming it “madden the brain and nerve the arm to disperation [*sic*],” but he believed his cause was righteous, knowing that “there is a day of reckoning comeing and may he who holds the destruction of Nations in his hand so direct that the right may yet prevail . . .”<sup>62</sup> Guerrant blamed the Confederate reverses in early 1862 on Confederate arrogance because Confederate soldiers had “forgotten to ascribe the cause of our victory to an Omnipotent hand & placed it all in Southern chivalry. He is now teaching us a bitter lesson.” “But,” Guerrant wrote, “we will not despair. ‘Our cause it is just and in God is our trust.’ ‘Fight

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<sup>59</sup> Green, *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade*, 84-85.

<sup>60</sup> Dorman, “‘In Everything Give Thanks,’” 98.

<sup>61</sup> For additional reading on the role of religion in the Civil War, see George C. Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> Parker, *Civil War Journal: 1861 – 1862*, 11 October 1861 entry, KHS.

on’—”<sup>63</sup> Again, after the fall of Fort Donelson, Guerrant mourned the loss, but his confidence remained unshaken, claiming, “we will not despair while we believe our cause is just. . . . My hope for success to the Southern cause is in its justness.”<sup>64</sup> “I know I’m right,” wrote Henry Stone to his father, “& believe God is with us . . .”<sup>65</sup> Stone also believed that God must disfavor the Union cause because of the Emancipation Proclamation. “All I have to say,” he claimed, “is the man that endorses that Proclamation is a demon, is a fit disciple of Satan, and I hope he may be ‘handled very roughly’ in the Day of Judgment, and I think he will.”<sup>66</sup> Writing about the end of year 1864, Private J. D. Sprake of Company A, 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Cavalry remained optimistic about the Confederacy’s chances of victory though they looked dimmer than ever. “the future is unrealized,” wrote Sprake in his diary while imprisoned, “but I feel a consciousness of the righteousness and justice of the cause for which we suffer, that buoys me up and I feel confident that by the help of God that conquer we must and conquer we will . . .”<sup>67</sup>

Another significant boost on the motivation to enlist and serve among Confederate Kentucky soldiers was a belief that, beyond fighting for homes and their way of life, they were fighting for a separate nation and for their country. The desire to fight for the independence of the South and the Confederacy animated Confederate Kentucky soldiers. A debate long exists among historians as to whether Southerners boasted any

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<sup>63</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 33-34.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>65</sup> Henry L. Stone to Father, 29 December 1862, Near Boston, KY, Stone Family Papers, FHS.

<sup>66</sup> Henry L. Stone to Father, 13 February 1863, Camp near Liberty, Tenn., Stone Family Papers, FHS.

<sup>67</sup> J. D. Sprake Military Diary, 20 December 1864 entry, p. 36, MSS A S766, FHS.



real nationalism at all; as the war progress and Union forces dealt severe defeats to Confederate forces, Confederate nationalism melted away. However, as Drew Gilpin Faust argues in *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*, this debate is moot as “such approaches are equivalent to embarking upon the study of religion by inquiring into the validity of its substantive claims . . .”<sup>68</sup> Whether it was real and substantial, Confederates believed they constituted a separate nation. By combining their perceived inheritance from and continuation of the ideals of the revolutionary generation with their own beliefs of Southern distinctiveness, Confederate Kentucky soldiers constructed their own sense of Confederate nationalism.<sup>69</sup> This strong sense of nationalism and duty to one’s country animated many Confederate Kentuckians to enlist and serve. In *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee: A Portrait of Life in a Confederate Army*, historian Larry J. Daniel questions the nationalism of Confederate soldiers in that army as the strain of battle, poor rations, and home events took their toll on the soldiers, causing decreased enthusiasm and some to desert.<sup>70</sup> However, that nationalism played a critical role in motivating Confederate Kentuckians to join and, at least for a time, to stay in the ranks.

Many Confederate Kentuckians enlisted because they felt a duty to the cause of Southern independence and enlisted to help bring about that independence. William E. Coleman wrote to his parents on his enlistment in the Confederate service, saying, “Sink

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<sup>68</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 6.

<sup>69</sup> Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 14; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 94-95.

<sup>70</sup> Larry J. Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee: A Portrait of Life in a Confederate Army* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 128 and 136.

or swim, survive or perish, I will fight in defence of my country.”<sup>71</sup> Another Kentuckian who enlisted with the Confederacy claimed “we should yield all to our country now. It is not an abstract idea. . . . We have no alternative: we must triumph or perish.”<sup>72</sup>

Lunsford Yandell echoed the idea to his sister, arguing, “The success of one party is the annihilation of the other; for no matter which side is victorious, the vanquished people are abolished as a nation. . . . neither part can afford to give up.” While the February 1862 losses of Forts Henry and Donelson were major setbacks for the Confederate war effort in the west, Yandell believed that “our only hope of avoiding destruction and utter ruin is to fight our way through our troubles and conquer our independence.”<sup>73</sup>

Demonstrating his belief in Southern nationalism, Captain Edward Ford Spears of Company G, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry grew angry at Lincoln as it was in his power “to have peace & he still persists in carrying on this fratricidal warfare, but the time is at hand when the scoundrel will feel the vengeance of a southern nation in earnest.”<sup>74</sup> Along with “relieving Kentucky from Northern rule,” Parker also joined the Confederate army “with the expectation of . . . never seeing home until that freedom of the South was established . . .”<sup>75</sup> Guerrant claimed to possess everything that rendered life pleasant: A thriving school, a good salary, and a fine home. “I had . . . everything

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<sup>71</sup> William E. Coleman to Parent, 19 January 1862, Coleman Letters, Civil War Collection, Tennessee State Library, Nashville, TN, quoted in McPherson, *What They Fought For*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> William Preston Johnston to Wife, 24 August 1862, in “A War Letter from William Johnston, ed. Arthur Marvin Shaw, *Journal of Mississippi History* 4 (1942): 44, quoted in McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 94-95.

<sup>73</sup> Lunsford Yandell to Sister [Sally], 26 February 1862, Yandell Papers, FHS, quoted in Frank and Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*,” 72-74.

<sup>74</sup> Samuel R. Flora, “‘I Consider the Regiment My Home’: The Orphan Brigade Life and Letters of Capt. Edward Ford Spears, 1861-65,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 94 (April 1996): 139-40.

<sup>75</sup> Parker, *Civil War Journal: 1861 – 1862*, 15 December 1861 entry, KHS.

that heart could desire,” wrote Guerrant, “Except the consciousness of not fulfilling my duty to my Country.”<sup>76</sup> “To-day,” Turney wrote of July 22, 1861, “I bid farewell to domestic life & peace & go to join the glorious lists for *Southern freedom & independence* . . . with confidence that the cause I now espouse will succeed believing that Southern necks were never made to wear a tyrants yoke & that Southern hearts will never submit to a Northern despotism.”<sup>77</sup> Two days later, Turney wrote that he has been “sworn into the *Confederate service* for 3 yrs. . . . Took oath to support the *Constitution of the Con. States*—entered the lists for *freedom*. This was the proudest act of my life—one which I never expect to regret even if adversity overtakes me & ill success attends every effort.”<sup>78</sup>

Many Confederate Kentucky soldiers also made it clear that the two sections of the country were forever divorced from each other; no reunion between the North and South could ever occur, as they had become two separate nations. “God grant that peace may be given—not to one Caesar, but to the rival Caesars,” because, wrote Minor, “. . . peace can never exist with them as one Nation. . . . if the North do not wish peace, they can have war—*desperate* war.”<sup>79</sup> Many Confederate Kentucky soldiers claimed they would never live in Kentucky again, presumably because it appeared it would remain in the Union, apart from the Southern nation. Henry Stone told his father he “intend[ed] to stay with the Army till the war is over & then make my home in the South. You know

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<sup>76</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 14-15.

<sup>77</sup> Turney, *The Civil War Journals of Captain Daniel E. Turney*, 1.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>79</sup> *The Weekly Courier*, 30 April 1862, quoted in Frank and Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*,” 175-76.

not how the South is united or how they fight.”<sup>80</sup> Stone never believed he would return to Kentucky because he did not believe a reunion between the sections was possible. He believed “now as always before, we cannot be conquered, nor united with the Yankees again. The Southern people are a unit and Kentucky in the bargain, if left free.”<sup>81</sup> Writing on Clement Vallandigham’s proposals for an armistice and possible reunion, Stone believed that there was “no use in talking of uniting the two Governments any more ‘that’s played out’, not only played out but so completely that every man, women, and child in the Confederate States would rather join the despotic powers of Europe before annexing themselves with the infernal Abolitionists of New England. The South as the fellow says, is ‘bent & determined’ to be free and independent.”<sup>82</sup> Guerrant believed as Stone did, professing disbelief that there were some in the North “still in favor of ‘*the Union*’. . . . there is no Union. They have piled the Ossa of hate, on the Pelion of interest & *we separate*. The union is dead & buried beneath the Execration of the South—& has the ‘*galorious old flag*’ as its winding sheet.”<sup>83</sup> Meeting Vallandigham’s train as it carried him to Richmond during his exile, Guerrant attacked his restoration platform, writing, “*There is no restoration!* And a month’s sojourn in the South will disabuse Mr. Vallandigham’s mind of such a chimera. Let him be treated respectfully, and bid adieu speedily. We want no unionists, either *in war or peace*.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Henry L. Stone to Father, 29 December 1862, Near Boston, KY, Stone Family Papers, FHS.

<sup>81</sup> Henry L. Stone to Father, 8 December 1862, 8 Miles from Murfreesboro, TN., *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Henry L. Stone to Father, 13 February 1863, Camp near Liberty, Tenn., Stone Family Papers, FHS.

<sup>83</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 212.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

For Confederate Kentuckians, it was either an independent South or conquest by the North; no middle ground existed.<sup>85</sup>

Unfortunately for the cause of Southern independence, the motivation to enlist and serve among Southern-sympathizing Kentuckians plummeted after about a year, as the failed 1862 Confederate Invasion of Kentucky attests. In August 1862, Confederate General Kirby Smith led a 21,000-man army through the Cumberland Gap, attacking Richmond, Kentucky, and later briefly occupying Lexington and Frankfort. At about the same time, Confederate General Braxton Bragg led his army north from Chattanooga across the Kentucky border, seizing Tompkinsville and Munfordsville.<sup>86</sup> The purpose of the invasion was not only to gain territory for the Confederacy, and maybe the whole state of Kentucky, but, more importantly, to win Kentucky recruits for the Confederate army. Smith, Bragg, and other Confederate officials believed that this invasion provided Kentuckians the opportunity to declare their true loyalties and sentiments and make it easier for them to enlist in the Confederate army, thereby gaining soldiers for the Confederacy. Earlier in the year, the Confederate government had avoided including

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<sup>85</sup> Some Kentuckians were not able to completely divorce themselves from their former country. Just after enlisting in the Confederate army, Jackman and his fellow soldiers passed a United States flag on the Elizabethtown Pike. "It was not molested by us," Jackman claimed. Jackman, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 18. Music also recalled former patriotic feelings in many Confederate Kentucky soldiers. Hearing such songs as "Hail Columbia," "America," and "The Star-Spangled Banner" from a nearby Union band, Young claimed they "sounded sweeter than I had ever before heard them, and filled my soul with feelings I could not describe for forget." "It haunted me for days," wrote Young, "but never shook my loyalty to the Stars and Bars or relaxed my efforts in behalf of our cause." Young, *Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Orphan Brigade*, 76. However, in others, these songs inspired opposite feelings. Hearing "Hail Columbia" and "Yankee Doodle" from a nearby Union band, Turney and his fellow soldiers looked at each other "and swore we would give them 'Yankee Doodle' tomorrow." Turney, *The Civil War Journals of Captain Daniel E. Turney*, 27.

<sup>86</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 517-21.

Kentucky in its March 1862 Conscription Act because it believed the volunteering spirit was high in Kentucky and as such conscription was not necessary; all that was wanting was to throw off the Union hold over the state.<sup>87</sup>

At the beginning of the invasion, expectations appeared to be match results. Guerrant reported that his senior officer, Confederate General Humphrey Marshall, received a letter from Confederate General Henry Heth on September 9, 1862, attesting that an “uprising” of Confederate recruiting in the state was occurring and that “such enlistment, such enlisting the world never saw.’ ‘Cant keep account of the numbers of volunteers all over the state.’”<sup>88</sup> A soldier in Kirby Smith’s army, William Adair reported to his father the “complete victory” of Confederate forces at Richmond, Kentucky, and that “Thousands of Kentuckians have joined our Army since our arrival here. Kentucky is rallying to our Standard by the tens of thousands.”<sup>89</sup>

However, it soon became clear to most that Kentuckians were not enlisting in droves as Confederate officials had anticipated. Although Kentuckians had, for various reasons, great sympathy for the Southern cause, that sympathy did not induce them to don a butternut uniform. On September 18, 1862, Guerrant, out and about around Sharpsburg, Kentucky, noted that Confederate enlistment among Kentuckians was “going on *peacefully*,” but they were “not turning out as they ought.”<sup>90</sup> By October 11, Guerrant had given up all hope, writing in his diary, “Clouds lowering & dark!!! . . . Everybody

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<sup>87</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 168. Although Coulter does not mention it, such an act would have been legally dubious as Kentucky was not under Confederate control.

<sup>88</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 144.

<sup>89</sup> William Adair to Father [W. H. P. Adair], 1 October 1862, Lexington, Kentucky, MSS C A, FHS.

<sup>90</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 150.

serious enough & express a general disgust of Kentucky. . . . Tom Marshall said ‘did ye never call the spirits from the vasty deep, & they *didn’t come!*’ So of K’y volunteers! God help our native State. We came & offered her help! She refused & *we go away!*”<sup>91</sup>

The next day, Guerrant wrote a long diatribe against his home state:

We came into the state to meet & deliver *friends*. We met rather the scowl of enemies! Surely—Surely—a few—comparatively—of its million inhabitants—a glorious self sacrificing few—are excepted honorably! Would God they were out of it. We came to meet Kentuckians with arms & doors open & welcome. We met clenched teeth, & closed doors. The provisions were driven & carried away from us. The mills stopped or burnt. Storehouses closed or emptied. We treated all men as *friends & freemen*. Most of them treated us as *enemies & robbers*. A noble few are always excepted! God bless them. They deserve a nobler fate! They will receive it!

To other others who prefer the Northern despotism, & associations with abolitionists, fanatics & Infidels—we leave behind us our ‘God speed’ in their new alliance & the recollection of our generous conduct towards them while they were in our power. But those we love shall never breathe the same air nor drink of the same streams that gives vitality to such Kentuckians. They will bid farewell to the skies & fields & rivers that were once beautiful in the sunlight of *liberty*—& glorious in the consciousness of an *untarnished fame!* To a sunnier—a freer & happier clime we will remove them—& live or die *free*, —if nothing more!

. . . [written the next day, October 13, 1862] ‘Twas a most sorrowful & to me painful sight to see the long lines of the Confederate hosts filling past towards a distant state & leaving our misguided people “alone with their gods”! joined to their ruin. I lament the date of those nobler ones who loved us & cherished us! (33000) Thirty three thousand strong we came to rescue them from worse than Egyptian bondage but they “would not”, & we go whence we came. We came not to enforce our government upon an unwilling people, but to offer them the olive branch of peace & the Cap of Liberty—& they rejected both & we return to our own land & people. Farewell!<sup>92</sup>

Several reasons explain this aversion to enlisting and serving in the Confederate army by Southern-sympathizing Kentuckians. Although it was termed an invasion and Confederate officials believed it so, Kentuckians understood that these movements of

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<sup>91</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 157.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 158-60.

Confederate armies into the state were only temporary stays. They knew Bragg, Smith, and other Confederate forces lacked the numbers and materials to maintain a permanent occupation of the state. Confederate officials did not perceive this point of view, though Guerrant hints at it in his diary: “The people [of Kentucky] seem delighted to see us all, but fearful we won’t stay long. They are afraid even yet to speak out of a whisper. So thoroughly were they subjugated!”<sup>93</sup> They may have wished the Confederate occupation to last, but Kentuckians, throughout the war, remained skeptical of any long-term Confederate hold on the state and of Confederate success in the war.<sup>94</sup> Kentuckians avoided placing themselves and their state on what they believed to be the losing side of the war.

The sight of the Confederate soldiers as they marched past and while occupying the state also dissuaded many Kentuckians from enlisting in the Confederate army. When Confederate soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia marched through Maryland, another Union-held state with strong Confederate sympathies, in August and September 1862, the sight of their physical condition disgusted Marylanders. Overtaxed by their commanders and undersupplied by their government, the Confederate soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia made the soldier life unattractive. One Marylander noted that the soldiers “were the dirtiest men I ever saw . . . a most ragged, lean, and hungry set of wolves.”<sup>95</sup> Given the lower material supply of the Confederate armies in the western theater, no reason exists to think that the Confederate soldiers marching through Kentucky were not of equal or worse physical condition. As the Confederate soldiers

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<sup>93</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 150.

<sup>94</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 518.

<sup>95</sup> Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 244.



filed past Kentuckian onlookers, the same feelings of disgust and sorrow must have passed over them as well, dashing all romantic notions of the soldier life and of war. Those who somehow maintained their romantic views desired to join the dashing cavalryman John Hunt Morgan on his raids, not slog it out in the ranks of the infantry.<sup>96</sup>

For his part, Bragg did what he could to get Kentuckians into his ranks. On October 2, in Frankfort, Kentucky, the only “loyal” capital captured by Confederates during the course of the entire war, Bragg attended the swearing in of Richard Hawes, Kentucky’s new Confederate governor, encouraging the legitimacy of a Confederate Kentucky government and granting Bragg the authority to institute a Confederate conscription policy in Kentucky.<sup>97</sup> Bragg had made numerous threats to carry out a conscription policy in Kentucky if Kentuckians failed to enlist *en masse*, but because of the perceived temporariness of the Confederate occupation of Kentucky and the hatred of conscription no matter the sympathy, Bragg’s threats amounted to little.<sup>98</sup> One Kentuckian that responded to the call, Curtis R. Burke, had wanted to do so for some time but was prevented by the wishes of his father. The 1862 Confederate Invasion of Kentucky allowed Burke, this time with his father’s blessing, and others to finally get away and enlist. Burke met up with several of his friends who said “they were going wherever the army went and would not stay and live among the Yankee soldiers again.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ronald Ray Alexander, “Central Kentucky during the Civil War, 1861 – 1865” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1976), 134. Alexander claims that not one regiment of infantry was raised in Kentucky for the Confederacy during its occupation of the state.

<sup>97</sup> Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 255.

<sup>98</sup> E. B. Patterson, “Memoirs of E. B. Patterson: A Perspective on Danville During the Civil War,” ed. Christen Ashby Creek, *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 92 (Oct 1994): 369-70.

<sup>99</sup> Curtis R. Burke, “Curtis R. Burke’s Civil War Journal,” (Part One), ed. Pamela J. Bennett, *Indiana Magazine of History* 65 (Dec 1969): 290.

Ultimately, though, Burke, his friends, and others like them were few in number. Bragg had entered Kentucky with several thousand spare firearms to furnish new Kentucky recruits; he left with 15,000 more.<sup>100</sup>

What continued to motivate Confederate Kentucky soldiers to remain and serve when it was clear that other Southern-sympathizers in Kentucky believed their choice to enlist and remain in service to be a bad one? Given the limited statistical data available, it is clear that desertion among Confederate Kentucky soldiers was no worse any those from other Southern states.

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<sup>100</sup> Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 247. Guerrant claims in his diary that the Confederate armies in the western theater, for all their effort, gained a number of recruits equal to only 40 percent of their losses due to sickness, wounded, and desertion while occupying the state. Whether the number is accurate or not, it shows the Confederacy's dismal failure at recruiting in Kentucky. Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 159-60. The idea that Kentucky maintained a well of recruits that only needed to be tapped was a constant belief among Confederate officials. One of John Bell Hood's goals in the counterattack on Tennessee after the Union capture of Atlanta was to force his way to Kentucky and "rally that state's mythical support for the Confederacy." Davis, *The Orphan Brigade*, 241.

**A Comparison of Desertion Among the States<sup>101</sup>**

State	Regiments	Enlistments	Desertions	Desertion %
N. Carolina	72.8	70,689	24,122	34.12
Arkansas	46	44,666	10,095	22.60
Missouri	21	20,391	4,410	21.63
Mississippi	61.5	59,717	11,660	19.53
Florida	12	11,652	2,219	19.04
<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>19,906</b>	<b>3,482</b>	<b>17.49</b>
Tennessee	85	82,535	12,308	14.91
Virginia	94.5	91,760	12,155	13.25
Louisiana	40	38,840	4,541	11.69
Confederate	24	23,304	2,500	10.73
Georgia	91	88,361	6,876	7.78
Texas	63.5	61,659	4,664	7.56
S. Carolina	53.2	51,657	3,615	7.00
Alabama	64	62,144	1,583	2.55

Seventeen and a half percent is higher than the total average desertion rate for the Confederate army, 14.32%, but it is not unreasonable and does not even approach the

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<sup>101</sup> The numbers for this chart were derived from Thomas L. Livermore's *Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America: 1861-65* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 26-35. Included within the work (pg. 27) is Confederate Colonel Charles C. Jones's roster of Confederate infantry, cavalry, and artillery units from each state, excluding any non-regularly enrolled units such as militia or home defense forces. Using Livermore's assumption (pg. 26) that one regiment is equivalent to one legion, or two battalions, or ten batteries, a total number of regiment's worth of troops for each state can be ascertained. Then, taking Livermore's estimate of the average size of a Confederate regiment at muster in, 971 men, the total number of enlistments from each state can be determined. The total number of enlistments for each state was then compared to the number of desertions found in Table I in the Appendix of Ella Lonn's *Desertion during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 231. So to avoid prejudicing the comparison between the final percentages, any state that contributed less than ten thousand soldiers is excluded. Additionally, the Regular Army and Jeff. Davis Legion desertion numbers were combined and compared with the Confederate numbers in Colonel Jones's roster. The numbers from both of these sources are out of date and likely somewhat inaccurate, but the percentages they provided are likely close enough to the real numbers to give a rough idea of what desertion was like for the soldiers of each state.

rates from other Southern states, such as Missouri, Arkansas, and especially North Carolina.

No doubt commanding officers played an important role in maintaining the motivation to serve among Confederate Kentucky units. In late September and early October 1862, the same time the Confederate 1862 Invasion of Kentucky began to sputter out, the men of the First Kentucky Brigade began to mutiny. The trouble began on September 22 in the 5<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, who believed their one-year enlistments were to be extended automatically and illegally by the Confederate government as had happened previously to other Confederate regiments. Only the words of their commander, Thomas H. Hunt, kept the men in line and on duty. The mutiny then spread to the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky on October 2 and from there to the whole of the Orphan Brigade on October 8. The men refused to attend roll and declined to do their duties and take orders. It took the charisma and superb oratory of Confederate General John C. Breckinridge to bring the men under control.<sup>102</sup> Green claimed that the men of 9<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry wanted to join up with John Morgan Hunt and his cavalry rather than remain in the infantry, however

Gel Breckinridge formed the Brigade on dress parade & explained that the needs of the country were such that the war department could not spare us from the infantry service & urged upon us the necessity of reenlisting in the same arm of the service. Some boy cried out, "Lets reenlist for thirty years or during the war," & it was meet with a shout of approval from almost every throat. The papers were made out for three years or during the war because it was the form adopted by the war department, but thirty years would have been signed for by the boys, such was their earnest devotion to the cause.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Davis, *The Orphan Brigade*, 129-34.

<sup>103</sup> Green, *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade*, 49-50.

In his reminiscences, Grainger also remember the great stir that Breckinridge's speech caused among the soldiers, no doubt more romanticized with age, writing that Breckinridge "delivered a most touching and eloquent appeal—one that went home to the heart and fired the patriotism and zeal of all who heard him. He concluded by asking everyone who was willing to follow him through weal or woe, and to die if necessary in the last ditch, to advance one step. Every man, without exception, stepped boldly forward, and three times three cheers were given to Gen. Breckinridge."<sup>104</sup> Due to his efforts, both the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry reenlisted, which, as historian Brian D. McKnight has argued, reflected the popularity of the army's leadership, rather than the southern cause.<sup>105</sup>

A sizeable number of Confederate Kentucky soldiers were also, at one point or another, imprisoned in Union prisoner-of-war camps. For many, they suffered a great deal of hardship and that only served to increase their hatred of their Union enemy and to seek revenge against them through service in the Confederate ranks. "Being goaded almost to desperation and maddened by the many wrongs that we have received here at their hands," wrote Paton of his stay at Camp Morton in Indianapolis, Indiana, "*we will if ever released fight them with a desperation heretofore unknown to a civilized world.*"<sup>106</sup> Writing on the day that their release was announced, Paton warned Indianans to "Beware . . . the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ky., they know how to resent the many wrongs they have from you *and they*

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<sup>104</sup> Grainger, *Four Years with the Boys in Gray*, 12-13.

<sup>105</sup> Davis, *The Orphan Brigade*, 133; and Brian D. McKnight, "Hope and Humiliation: Humphrey Marshall and the Confederacy's Last Chance in Eastern Kentucky," *Ohio Valley History* 5 (June 2005): 17.

<sup>106</sup> Paton, "Civil War Journal of James E. Paton," 229.

*will do it.*”<sup>107</sup> Turney was equally invective in his descriptions of Camp Morton. After detailing the abuses of the prison guards, Turney wrote, “Does the World doubt that *Camp Morton* prisoners will not fight if exchanged—they will have *treble* cause for fighting—Added to *love of country & Liberty* and *protection to Southern homes & firesides & Virtue is revenge*, revenge for the injuries heaped upon us while prisoners—these incentives would surely nerve the *weakest arm* and *steel* the most *timid heart* to the performance of *deeds of daring & acts of unheard of valor.*”<sup>108</sup> Confederate Kentucky soldiers must fight on, Turney argued, because “the wrongs we ourselves have suffered since prisoners are calling for revenge; and the blood of our fallen comrades are crying to us to avenge their deaths.”<sup>109</sup>

Another reason against deserting and quitting the army is that Confederate Kentucky soldiers, by and large, could not go home, as historian William C. Davis titled his book about the First Kentucky Brigade, *The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates Who Couldn't Go Home*. The federal government controlled Kentucky, and, though the state had its fair share of Southern-sympathizers, the majority of Kentuckians supported the Union cause, if not the government's view of it. For these Confederate Kentucky soldiers, to go home meant to walk into enemy territory and the law prescribed arrest, prison, or death for them. The Unionist government and population considered them traitors and no place existed for them in their home state. Guerrant recorded that General Humphrey Marshall believed that “the K'y boys deserved more credit than any other soldiers of the Confederate army . . . [because they] have no home

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<sup>107</sup> Paton, “Civil War Journal of James E. Paton,” 231.

<sup>108</sup> Turney, *The Civil War Journals of Captain Daniel E. Turney*, 59-60.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-64.

in K’y—Nowhere!”<sup>110</sup> They could have also left the army and remained in the South rather than return home, but a war-torn South provided few opportunities for employment outside of the military. Staying in the Confederate army might not be a Confederate Kentucky soldier’s favorite choice, but, in many cases, it was his only one. Additionally, as the war progressed and the tide turned against the Confederacy, the Confederate armies marched farther and farther away from the border states to the heart of the South. It became increasingly difficult for Confederate Kentucky soldiers who wanted to go home to do so. They would have to track through many miles of enemy-controlled territory, avoiding enemy guards and sentries posted in all major towns and cities as well as along the roads. Deserting the army in the heart of the South and running the gamut to Kentucky was not an impossible feat but surely an extremely difficult one.

However, by far the most important motivators for Confederate Kentucky soldiers to stay in the army and continue to serve were the ones that they brought with them into service. They signed out to protect Southern homes, its institutions, and its way of life; that never changed. In contrast to the situation experienced by Union Kentucky soldiers, the war aims of the Confederacy never changed. Those aims always remained the establishment of a new Southern nation and the preservation of slavery, goals supported by Confederate Kentuckians. That the Confederate government and Confederate Kentuckians never came into ideological conflict—unlike in the case of Union Kentucky soldiers—no reason existed for Confederate Kentuckians to quit the service for ideological reasons, but rather just mundane reasons. Had more come of the black enlistment bill passed by the Confederate Congress in 1865, ideological conflicts as black

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<sup>110</sup> Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate*, 532-33.

men filled butternut uniforms, thus threatening white supremacy and the existence of slavery, may have occurred. Confederate Kentucky soldiers would have had to choose which was more important: the establishment and continuation of the Confederate States of America, which black troops could help secure, or the continuation of white supremacy and slavery.

That ideological conflict never occurred. Excepting those soldiers that deserted, Confederate Kentuckian soldiers fought for their rights—as they perceived them—until the final defeats and the surrenders of Lee and Johnston’s armies. Defeated, dejected, and no doubt distraught, these men left the Confederate service and began their journeys into a new United States where no slavery existed and where white supremacy, if only briefly, no longer formed the law of the bluegrass land.



## CONCLUSION

Antebellum Kentuckians lived in a world built on, with, and around the complex institution of slavery. Since the 1790s, Kentuckians debated on the necessity of slavery within the state, but every time the issue came to the ballot box, a majority of Kentuckians voted to perpetuate slavery. The defense of United States Constitution and slavery became the backbone of Kentucky politics, economics, and culture, and white Kentuckians proved unwilling to part with the institution. While anti-slavery ideas such as colonization gained some popularity within the state, the infeasibility of such a public policy option and the white majority's inability to deal with the consequence of a large, free black population led to the ultimate rejection of all such option. Slavery provided many economic bonuses for the state and as a system of labor and capital organization, slavery formed a viable economic system. Most importantly, white Kentuckians viewed slavery as necessary for the maintenance of proper race relations and white supremacy. Slavery prevented the racial violence white Kentuckians believed would occur should the institution be abolished suddenly and without proper planning. By the 1850s, many to most white Kentuckians embraced the institution and no longer considered any alternatives to the full acceptance and defense of the institution as the correct model for Kentucky society. Though they fought for differing causes, both Union and Confederate Kentuckians carried this belief about slavery and its associated meanings and values with

them as they entered military service on their respective side of the Civil War and slavery largely determined their motivation to enlist and serve in those armies.

Kentucky's Union and Confederate Civil War soldiers entered military service for a variety of mundane reasons; some sought adventure and excitement, others wanted pay, and many because of family or peer pressure. But the ideological motivators had the strongest and most-lasting effect on their desires to enlist and serve on a larger than expected number the men who served. Union Kentucky soldiers fought for the preservation of the United States that they knew and loved, one of Unionism and of slavery. They felt an obligation or a call to duty which required their enlistment and service in defense of their country, home, and way of life. They also fought to punish the traitors of the South and especially those of their own state who had abused the public trust and broken the sacred bond of the Union. When the administration of President Abraham Lincoln chose preservation of the Union over that of slavery by instituting emancipation as a war aim, the Union Kentucky soldiers reacted negatively, though some did see the usefulness of emancipation even as they disagreed with it. The majority of Union Kentucky soldiers disagreed with the change in war policy because forced uncompensated emancipation contradicted the slavery-based antebellum worldview that these soldiers had carried with them into the service. National emancipation attacked the foundation of what white Kentuckians believed to be proper race relations, and, thus, threatened social upheaval and economic poverty. However, in the end, Union Kentucky soldiers placed Unionism above the institution of slavery and continued their service to the nation and the national cause.

Ideologically, Confederate Kentucky soldiers fought to defend their homes, institutions, and way of life, all of which, at its base, required the preservation of slavery. Confederate Kentucky soldiers felt an obligation or possessed a sense of duty to protect the South and the institution of slavery as the bedrock of the Southern nation. As a part of that goal and along with their beliefs in Southern distinctiveness, Confederate Kentucky soldiers fought for the establishment of a new Southern government—The Confederate States of America—to represent the Southern nation and its interest in perpetuating slavery. Many men also fought to liberate Kentucky from Union control and to allow it to join the Confederacy where they believed the interests of Kentuckians would be best served. In the end, they failed to achieve their goals. The force of Union arms extinguished the institution of slavery and the Confederate States of America.

Neither the Union nor Confederate Kentucky soldier obtained out of the war what they thought they fought for at the war's beginning. Despite the Union victory which, by and large, satisfied Union soldiers from the North, Union Kentucky soldiers became just as disgruntled as Confederate soldiers. While the Lincoln Administration preserved the Union and achieved its paramount war goal, the institution of slavery died to save it. With the Union preserved, all that was left for Union Kentucky soldiers was the lack of slavery. None of Kentucky's soldiers got what they wanted: the preservation of slavery. Given the integral position slavery occupied in Antebellum Kentucky, the end of the war portended the painful and protracted birth of a new racial, labor, and social world few Kentuckians were prepared for and even fewer wanted. Eventually, Kentuckians regretted the outcome of the war becoming, as many have argued, a Confederate state after the war despite their strong Unionism before and during the conflict. Historian E.

Merton Coulter argued that the heavy-handed antics of the federal government and Freedman's Bureau caused Kentuckians to resent the Union and sympathize with the South and the Confederacy.<sup>1</sup> However, as Jacob F. Lee more accurately argued, emancipation played the greatest role in causing defection among Kentucky's Union-loving population. While the serious negative reaction to emancipation waited until after the war when the Union was no longer in immediate danger, Kentuckians recoiled at the final outcome.<sup>2</sup> Though they were the victors, Kentuckians viewed themselves as part of the vanquished as they had lost the right to own slaves and the economy of the state had been jeopardized as a result of emancipation.

By and large, as a result of this greater post-war sympathy with the South, Kentuckians allowed Confederate Kentucky soldiers to return to their home state and reintegrate into society. After the war, Kentuckians agreed with the ideals of the South and of the Confederacy and they "lionized" Confederate Kentucky soldiers and their exploits, except for those in the eastern mountains who often expelled former Confederates by force.<sup>3</sup> By the end of 1866, the Kentucky legislature repealed most of the anti-Confederate laws passed earlier during the war and the governor pardoned those who had been restricted such that former Confederates had few, if any, restrictions placed on them.<sup>4</sup> Their service in the Confederate army provided to be an aid rather than a

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<sup>1</sup> E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 340-65.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob F. Lee, "'The Union as it was and the Constitution as it is': Unionism and Emancipation in Civil War Era Kentucky" (master's thesis, University of Louisville, 2007), 92-93.

<sup>3</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 274-76.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

hindrance in their post-war careers.<sup>5</sup> The shift away from strong Unionism to sympathy and identification with the South allowed, with the blessing of the Kentucky voter, former Confederate soldiers to take hold of the reins of state government.<sup>6</sup> Having lost his bid in the special Congressional election on May 4, 1867, Samuel McKee, a member of the Unconditional Union Party, believed that “Kentucky, at the polls, has given proof, that a majority of her voters believe the war for the Union was wrong, and that their hearts, as well as their voices, are in sympathy ‘with the lost cause.’”<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, returning Union soldiers were not lauded but despised as “Tories” for the part they played in bringing about the end of slavery and the crippling effects it and the war had on the state.<sup>8</sup> Where Kentuckians celebrated the achievements and exploits of Confederate soldiers with picnics and parades, they held few—if any in some parts of Kentucky—for Union soldiers. While the gravestones of Union soldiers might have been decorated on occasion, they did not receive the statues and monuments dedicated to the dead and living Confederate soldiers. Reunions of Union soldier regiments and brigades were also not as popular or well-received as those of Confederate regiments or brigades, especially that of the Orphan Brigade, the most famous and most popular Kentucky Confederate unit of the war.<sup>9</sup> As adherence to the Lost Cause gained ascendancy in post-war Kentucky, former Union soldiers found their service in the Union more a hindrance

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<sup>5</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 275-76.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>7</sup> *Lexington Observer and Reporter*, 22 May 1867, quoted in Coulter, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Kentucky*, 324.

<sup>8</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 276 and 387.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 395. The large amount of literature, some of which is cited in this work, on just this one brigade should give an indication of its popularity among Kentuckians in the past and today.

to advancement rather than as an aid.<sup>10</sup> By preferring to elect former Confederate soldiers into state and local offices, Kentucky voters prevented former Union soldiers from gaining public office because of their war service. This ostracism extended beyond just politics and office-seeking. “The fact is loyal men will have to ask an amnesty from the rebels,” wrote J. W. Kincheloe to Joseph Holt on March 22, 1866. “They cannot live under the oppressive weight of the rebellion, and the government both, and the government seems determined to show no quarter, to those who have aided in its preservation. . . . The rebels have gotten up a system of proscription, extending to business matters and everything else of interest to man.” If the situation did not improve, Kincheloe continued, “the loyalists of Kentucky will have to seek a more friendly climate.”<sup>11</sup> As they suffered and sacrificed during the war, Kentucky’s Union soldiers continued to do so long after the war as the Confederate domination of state grew, expanded, and perhaps has never ceased.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 417.

<sup>11</sup> J. W. Kincheloe to Joseph Holt, 22 March 1866, quoted in Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 302.

<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon of historical reality being obscured or dominated by post-event memory, such as how the reality of Kentucky’s wartime Unionism became dominated by its post-war sympathies with the South such that many modern Kentuckians view Kentucky as a Confederate or a Southern-sympathizing state during the war, is the subject of memory studies, an expanding field of historical study. For additional reading on memory and the Civil War, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MS: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

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