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# Civil War Unionists and Their Legacy in the Arkansas Ozarks

Rebecca Ann Howard  
*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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Civil War Unionists and Their Legacy in the Arkansas Ozarks

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

Rebecca Ann Howard  
Texas A&M University  
Bachelor of Arts in History, 2000  
Texas A&M University  
Master of Education in Education Administration, 2002

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University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Dr. Jeannie M. Whyne  
Dissertation Director

---

Dr. Daniel E. Sutherland  
Committee Member

---

Dr. Patrick G. Williams  
Committee Member

## **Abstract**

More than a thousand men from northwest Arkansas served in the Union Army during the American Civil War. The conflict devastated a region that had previously enjoyed impressive economic growth. The years of suffering during the war eventually left the region largely depopulated. As people returned to the region after the war was over, unionists and their families fought not only to rebuild, but to secure the benefits they felt their loyalty to the federal government deserved. As unionists became Republicans in the decades after the war, Arkansas became a securely Democratic state. But Arkansas's native Republicans leveraged their wartime loyalty into a unique relationship with the federal government that secured for them restitution for wartime losses, pensions for wartime service, and political appointments through the patronage system.

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High school teachers are the often-unsung heroes of education, so my first thanks must go to Sarah Redfield and Cheryl Gregory. It takes a very special educator to willingly bait the arrogance and obsession of the “smart kids” by challenging them to do better. It is only as I am in the classroom myself that I can truly appreciate the amount of work that went into every carefully graded and reviewed assignment I received back from them. They made me a scholar and a writer.

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I deeply appreciate the many fine scholars of the Department of History and Special Collections at the University of Arkansas, the community of historians in the Arkansas Historical Association, and the historians and archivists of the Shiloh Museum, the Arkansas Statehouse

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Robert Calvert. A fine activist and scholar, I aspire to always see students and colleagues as he did.

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## Introduction

One of the most reviled Civil War bushwhackers in the Arkansas Ozarks, Tuck Smith, led a notorious band that harassed the federal army and local unionists relentlessly, and in 1863, he captured John Rutherford and Richard Dye. The “old men,” as they called themselves, had been among the first settlers in Washington county. They each had three sons in the Union army, and both had a son die during their service. Through extensive and for the old men, quite humiliating, negotiations involving women as go-betweens and men much their junior, they were eventually released. Smith was no doubt motivated by a threat from the Rutherford and Dye sons to put Smith’s own elders “under the sod” should their fathers come to any harm. For the rest of the war, Rutherford and Dye abandoned their homes and sought refuge behind Union lines. In May of 1865, Smith rode into Fort Smith, surrendered to Union forces there, and was paroled the next day. For the rest of their lives, the three men lived within fifteen miles of one other. Though the Arkansas Ozarks experienced violence and upheaval after the war, Smith resumed his work as a blacksmith and Rutherford and Dye went back to farming. Rutherford’s son, who died in service, was honored as namesake for the local Grand Army of the Republic post; Smith was a hero to local failed Confederates.

This study examines the impact of war and the process of reconciliation and Reconstruction in the Arkansas Ozarks, an area that witnessed the brutality of guerrilla warfare. No one has examined the impact of guerrilla war in northwest Arkansas in terms of how it affected Unionism and civilians, particularly in the postwar period. It challenges the widespread belief that Reconstruction was relatively easy in the upcountry of Arkansas, with large numbers of native unionists and few freed people. It utilizes records of the Southern Claims Commission

and the pension files of Arkansas's Federal soldiers, as well as newspapers, wartime and postwar correspondence, and organizational records to retrieve the experience of local unionists. The key to the continued existence and solidarity of this group was not negotiations internal to northwest Arkansas, but the new relationship that developed between them and the federal government as they evolved from unionists to Republicans. After the war, Republicans and Democrats began sniping at each other more from newspaper pages than hilltops, but covert political violence continued. Careful distinctions were made between noble, if unconventional, warriors and the true brigands. Some old soldiers embraced the pagentry of joint Confederate and Union encampments, but others carried their differences to the grave. The guerrilla war in the Ozarks left a complex legacy of reconciliation and resentment, political processes of questionable honor, and left a small group of Union veterans and their households as outposts of Republicanism in a Democratic state.

Northwest Arkansas, here defined as the counties of Benton, Carroll, Madison, and Washington Counties, is not the only region of the upland South to experience a complex aftermath of Civil War. In the final chapter of *Contested Borderland*, Brian McKnight's excellent exploration of the Civil War in eastern Kentucky and western Virginia, he makes two seemingly contradictory statements. First, he argues "violence that the Civil War legitimized within the mountain society...usher[ed] in a period of social strife and citizen-led violence [in the postwar period] that still remains a part of the American concept of Appalachian life."<sup>1</sup> Yet McKnight notes a few pages later how interesting it is "that a population so divided by war became so strongly committed to postwar reconciliation," and that these mountaineers "found the security offered by the U.S. government to be the force that would salve the wounds of war

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Dallas McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

and bind people together.”<sup>2</sup> John Inscoe, in his review of McKnight’s book in *The American Historical Review*, calls McKnight on this seeming contradiction. Notably, however, Inscoe does not challenge the veracity of McKnight’s claims. He merely states “McKnight might have done more in explaining how and why these statements are not necessarily as contradictory as they sound.”<sup>3</sup> As an expert himself on the Civil War in Appalachia, Inscoe’s reticence does not come from misplaced scholarly politeness; his studies of southern Appalachia also reveal a mix of lingering violence and reconciliation in the postwar years. Yet his treatment of the period comes in a number of frustratingly short final chapters.<sup>4</sup> This work seeks to fill a gap in the historiography by offering a better understanding of the postwar period in the mountain South. This dissertation hopes to change how we think of southern unionists, both during the Civil War and for decades after the conflict officially ended. They were a group with a lowered threshold for violence that found also security in the power of the federal government and not a group that retreated into their communities to become consumed by only local issues and conflicts. In the broader view, this study also finally brings the Arkansas Ozarks into the discussion of the mountain South during and after the war.

With titles that include phrases like *With Fire and Sword, Persistence in the Midst of Ruin, Getting Used to Being Shot at, Fields of Blood*, or the latest *I Do Wish This Cruel War Was*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Inscoe, review for *The American Historical Review*, 111 (December 2006), 1517-1518.

<sup>4</sup> John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

*Over*, the chronicling of the Civil War in Arkansas does not paint a pleasant picture.<sup>5</sup> The war was long, brutal, and as Thomas DeBlack noted in *With Fire and Sword*, “the lines between good and evil, right and wrong . . . often blurred.”<sup>6</sup> DeBlack made a point not only about the war itself, but acknowledged that a large portion of the secondary literature about the war in Arkansas has been quite partisan itself. Thomas S. Staples published *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* in 1923. He provided a thorough examination of Reconstruction with an interpretation that was critical of both the impact of Federal troops and the postwar Republican government of the state.<sup>7</sup> David Y. Thomas’s 1926 contribution *Arkansas in War and Reconstruction* worked to present an accurate picture of the conflict, the book was published by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. References to northwest Arkansas were few in both works and only utilized to give context to events occurring in the capital. What followed these two works were examinations of the war that generally focused on military history, especially fighting and re-fighting battles conducted in the state, or biographies expounding upon the honor of various Confederate military leaders. Again, little attention was given to northwest Arkansas, with the exception of discussions of the battles of Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove, but they were placed in the context of the war in the state and nation, and not with a focus on conditions in the region and impact on civilians.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2003); Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 2002; 1994); Alexander E. Spence, Thomas F. Spence and Mark K. Christ, *Getting used to being Shot at: The Spence Family Civil War Letters* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002); Mark K. Christ and Patrick G. Williams, *I Do Wish this Cruel War was Over: First-Person Accounts of Civil War Arkansas from the Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (Fayetteville, Ark.: The University of Arkansas Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Staples offered William A. Dunning special thanks in his acknowledgements. Thomas S. Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* (New York: Columbia University, 1923).

The first to consider the war and Reconstruction in the post-Dunning School era was Michael Dougan's *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime*.<sup>8</sup> The 1972 work eschewed military history for the most part to focus on the political circumstances of secession and the impact of the war on the state. However, Dougan's state-wide study does not anticipate current attention to guerrilla warfare and favors discussions of sections of the state in that experienced more racial strife than the Ozarks. The next noteworthy consideration of the Civil War in Arkansas was Carl Moneyhon's *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin*. Meticulously researched, Moneyhon's 1994 book calculated a surprising level of wealth and development in the state in 1860 and then carefully quantified its near complete destruction through war and Reconstruction. Though Moneyhon makes note of the economic persistence of Arkansans during Reconstruction, ruin is the condition that leaves the most impact on the reader. Studies of Reconstruction in Arkansas have largely centered on Little Rock and the regions of the state that experienced the most racial violence. Moneyhon included information for Washington County in northwest Arkansas in his study, but mainly as a comparison, not to focus attention on the region. Aside from a few small studies of the guerrilla war and its effects in northwest Arkansas that will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four, little attention has been paid to northwest Arkansas during or after the Civil War.

A note about sources used in this project is in order. Diaries, letters, memoirs, archival collections, and biographies from and by participants in the Civil War in northwest Arkansas are almost exclusively related to those affiliated with the Confederacy. However, strong anti-secessionist sentiment has been documented in northwest Arkansas and at least one thousand

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<sup>8</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1976).

men from the four counties of northwest Arkansas served in the state's Federal units—each with families and kinship-networks of their own. Pension files indicate many of them remained in northwest Arkansas or the surrounding region until their deaths, many living into the twentieth century. But personal documents produced by them are exceedingly rare. Even postwar documents from the local Republican Party, the Grand Army of the Republic posts in the area, and Republican newspapers are slight. Usually the winners write the history, but that has not been the case with the Civil War, and especially not in northwest Arkansas. Two issues may have been at play. First, northwest Arkansas was not immune to the lure of the Lost Cause in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The same impulse that favored town square statuary and plaques honoring former Confederates instead of Union veterans no doubt came into play when deciding whose stories and memorabilia were collected and preserved. United Daughters of the Confederacy (U.D.C.) chapters in northwest Arkansas predate the creation of county historical societies by decades. While the mission of the U.D.C. was not focused on preservation of documents, their activism in perpetuating their view of the war was no doubt influential in local preservation efforts.<sup>9</sup> Second, there was a notable socioeconomic difference between Confederate-affiliated and Union-affiliated families in the region. Wealthy families with the means preserve their history and the social and political influence after the war for it to be deemed relevant were more likely to have been Confederates during the conflict.

So significant was this bias in preservation that it eventually rendered the Unionist history of the region largely invisible. For example, there exist personal accounts of the Civil War by any number Confederate officers from the area, but the not one from any Federal equivalent, not even the dashing and influential Thomas J. Hunt, who was a northwest Arkansas

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<sup>9</sup> Most UDC chapters were formed in northwest Arkansas in the 1890s and 1900s. Most county historical societies were formed in the 1940s and 1950s.

resident prior to the war, achieved rank during the conflict, and enjoyed political influence for decades. Unionist records have survived in federal hands—the Pension Office, the Department of War, and various Reconstruction-era commissions like the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, and the Southern Claims Commission—but these records remain far from the Ozarks. Accessing those records has become easier in the age of digitization and reveal a wealth of information. Testimony in a government document, however, has a different tone than a letter to a family member or a nostalgic account in one’s twilight years of a tragic, yet honorably fought battle. The federal records for northwest Arkansas Unionists tend to be more thorough—most were collected during investigations into eligibility for a government program—and are easier to quantify, allowing creation of useful graphs and charts. But what personal perspective from individuals that is in the documents is in the context, generally, of asking a government agency for support or reimbursement. The records can be dry, and loyalty overstated or simplified. Confederate records from the war years are sloppy, at best, and usually incomplete, rendering quantification almost impossible. But they are supplemented by numerous personal accounts from during the war years and in remembrance.<sup>10</sup> Every effort has been made here to account for that difference without giving short shrift to any one perspective, but the differences will no doubt be visible.

Chapter One, “The Lay of the Land: Northwest Arkansas to 1860,” establishes the trajectory of northwest Arkansas on the eve of the Civil War. Everything from the physical geography of the area, to the racial and ethnic make up of its inhabitants, to its politics and

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<sup>10</sup> Confederate records are useful for confirming the service of a known individual, or discussing particular units, but not for the type of analysis that will be done here of Union units. For example, individuals in Washington County, Arkansas recently compiled a list of Confederate veterans and their families but eschewed military records in favor of newspapers, mainly obituaries, as a source. William W. Degge and Dorothy Ruth Miller, *Confederate Veterans and Related Families* (Washington County, Arkansas: Luginbuel Funeral Home, 2014).

economics are explored to contextualize the impact of the war to come. Chapter Two, “Northwest Arkansas Faces War,” is focused on northwest Arkansas’s Union soldiers. It identifies who they were and analyzes enlistment patterns and the factors that influenced decisions about joining the Federal army. The choices made by men in the war years shaped their lives and fortunes for decades to come. Chapter Three, “Wartime Ruin and Survival: The Civilian Experience of Northwest Arkansas,” delves into the experiences of women, children, slaves, and old men as they were either caught up in both formal and guerrilla fighting, or forced to flee the area. By the 1865, northwest Arkansas was physically and economically devastated and largely depopulated. Conditions for civilians affected the postwar period as much as the military experience. Chapter Four, “Peace Returns: Battles on Other Fronts,” considers the period between 1865 and the early 1870s in northwest Arkansas as an era shaped by slowly subsiding violence, gradual repopulation, and painstaking rebuilding. As the native-born unionists of northwest Arkansas endured political losses at the state level, they turned to securing their legacy locally. Chapter Five, “Southern Republicans in a Hostile State,” pushes beyond 1870 and through the turn of the century. It broadens the focus to place northwest Arkansas in the context of Reconstruction in both Arkansas and the nation. The area was both typical of the period in terms of political machinations and party conflicts, but unique in how former Unionists leveraged their early commitment to the Republican Party for political and economic gain in a state controlled by Democrats.



## **Chapter One**

### **The Lay of the Land: Northwest Arkansas to 1860**

When Arkansas became a territory in 1819, portions of northwest Arkansas were officially opened to white settlement. National political forces in the first half of the nineteenth century changed who lived in the Ozarks, from the Osages to the Cherokees to whites of European descent. Settlement after the western border of the territory was set in 1828 was a race to get the best land and culminated in a surge in settlement in the 1850s. Attaining good land, keeping it, and making money off of it consumed the first thirty years in northwest Arkansas. By the end of the 1840s, the best land was under cultivation, producing corn and grains and supporting a large livestock population. By the end of the 1850s, the region had a mill system that had moved beyond gristmills and into manufacturing and was well connected to regional markets. Northwest Arkansas was also an emerging center of education. The political landscape by 1860 was active with erstwhile Whigs and Jacksonian Democrats of the early statehood era struggling to retain control of the increasingly fractured political system and rein in the volatile generation taking control. By the eve of the Civil War, northwest Arkansas had built enough to have much to lose in the coming conflict.

The lives, families, and resting places of two men illustrate the antebellum experience in northwest Arkansas. Behind a steel cattle gate surrounded by pastures in rural Washington County, is a small collection of graves known as Parks Corner Cemetery. Among them lies Mark Bean. He was born in Grainger County, Tennessee, in 1794, but he and his older brother came to Arkansas, strangely enough, from what is now Oklahoma after the salt works they had started in

1817 ended up on the wrong side of the territorial border after it was redrawn in 1828.<sup>1</sup> Bean made the best of the situation, however, by establishing extensive holdings near Cane Hill on some of the finest cropland in northwest Arkansas and investing in many additional enterprises: a cotton plantation in Pope County on the Arkansas River, a cotton thread manufactory and saw mill in Washington County, and extensive corn and livestock cultivation on his holding at Cane Hill. At the time of his death in 1862, Bean was the largest slaveholder in Washington County, and his son, Richard Henderson Bean, a native-born Arkansan, was serving in the Confederate Army.<sup>2</sup> Some fifty miles away east of Bean's resting place, you can find the marker for Abraham McGinnis in remote Bohannon Cemetery. Born in Halifax County, Virginia, in 1786, McGinnis died in 1842 after spending most of his life leading his family across the continent to the promised land—Madison County, Arkansas. Like his namesake, his journey was a meandering one. He married Deborah Clark in Kentucky, served as a Tennessee volunteer in the War of 1812, and, though a few of his children were born in Illinois, he died in Arkansas. His grandson Elisha, a native-born Arkansan, joined the Union Army during the Civil War—but only after serving out his year-long commitment in the Confederate one.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark and Richard Bean protested this loss to the highest levels of the Federal government for the rest of their lives. Petition of Mark and Richard H. Bean [To accompany bill H. R. No. 454.], July 19, 1856, Committee on Public Lands, Report No. 210, 34<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, U.S. House of Representatives [hereinafter Bean Petition to Congress].

<sup>2</sup> Between properties in Cane Hill and Vineyard townships, Bean owned 41 slaves in 1860. Manuscript census returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, slave schedules, Washington County, AR; Bobbie Jones McLane and Capitola Hensley Glazner, *Arkansas 1911 Census of Confederate Veterans* (Hot Springs National Park, Ark.: B.J. McLane : C. Glazner, 1977; 1981), transcribed in William W. Degge and Dorothy Ruth Miller, *Confederate Veterans and Related Families* (Washington County, Arkansas: Luginbuel Funeral Home, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Elisha McGinnis deposition, Soldier's Certificate No. 336430, Elisha McGinnis, private, Company L, First Arkansas Cavalry, Case Files of Approved Pension Applications of Veterans Who Served in the Army and Navy Mainly in the Civil War and the War with Spain (Civil War and Later Survivors' Certificates), 1861-1934, Civil War and Later Pension Files;

Mark Bean was one of the wealthiest men of his generation in Arkansas, but his headstone looks like it has been clipped by the tractor parked within the ramshackle fence around it. Even today, the owners of the space resist wasting good land. In contrast, on the rocky hilltop of Bohannon Cemetery, hundreds of graves are protected by a tidy fence beside a venerable country church. Abraham McGinnis was a typical yeoman farmer—neither rich nor poor—but unlike Bean, he has a unique, well-preserved marker in a cemetery with a lovely view. While Bohannon Cemetery is beautiful, nothing much grows there, and that is why it *is* there. Both cemeteries capture much about the geology, geography, and settlement patterns that shaped northwest Arkansas prior to 1860. The resources and geology of northwest Arkansas defined how the land was used and directly shaped the wealth and social status its occupants could attain. Bean might rest in a humble, forgotten cemetery sharing space with farm equipment, but that is because he settled land so ready to be turned to agricultural use that it barely needed the sod broken, much less cleared of trees. The land made him wealthy and gave him political influence. McGinnis hacked a life out of the more unforgiving terrain of Madison County. The land gave him subsistence, but not wealth, and certainly not power. The lives of hundreds of other early settlers in northwest Arkansas were shaped by the land in much the same way as Bean and McGinnis.

An understanding of the physical shape and resources of a region can elucidate patterns of settlement, land usage, agriculture, transportation, and, later even, the movement of armies and postwar recovery. The underlying geology determines the resources both below and on the surface, and in the case of the Ozarks, a great variety of soil and terrain types. Mineral wealth, or

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Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC [hereinafter Pension Files].

lack thereof, and the type of land available for cultivation shaped nineteenth-century economics, life, and culture. The race to claim newly opened lands as the U.S. expanded was heated because getting the best land was critical to future success. Not only could the best land produce more, but it was also easier to break and tolerated periods of disuse better, a fact that would become especially important to economic success after the Civil War. In the Arkansas Ozarks, the small but lucrative areas of rolling, well-drained prairie required only the breaking of the sod to become useful in the 1830s, and would only need a minor extra effort to regain that status after being abandoned during the Civil War. In contrast, wooded land required backbreaking work before it could be put under cultivation prior to the Civil War, and after only a short period of disuse, could become covered in vines, brambles, and brush that was very difficult and time consuming to clear a second time. The location of mountains, rivers, valleys, and prairies also shaped the impact of war, influencing how armies moved across the land and where battles were fought.

Despite a visual resemblance to their eastern counterparts, geologically the Ozarks are vastly different from the Appalachian range. While the Appalachians formed through the compression and uplift pressures of plate tectonics, the Ozarks were formed through the erosion of a preexisting continental high. Over millions of years, this high point was covered with sedimentary deposits during eras of high sea level, only to be eroded when later exposed. As a result, the Ozarks Mountains are of relatively uniform height, flat-topped, and formed mostly of eroded limestone interspersed with layers of dolostone, shale, and sandstone. Some of these rocks make useful building materials, but beyond that were not particularly valuable in the nineteenth century. The uneven nature of erosion left the Arkansas Ozarks divided into three general regions; the Salem Plateau of north central Arkansas, the Springfield Plateau of

northwestern to central Arkansas, and the Boston Mountain range, a belt across the southern boundary of the formation, parallel to the Arkansas River.<sup>4</sup>

The Ozarks are generally lacking in valuable mineral deposits, especially in comparison to the Appalachian range. Bluffs and modern roads cut in the Ozarks reveal that the rock strata is almost completely level with horizontal layers across the face of an exposure. These lines explain the lack of mineral deposits in the Ozarks; without the chaos of compression and uplift, incursions of valuable minerals are difficult to form. Hernando De Soto found no mythical gold when he explored the Ozarks, nor did northwest Arkansas harbor silver, coal, or significant deposits of lead or zinc found by later explorers looking for Appalachian-style treasures.<sup>5</sup> These differences affected not only how the land was used after settlement, but the region's experience of the Civil War as well. Numerous mineral resources, coveted by both Union and Confederacy in Appalachia, and especially in the Cumberland Gap, during the Civil War have been identified as having a profound effect on the fighting there.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the Ozarks had a few zinc and lead mines, and all are located outside of the counties of this study. The closest was a mine in adjacent Newton County that was utilized by Confederates. Due to its low yield and distance from Union smelting operations hundreds of miles to the east, it was closed and guarded when federal troops took control.

One geological formation the Ozarks possess in abundance is caves. The vulnerability of limestone to chemical weathering processes—where rainwater slowly dissolves the stone—has left the Ozarks riddled with cave and bluff formations. Some of these spaces are quite extensive

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<sup>4</sup> John David McFarland, *Stratigraphic Summary of Arkansas* (Little Rock: Arkansas Geological Commission, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> George C. Branner, *Outlines of Arkansas' Mineral Resources* (Little Rock: Bureau of Mines, Manufactures and Agriculture and State Geological Survey, 1927), 37-58.

<sup>6</sup> Brian McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006).

and burrow deep into the hills. Many are shallow and extend only far enough to provide a small space of dry shelter. Native populations for millennia utilized these caves and bluff shelters. White settlers used them for cool storage and emergency shelter. During the Civil War, caves harbored everything from men avoiding conscription, to foodstuffs, to ammunition. After the war, desperate families sought shelter in them until their homes were rebuilt.

Defined by gentle prairies cut through with creeks and patches of higher terrain over fertile valleys and rivers, the four counties of northwest Arkansas hold the best land in the Arkansas Ozarks, even though all four counties have areas of rough country more typical of the region.<sup>7</sup> Yet it was not easy of access. Anyone arriving from the Arkansas River had to cross the rugged Boston Mountains, defined by rocky hillsides and steep valleys with little soil on which to grow more than subsistence crops. Northwest Arkansas has one major river, the White, and it flows inconveniently north, away from the Arkansas River. Further, its headwaters are in Madison County, and, before it was dammed in the 1960s, remained too low for river travel most of the year as it flowed in a curve through all four counties of northwest Arkansas before crossing into Missouri. It was not the accessibility of northwest Arkansas that appealed to early settlers, but the land itself. White settlers from other upland parts of the south—Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia—knew how to make a living from the varied terrain of northwest Arkansas. The region was first granted, however, to another group intimately familiar with the upland South: the Cherokees.

The nineteenth-century negotiation of the boundaries of northwest Arkansas reflected the national debate over removal of Native Americans. Prior to the Louisiana Purchase, the Arkansas Ozarks were mainly utilized as seasonal hunting grounds by the Osages, who had remained

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<sup>7</sup> Brooks Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers & their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 340.

based in what is now Missouri. Through a series of treaties in 1808, 1818, and 1825, they ceded their land in Arkansas and were removed to what is now eastern Oklahoma. Portions of the Cherokees—a fragment of the larger tribe who chose to move westward on their own terms—began to arrive even before their territory was defined by treaty in 1818. Unwelcomed by the Osages, the intermittent violence that sprang up between the two groups eventually led to the creation of the U. S. Army post at Fort Smith on the Arkansas River, due south of northwest Arkansas.<sup>8</sup> For the decade the Cherokees were allowed to settle lands in Arkansas, they favored land along navigable waterways and generally left much of the higher or less accessible areas of the Ozarks untouched. The lands of western Arkansas were coveted by white settlers and the boundary between Arkansas and Indian Territory (Oklahoma) was in flux until 1828. A treaty with the Cherokees in that year set the final border, pushed the Cherokees farther west, and officially created northwest Arkansas. Bordered by Indian Territory to the west and Missouri to the north, from 1828 through the late 1840s, northwest Arkansas was the western edge of the organized states.<sup>9</sup> Though the Cherokees had moved westward, they remained within easy trading distance from northwest Arkansas and, along with the federal military presence in the region, were critical to the early economy of the area.

With the western border of the territory established, white settlement in the Arkansas Ozarks began in earnest, drawn by both the land and a climate deemed healthy, especially in comparison to the Mississippi Delta and Arkansas River Valley. Avoidance of rougher terrain meant that the flatter western portions of Benton and Washington Counties were settled first. Settlement then expanded eastward across the counties and into Madison and Carroll Counties.

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<sup>8</sup> George Sabo, III, “Osage,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed September 13, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Derek R. Everett, “On the Extreme Frontier: Crafting the Western Arkansas Boundary,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 62 (Spring 2008): 1–26.

On the formation of Washington County in 1828 (which at that time also included what would later be Benton County), the *Arkansas Gazette* proclaimed:

The contemplated Washington County, in the north west section of the Territory, is represented as embracing in its limits, one of the finest bodies of soil in the western country. Its extent of fertility is unsurpassed: the climate more favorable for health than it is in any part of the Territory: the springs of water numerous and not excelled in quality by any in the world. Emigration to it, is taking place every day. To examiners of the Territory, we would say, leave it not, until you have seen it.<sup>10</sup>

With such endorsements, settlement began quickly. White settlers initially followed the same preference for water routes as the earlier Cherokees, but also utilized overland routes. Some settlers arrived from the north via Missouri, while others traveled up from the Arkansas River, disembarking at what would become Van Buren and taking advantage of a flatter route around the Boston Mountains that closely following the new border with Indian Territory.

The white settlers of northwest Arkansas who arrived between 1830 and 1860 were familiar with westward movement. Birthplaces listed on the 1860 census reflect an intergenerational tradition of westward movement, with elders born in the east and younger generations born farther and farther west. Like the McGinnises and the Beans, many of the settlers to northwest Arkansas came from other upland regions of the South. While it is often expedient to treat the Arkansas Ozarks as identical to Appalachia, inhabited by mountaineers unique only in their bravery in crossing the Mississippi, one must be careful about taking the parallels too far. Though there are many commonalities between the regions—Inscoc's *Mountain Masters* reveals much common ground in terms of crop production and methods, slavery, and the myth of isolation—there are many differences.<sup>11</sup> Where western North Carolina society was rooted in 100 years of history and tradition at the start of the Civil War, northwest Arkansas

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<sup>10</sup> *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), October 28, 1828.

<sup>11</sup> John C. Inscoc, *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).



society was barely 30 years old. When western North Carolina shed population, northwest Arkansas received much of that population, and a mix of many others. While western North Carolina had expelled Native Americans before 1800, northwest Arkansas had active ties with Indian Territory in 1860 and beyond. While northwest Arkansas saw formal fighting and occupation during the Civil War, western North Carolina saw little. Though Appalachia and the Arkansas Ozarks have many commonalities, they were unique regions before the war and became even more so during and after it.

Appalachian transplants did, however, bring an understanding of how to cultivate the diverse terrain of northwest Arkansas. Few characterizations are more temptingly expedient yet frustratingly inexact as the connections that can be made between Arkansas's geography and its cultural, economic and political differences in the mid-nineteenth century. Northwest Arkansas is often a victim of this simplified view. Arkansas, we like to say, can be roughly divided along a line between the southwest and northeast corners. The upcountry agricultural economy was one of corn and hogs, and the delta was in cotton. The reality, of course, was not nearly so tidy. Northwest Arkansas had a mix of farming practices, similar to what John Inscoe documents in North Carolina: stereotypical yeoman farming with incursions of more delta-style, slave-based agriculture along rivers and streams.<sup>12</sup> Bean and McGinnis, for example, though both from upland regions of Tennessee, utilized the land in different ways. Bean was an upland landowner and slaveholder who achieved the definition of planter status—more than 20 slaves. McGinnis was a typical yeoman farmer who, while economically independent, was never wealthy and likely never owned a slave.

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<sup>12</sup> John C. Inscoe, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

The earliest settlers in northwest Arkansas actually had more in common with Bean. They tended to be wealthier, have connections to the U. S. Army, arrive with slaves, and claim larger tracts of land along rivers and creeks. William Vaughn, a slaveholder from Tennessee, was an early settler of western Benton County along the Little Osage River. Philip Harp, who claimed land near modern day Eureka Springs in Carroll County was also a Tennessean and slaveholder. Samuel Vaughan, a relation to William, claimed prime land around present-day Hindsville in western Madison County. “Lush prairie grass that was more than belly deep on the horses” greeted Vaughan when he arrived, and the valley he claimed still supports row crops cultivated by Vaughan descendants.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Jefferson Kelley, also from Tennessee and a veteran the Seminole War, was an early settler of Benton County. These men, their families and slaves, settled so early some of their first claims were probably made before the area had been completely cleared of Cherokee title.<sup>14</sup> Yeoman farmers eventually came to outnumber their wealthier counterparts, but slaveholders remained dominant in the economy.<sup>15</sup>

Flatter, fertile areas of northwest Arkansas were conducive to slave-supported agriculture, even though the climate was not friendly to cotton.<sup>16</sup> In 1830, the two counties from which Benton, Carroll, Madison, and Washington Counties would be carved had a population of 3,348, of which 227, or nearly seven percent, were slaves. Arkansas achieved statehood in 1836, and by 1840, with county boundaries established, northwest Arkansas boasted a population of 14,996, of which 1,271, or almost eight and half percent, were slaves. There were differences between the four counties, however, with Washington County at a little more than twelve percent

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<sup>13</sup> *History of Washington County Arkansas* (Springdale, Arkansas: Shiloh Museum, 1989), 20-23.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Vaughan, *Vaughan Pioneers* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc. 1979), 245.

<sup>15</sup> Ted. J. Smith, “Slavery in Washington County, Arkansas, 1828-1860.” M. A. Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1995.

<sup>16</sup>Smith, “Slavery in Washington County, Arkansas, 1828-1860.”

enslaved, and Madison County below three percent. But that was nothing compared to the extremes within the state. In the same census, the population of Chicot County in southeast Arkansas was more than seventy percent slave.<sup>17</sup> Both the Beans and Vaughans farmed their land with slave labor as early as the 1830s.<sup>18</sup> They were following a pattern already demonstrated in Appalachia—those who had the means to arrive first were likely to be slaveholders, and by claiming the best land, they secured the means to continue that lifestyle and grow it.<sup>19</sup> A study of slaveholding in Washington County revealed that nearly every slaveholder was located on fertile land along creeks and streams. By 1860, six percent of the northwest Arkansas population was enslaved, a decline that reflected the increasing population of non-slaveholders.<sup>20</sup> Of the slaveholding class, Mark Bean was the largest in northwest Arkansas with forty-one slaves, and most were smaller holders with five to twenty slaves. Only a handful of men in each county achieved the status of “planter,” which most historians characterize as owning at least twenty slaves. Twenty is the number of slaves generally required to operate a plantation without the owner having to work. In northwest Arkansas, however, slaves were not performing agricultural labor alone, nor had the declining percentage of slaveholders limited their influence in the economy.

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapservr.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapservr.lib.virginia.edu).

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, Population Schedules, Washington and Madison Counties, AR.

<sup>19</sup> Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*; Martin Crawford, “Political Society in a Southern Mountain Community: Ashe County, North Carolina, 1850-1861,” *Journal of Southern History* 55 (August 1989), 373-390.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapservr.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapservr.lib.virginia.edu).

In northwest Arkansas, slaveholders made up less than two percent of the population of in 1860, yet their holdings—farms, mills, and manufactories—produced one third to one half of all commodities grown or manufactured in the region.<sup>21</sup> Slaves were an important part of the pre-Civil War landscape in northwest Arkansas. Despite the obvious role of slavery prior to the war, surprisingly, most studies of the upland South during the conflict make virtually no mention of slaves. Slaves may not have had an obvious impact on how the war was fought there; they often left their farms, if not the region, for either the safety of Union lines or because they went south with their masters. But slaves were critical to the economy and social structure of northwest Arkansas. Understanding the prewar and wartime slave experiences is critical to understanding the postwar economic situation. Not only were capital investments destroyed and land left fallow during the war, but the entire labor system for the largest producers in the region changed. Where slaves came from, how they lived, and how they were treated from the 1830s through the 1850s had a direct bearing on whether or not they decided to stay in northwest Arkansas after the war—and whether or not their former owners could count on their labor in the postwar period.

Studies of upland slavery emphasize its variety. John C. Inscoe offers one of the best studies of upland slavery in a book-length treatment that found a more diversified slave system in North Carolina. He notes that African American slaves in upland areas participated in a corn and hogs economy, and found limited use of enslaved people in the production of cotton in river bottoms of the upcountry. Diane Mutti Burke's study of small slaveholding households in Missouri provides a more proximate study of the type of slavery practiced west of the Mississippi. She shows the variable nature of slave tasks as well as the close quarters many slaves and masters kept in emerging slaves systems in the nineteenth century. Finally, Kelly

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, "Slavery in Washington County, Arkansas, 1828-1860," 51-53.

Houston Jones's dissertation "The Peculiar Institution on the Periphery: Slavery in Arkansas," gives a much-needed focus on slavery in the state. In terms of upcountry slavery, she points out that tasks and labor were more varied, and slaves themselves were perhaps lonelier in the scattered smallholdings when compared to the plantation districts.<sup>22</sup>

There was no typical slave experience in northwest Arkansas. Life for enslaved people depended on who owned them, where they lived, and the economic endeavors of their owners. There is evidence that slaves were utilized as part of the work force of the mills in the area. An extensive excavation of the Van Winkle Mill site in Benton County and an analysis of related records indicated Peter Van Winkle utilized most of his slaves in his mill during the antebellum period.<sup>23</sup> David Walker and A. V. Rieff, both slaveholders and mill owners, likely also utilized slave labor in their mills.<sup>24</sup> The Caesar and Mary Bean family and Joe Bean, enslaved on the massive Bean holding in Washington County, on the other hand, lived in slave quarters and seem to have experienced a slave community that resembled that of their more southern counterparts. A neighboring slaveholder, James Moore, had twenty-five slaves in 1860 and the slaves on the two holdings may have been able to form an extended community.<sup>25</sup> Bean and Moore were an exception, however, as most enslaved people in northwest Arkansas did not live on large

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.; Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010). Kelly Houston Jones, "The Peculiar Institution on the Periphery," University of Arkansas, Ph.D Dissertation, 2014, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Jamie C. Brandon and James M. Davidson, "The Landscape of Van Winkle's Mill: Identity, Myth, and Modernity in the Ozark Upland South," *Historical Archaeology* 39, No. 3, *Landscapes of Industrial Labor* (2005): 113-131.

<sup>24</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Washington County, AR.

<sup>25</sup> Deposition of Caesar Bean, Caesar Bean (Crawford Co., Arkansas) claim, no. 17418, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013). "Joe Bean, Washington County," in *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery, Narratives From the 1930s WPA Collections*, ed. George E. Lankford (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 382; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Washington County, AR.

holdings. Since slaveholders settled near one another on the better land in northwest Arkansas, however, some slaves on smaller holdings in the region might have lived closely with their masters, while also having the opportunity to participate in a larger slave community. The large patches of uncultivated land between holdings was likely utilized by slaves as meeting places. The bands of intense slaveholding Jones identified along major rivers in Arkansas are echoed in some ways in the strips along smaller creeks and tributaries in northwest Arkansas.<sup>26</sup> By 1860, the Vaughan family holdings in Madison County had broadened to include multiple generations. While no one member of the Vaughan family held more than 13 slaves, there were a total of 45 individuals enslaved by someone with the Vaughan surname in a single township.<sup>27</sup> In a letter to family back in Tennessee, William Wilson of Madison County passed word that his slave Harrison had married a girl from the Shofner place down the road. The Wilsons and Shofners lived in another cluster of slaveholding that afforded slaves a chance at community.

Most enslaved people in northwest Arkansas lived in households with fewer than five slaves. Whether in a rural area or in town, this meant that they were under the constant supervision of their masters and mistresses. Mary Farley of Benton County and Adeline Blakely of Washington County were both raised by their mistresses from childhood to be domestic servants.<sup>28</sup> Farley was on a rural farm with only her siblings and master after her mother's death. Blakely lived in Fayetteville and was one of the only slaves in her household. Wesley Mecklin of Washington County lived and worked as the sole male hand on the farm and school of Robert

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<sup>26</sup> Kelly Houston Jones, "The Peculiar Institution on the Periphery," 47.

<sup>27</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Madison County, AR.

<sup>28</sup> "Mary Farley, Benton County" and "Adeline Blakely, Washington County" in *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery, Narratives From the 1930s WPA Collections*, ed. George E. Lankford (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006).

Mecklin of Washington County, visiting his wife Hannah, enslaved on a neighboring farm when their masters allowed.<sup>29</sup>

Northwest Arkansas also had its share of slaveholders who stretched norms and state law in regards to the treatment of their slaves in ways positive or horrific. Jackson Wallace and Wesley Dodson were owned by individuals in Washington County who allowed them to accrue such large amounts of personal property that they later made successful claims against the federal government for the loss of it during the Civil War. Both men expressed, and were supported with testimony of whites and blacks, that they enjoyed not only a level of personal freedom, but a substantial amount of trust from their masters and mistresses.<sup>30</sup> Others were owned by less generous slaveholders. Sofia, a woman enslaved by Isaac Spencer of Washington County was separated from her children when she was sold from one part of the county to another. She continually ran away—back to her children—and used a substantial part of her time making things for them. Despite Spencer’s best efforts to persuade her to do what she was told, including whippings and the subsequent strafing of her back with a salted cob, she refused to submit. It was her seeming defectiveness as a worker—not Spencer’s brutal treatment—that landed her story in the proceedings of the state Supreme Court, as Spencer sued her previous owner over her supposed state as “unsound, unhealthy, and mentally deranged.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Wesley Mecklin (Washington County, AR) claim no. 9234, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013). Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Washington County, AR.

<sup>30</sup> Deposition of Jackson Wallace. Jackson Wallace (Washington County, AR) claim no. 11367, Allowed Case Files, Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 217, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, reproductions at Fold3.com (accessed June 23, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Kelly Houston Jones, “‘A Rough and Saucy Set of Hands to Manage’: Slave Resistance in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61 (Spring 2012): 8-9.

Slave life in northwest Arkansas was not idyllic or easy simply because it was not in the plantation belt. The demographics of slavery in northwest Arkansas, and the stories of enslaved people—from the surprisingly empowered Dodson and Wallace, to Sofia’s torture for continually running away to her children—illustrate that the black experience of slavery and the white understanding of the acceptability and economic role of the institution in northwest Arkansas did not substantially differ from that of other regions of the South. Though slavery certainly adapted to Arkansas’s wilderness and border with Indian Territory, the institution itself was in no way weakened by the distance from the more established regions of the slave-holding South. In many ways, its persistence in northwest Arkansas illustrates the strength of the slave system. Even on the periphery, even with limited numbers, even in a newly settled place, slavery was startlingly stable and prolific. Northwest Arkansas was firmly a part of the slave system.<sup>32</sup>

Though slaveholders and slaves were a critical component of early northwest Arkansas settlement and economics, the majority of the population growth from 1830 to 1860 was among yeoman farmers. While not as economically and politically powerful as the slaveholding class, their background would also shape how secession, war, and the postwar period were experienced in northwest Arkansas. Yeomen farmers came from Appalachian regions of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina. Most were not slaveholders, and unlike the adventurous individuals who made the first claims on land in the area, they arrived in larger groups. This was a kinship-based society, and elders—like Abraham McGinnis—traveled with the group, a contrast to the wealthier young men like the Beans and Vaughans who, while likely funded by family back east, did not travel with them. The McGinnises of Madison County were siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins to the Drakes, Clarks, and Calicos who arrived with them,

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<sup>32</sup> For more information on slavery in Arkansas, see, Kelly Houston Jones, “The Peculiar Institution on the Periphery,” University of Arkansas, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2014.



and settled on land near the Vaughan claim. They were far from unique. The Nail and Farrar families, linked by marriage, came from Tennessee to central Benton County. The Sawyers, Martins, and Rutherfords who settled in and around modern-day West Fork and Hogeys in Washington County were also a kinship group, and also came from Tennessee.<sup>33</sup>

Arrival dates for yeoman farmers determined the type of land that was available for settlement. Those who missed the first wave of claims still found viable land along creek and river bottoms, albeit farther from the few roads and towns in the area, and in smaller quantities. Settlers of the late 1840s and 1850s took the agriculturally viable, if less accessible, land of the flattened hilltops. Marginal, steep land of hillsides was claimed last. This pattern is borne out in the censuses of 1840, 1850, and 1860 as the population grew first in townships on fertile land—often given names like Richland, Vineyard, or Prairie—and later, in the rockier, more mountainous townships, given equally descriptive names like Mountain and Stone.<sup>34</sup>

Like their counterparts across the upland South, yeoman farmers practiced a type of agriculture that allowed them to feed their families, pay their taxes, and remain largely free from debt or reliance on a broader economy that that might subject them to the fluctuations of the market. While slaveholders had more diversified holdings with wheat, barley, and potatoes, and even showed small experimentation in cotton, rice, and tobacco in the antebellum period, most yeoman farmers in the Arkansas Ozarks practiced corn and hog agriculture. However, many also raised a surprising number sheep, probably for the market, as the wool and meat of sheep

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<sup>33</sup> Kinship connections for the families listed here were established through census records and testimony presented in multiple pension files.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu). U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), *ibid.*

provided a dual income. Sheep were well suited to the rougher terrain in areas that could not support the cultivation of crops. But the sheep population by 1860 was nearly evenly dispersed across the four counties of northwest Arkansas, despite the differences in terrain. This indicates that while sheep might have been more heavily relied upon in the rockier reaches of Carroll and Madison Counties, they were also in the mixed livestock areas of the flatter and wealthier portions of Benton and Washington Counties.<sup>35</sup>

Northwest Arkansas had a fairly typical southern upland mix of slaves, slaveholders and yeoman farmers, but the region also reflected distinctive social and immigration trends. Native Americans, Germans, and even a New York utopian society found their way to northwest Arkansas before the Civil War. Many families listed as white in the census of Washington and Benton Counties share both surnames and arrival dates with families in or of Indian Territory. Former slaves, in both nineteenth-century government documents and the WPA slave narratives of the twentieth century indicate connections to and common heritage with the Cherokees.<sup>36</sup> These Native American connections were important socially, politically, and economically, and—especially important for this study—affected when and how families decided which side to support during the war. German immigrants explored and settled the frontier of the American west throughout the nineteenth century and northwest Arkansas was no exception. Hermannsburg in far western Washington County was established by the Hermann brothers in the 1850s after they left the revolutions that unsettled Germany in the late 1840s. They had strong opinions about the advisability of war as Arkansas considered the secession question. The

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<sup>35</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Census of Agriculture, *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapservr.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapservr.lib.virginia.edu)

<sup>36</sup> “Joe Bean, Benton County” and “R. C. Smith, Washington County” in *Bearing Witness*; Deposition of Wesley Dodson, Wesley Dodson (Washington County, AR) claim no. 19121, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

utopian community, the Harmonial Vegetarian Society of Benton County—known locally as the “grass eaters”—built a short-lived community near Maysville in northwest Benton County. The New Yorkers were vegetarians and their experiment did not last long. After its failure, the society’s lands became a part of one of the first training camps for Confederate soldiers in Arkansas immediately after secession, but some of their members went to Kansas and joined the federal troops organizing there.<sup>37</sup>

The diversity in the population of northwest Arkansas was driven by its rapid increase. By 1850, Washington County was the most densely populated in the state, with a little over seven thousand residents, two thousand more than the capital in Pulaski County, despite its smaller size. The total population of northwest Arkansas was more than twenty-three thousand, and then nearly doubled by 1860 to just over forty-one thousand. Through 1860, northwest Arkansas had the highest population density of free people in the state, even as the slave population boomed elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> In some ways, this made Arkansas a microcosm of the political situation in the nation—a northern section leery of the growing power of a southern section that was grounded, not in a population of voters, but their substantial slave holdings. However, northwest Arkansas had its own slaveholding elite, and the region would come to support secession, albeit with short-lived enthusiasm. This complexity is grounded in the economic environment of northwest Arkansas.

If the land and the people are critical to an exploration of the effects of war and the eventual rebuilding process, so too is an understanding of the agricultural and embryonic

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<sup>37</sup> Kim Allen Scott and Robert Myers, “The Extinct “Grass Eaters” of Benton County: A Reconstructed History of the Harmonial Vegetarian Society,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 50 (Summer 1991), 140-157.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu).

manufacturing systems that grew in northwest Arkansas prior to 1860. Farm production was on a steep climb all over Arkansas during the first twenty-five years of statehood, but few places were as diversified as northwest Arkansas.<sup>39</sup> Whether yeoman, slaveholder, or grass eater, northwest Arkansas farms were producing a wide variety of crops and livestock. The foundation of agricultural production was corn and hogs, in typical upland South fashion. In 1860, over 100,000 swine roamed the hills, and corn production topped two million bushels, an increase of twenty-nine and fifty-seven percent respectively from 1850. Yet northwest Arkansas farms also saw substantial increases in wheat production and rye production (double and tenfold, respectively), modest increases in Irish and sweet potatoes, and growth in all livestock numbers. Further, products like tobacco, honey, sorghum molasses, and even wool saw a large increases.

<b>Growth in Livestock Populations</b>			
<b>Benton</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>
Horses & Mules	1,236	1,427	3,830
Cattle	3,074	3,739	10,032
Sheep	1,934	2,533	10,410
Swine	8,221	9,371	22,044
<b>Carroll</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>
Horses & Mules	1,720	2,059	4,325
Cattle	4,300	6,574	12,460
Sheep	2,038	3,910	7,494
Swine	10,429	17,174	27,409
<b>Madison</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>
Horses & Mules	1,697	2,353	3,782
Cattle	3,341	8,241	8,817
Sheep	2,675	5,851	7,100

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<sup>39</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Census of Agriculture, *ibid.*

Swine	11,534	21,787	21,834
<b>Washington</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>
Horses & Mules	4,564	4,531	6,413
Cattle	11,734	12,822	13,565
Sheep	7,947	10,916	11,115
Swine	35,829	33,257	33,556

Table 1. Growth in Livestock Populations for the four counties of northwest Arkansas. Compiled from the Censuses of Agriculture for 1840, 1850, and 1860.

<b>Total Growth for Northwest Arkansas</b>				
	<b>Horses &amp; Mules</b>	<b>Cattle</b>	<b>Sheep</b>	<b>Swine</b>
<b>1840</b>	9,217	22,449	14,594	66,013
<b>1850</b>	10,370	31,376	23,210	81,589
<b>1860</b>	18,350	44,874	36,119	104,842

Table 2. Total growth in livestock populations for all of northwest Arkansas. Compiled from the Censuses of Agriculture for 1840, 1850, and 1860.

Perhaps the strongest indicator of the booming antebellum economy of northwest Arkansas is the manufacturing sector. While boasting tanneries, blacksmiths, and horse-powered gristmills as early as the 1830s, the 1850s saw an increase in the number and complexity of manufacturing establishments, brought on by higher demand and the arrival of steam-power. A resident of northwest Arkansas in 1860 could build a house with lumber from any of seven sawmills, install doors and sashes made in Fayetteville, and sit on the resulting porch while enjoying tobacco manufactured in Benton or Washington County. Daily bread was made from wheat or corn milled at no less than twenty-one increasingly efficient establishments in the four counties. Residents of the area could be clothed from locally carded wool. And those desiring cotton fabric benefited from Mark Bean's well-established cotton manufactory, which produced \$10,000 worth of cotton thread annually by 1860, and had no doubt been favorably affected by

the arrival of Anderson Crouch's cotton gin at Fayetteville. The sawmills also supplied lumber to fourteen wagon and cabinet makers, for the transport and storage of all of these goods. Part of this increase in agricultural and manufacturing production is explained through population growth, which was, on average, 2,000 people every year between 1850 and 1860. Spread over four counties, that yearly increase is not particularly impressive, but it does indicate that the system in northwest Arkansas was able first, to absorb such growth successfully, year after year, and second, feed that new population for at least the year it took for their farms to come into full production.

Without a doubt, the slaveholding class was in the best position both to support and profit from the population surge. In Washington County, with the largest slave population in the area at more than ten percent in 1860, slaveholders made up only three percent of the population, yet they produced one-third to one-half of every agricultural asset tallied by the 1850 census. With Washington County serving as the main supply point for most settlers arriving in the area, Fayetteville was the center of economic and political life in the region. By 1860, the other county seats of the area were also becoming centers of population and commerce. Around these centers, smaller communities were settled, often by families linked by kinship. The McGinnis group and others mentioned earlier often created communities that, once well settled, grew more through natural increase than through new people moving to their specific area. This pattern of tight-knit, kinship-based rural communities and towns with a mix of established residents and new arrivals, occasionally created cultural tension. Towns saw themselves as more cosmopolitan and connected than those in rural areas. Rural communities were viewed as insular.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The postwar arrival of railroads put Bentonville, Rogers, Eureka Springs, Siloam Springs, and Springdale to the list of appealing locales for newly arrived outsiders, but often left rural communities to the natives.

Rural settlers were not living in an isolated pastoral landscape, however, nor did all members of their kinship group necessarily stay in place once they were in northwest Arkansas. After all, these are people very familiar with westward travel and expansion. Many families maintained connections to kin back east, and were keenly aware of the effect regional market prices could have on their own success. The Wilson family arrived from Tennessee in the 1850s and settled land in Richland Township in Madison County on the border with Washington County. Family letters reveal sons in constant motion throughout the region as they moved between Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, and Texas over the next fifteen years, looking for good land. Their letters communicate information about the prices of corn, oats, wheat, hogs, and cattle, and include discussions of slaves, political issues, and the Civil War. Corn production and prices were communicated between the Wilson men most consistently, indicating the importance of this crop to their livelihood. In June of 1856, John Wilson wrote to his son William, “We have forty acres of corn and it looks fine at this time. If we have a good season corn will go begging this fall at ten cents a bushel. This country cannot be beat for corn, Irish potatoes, oats and it is good wheat country.”<sup>41</sup> Two years later, John’s other son James wrote to William, “Crops are very bad. The drought has injured corn very bad. There won’t be half a crop this year. There is some sickness, but not a great deal. Corn will be very high.”<sup>42</sup> The next year, 1859, saw an improvement, as this time another son, John, wrote “We have as fine a crop of corn as you ever

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<sup>41</sup> Pat Donat. 1960. “Letters of Early Arkansas Family Tell Interesting Tale: A Segment of History Was Found in a Lost Forgotten Trunk” *Northwest Arkansas Times – Centennial Edition*, June 14, 1960.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

saw. I think if the season continues we will make twenty-five hundred bushels of corn.” In the census of agriculture for that year, however, John Wilson reported a crop of only 400 bushels.<sup>43</sup>

Consistent with its connection to the larger state and regional economy, northwest Arkansas was also an antebellum center of education. Local subscription schools existed in northwest Arkansas throughout the antebellum period. These small, locally funded schools met in private homes or small community buildings and came and went based on local interest, funding, and the availability of teachers.<sup>44</sup> More formal and permanent educational institutions were also founded. There was a strong missionary element in the initial establishment of schools, colleges, and seminaries in northwest Arkansas. Many were built on the hope the healthier air of the Arkansas Ozarks would attract students. For wealthy southern families, sending children to school in the upcountry, safer from yellow fever and malaria, was a tradition by the nineteenth century. In the 1830s, the Fayetteville Female Academy was established by Reverend Robert Mecklin before Fayetteville was even officially incorporated. It was followed a few years later by Sophia Sawyers’s Fayetteville Female Seminary.<sup>45</sup> The Cumberland Presbyterians of Cane Hill opened Cane Hill School in 1835. In the 1840s, the Pleasant View Female Seminary was founded in Huntsville in Madison County, along with the Huntsville Masonic Institute, the latter headed by future governor Isaac Murphy. Records indicate he taught at both institutions.<sup>46</sup> In Washington County in the same decade, Mecklin along with Cephas Washburn founded the Ozark Institute at Mount Comfort, outside of Fayetteville. The Institute provided education into

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<sup>43</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Census of Agriculture, Madison County, AR.

<sup>44</sup> Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers & their Image*, 59-60. Kevin Louis Hatfield, “The History of Education in Madison County, Arkansas, 1827-1948,” University of Arkansas, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1991, 34-40.

<sup>45</sup> *History of Washington County*, 125-134.

<sup>46</sup> Hatfield, 34-47.



the 1860s with enrollment in some years upwards of 100 young men. In 1849, in Elm Springs in Washington County, near the Benton County border, Reverend Jesse McAllister and his wife established academies for male and female students that lasted until the Civil War.<sup>47</sup>

By the 1850s, northwest Arkansas educators were looking to provide a more formal and official level of instruction. In late 1850, Arkansas College was founded at Fayetteville. The first state chartered degree-conferring institution in the state of Arkansas, it was led by pastor Robert Graham of the Disciples of Christ and included William Baxter on the faculty by the late 1850s. The institution drew students from a wide swath of the frontier and had as many as 200 students enrolled in some years.<sup>48</sup> Also 1850, under superintendent Robert McGee King, Cane Hill School became the Cane Hill Collegiate Institute, and in 1852, was chartered by the state as a degree-granting institution, becoming Cane Hill College. The College remained officially under the control of the Arkansas synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, but relied heavily on local support and funding. The Boonsboro area, as Cane Hill was also known at the time, was home to many of the wealthiest planters in northwest Arkansas, which allowed the College to persist.<sup>49</sup>

The educational institutions of northwest Arkansas also illustrate the persistence of intimate local connections to removed Native American groups, especially the Cherokee. Several of the area's most prominent and respected institutions of higher learning in the antebellum period were multi-racial. Sawyers's Female Seminary provided a boarding school education not only for the daughters of wealthy white families, but to Cherokee girls as well. Robert Mecklin's Ozark Institute served both white and Cherokee boys, including future political and military

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<sup>47</sup> *History of Washington County*, 125-134.

<sup>48</sup> Charlie Alison, "Arkansas College," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed September 14, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> David B. Ellis, "Cane Hill College," *ibid.*

leaders of Arkansas, and Cherokee authors, editors, and artists.<sup>50</sup> These connections indicate a blurring of the border between northwest Arkansas and the “Nation,” as locals often called the Cherokees. There was also mutual respect between the elites of both groups. Politically active men like David Walker and Mark Bean often worked to support positive relationships between whites and the Cherokees, even at the expense of whites, if necessary.<sup>51</sup>

The gentility implied by a growing economy and a landscape of prosperous farms dotted with schools and institutes does not mean the region was free of the violence typical of nineteenth-century American society, and especially slave societies. The 1839 murders of members of the Wright family in western Washington County led to a spate of vigilante and legal executions in response, all while navigating relations between whites and the Cherokee. On the evening of June 15, 1839, three men entered the home of William Wright, murdering him in front of his family, killing four of his children, and scattering the rest of the family into the woods. The youngest of the murdered children was reportedly found with a caved in skull. Wright was an active trader with the Cherokees and, after initial concern they were involved in the incident, suspicion turned to local white men who may or may not have been the perpetrators. A number were hanged by both legal and extra-legal process. The “Cane Hill murders,” as they came to be known, were held up then and for decades after as examples of frontier violence and questionable justice.<sup>52</sup> In 1849, Robert Mecklin’s brother-in-law, a slaveholder in Benton County, was murdered by a slave he was taking to sell in Van Buren. The *Arkansas Gazette* reported in morbid detail that James Anderson was found “weltering in his gore” along the road.

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<sup>50</sup> Charlie Alison, “Ozark Institute [School],” *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> For insights into Cherokee and white interactions in northwest Arkansas, see, Ted R. Worley, “The Story of Alfred W. Arrington,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 14 (Winter 1955): 315-339.

<sup>52</sup> Charles G. Williams, “The Cane Hill Murders of 1839 in History and Literature,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (Autumn 1970): 209-214.

It is unclear if the slave was ever captured.<sup>53</sup> The region had its fair share of violence; as much as would be expected of a region with a low and often transient population where slavery, westward expansion, and Indian removal came together.

The violent reputation of antebellum Arkansas was widely known in the country, though often exaggerated, and northwest Arkansas contributed to that image as much as any other part of the state.<sup>54</sup> A fatal 1859 gun and knife fight on the Huntsville square in Madison County made the papers as far away as Cincinnati and San Francisco. On Friday, June 24, 1859, local merchant, Warren Sams rushed lawyer Forester Black with a bowie knife. Black drew a revolver and fired three shots at Sams, with the first one hitting the knee of spectator J.W. Moody and the final shot blowing out the back of Sams's head. James Sams, the sixteen year-old son of Warren, then emptied one barrel of a double-barreled shot gun into Black's back, killing him instantly, before turning the second barrel on Black's brother, hitting his thigh and relieving him of his bowie knife. Reports on the incident focused far more keenly on the details of the fight than on its causes, though Sams was noted as possibly intoxicated and the men may have had strained dealings in the past.<sup>55</sup> Even the violence of antebellum life, however, did not prepare newspaper readers or Arkansas residents for the calamity that was about to take hold of the country.

The diversity of population, landscape, and livelihood in northwest Arkansas were reflected in a complex political scene as the secession crisis began. Of course, the Civil War occurred, in part, because of the failure of the party system, so it is no wonder tracking party

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<sup>53</sup> "Horrible Murder," *Arkansas Gazette*, August 16, 1849, p.2, referenced in Jones, "'A Rough and Saucy Set of Hands to Manage,'" 18-19.

<sup>54</sup> For more on Arkansas image, see, Brooks Blevins, *ArkansasArkansaw: How Bear Hunters, Hillbillies, and Good Ol' Boys Defined a State* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> "How They Manage Things in Arkansas," *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), August 9, 1859, p. 1.

affiliation in these years would be difficult. To understand the political affiliations of the settlers of northwest Arkansas, it is helpful to again consider men like Bean and McGinnis. Both had connections to the federal government. McGinnis was a veteran of the War of 1812, and his widow claimed his land bounty in Madison County after his death. Bean had originally built his salt works along the Illinois River in what is now Oklahoma with an intention to supply the western U. S. Army forts with salt.<sup>56</sup> Mark Bean left behind political correspondence that indicates a close relationship with David Walker, a Whig for most of the antebellum period.<sup>57</sup>

Few men in northwest Arkansas would have found much appeal in the Whig party, but with economic interests heavily reliant upon river and overland transportation, the party's platform would have made sense to the wealthy Mark Bean. In contrast, as a War of 1812 veteran and subsistence yeoman farmer on the frontier, McGinnis was the very picture of a Jacksonian Democrat. He was joined in northwest Arkansas by many men with similar backgrounds; small farmers traveling from the upcountry back east with their families, seeking land and opportunity in Arkansas. The Democratic Party had much appeal for those men and even many smaller slaveholders. Archibald Yell and the Rieffs of Washington County, the Berry clan in Carroll County, and the Bells of Benton County were among the wealthier residents of northwest Arkansas to identify with Democrats as well. Men of Bean's class dominated northwest Arkansas politics for at least the first twenty years of settlement, and even after 1850 as the yeoman population grew, enjoyed a high level of political and social power.

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<sup>56</sup> Katheren Christensen, compiler. *Arkansas Military Bounty Grants, War of 1812*. (Hot Springs: Arkansas Ancestors, 1971); Mark and Richard Bean Petition to Congress.

<sup>57</sup> The Cane Hill Museum in Cane Hill, Arkansas, notes that Mark Bean was a Whig. Correspondence he left also supports this idea. For an example, see, "Letter from Mark Bean to David Williams, January 30, 1861," in *Slavery and Secession in Arkansas: A Documentary History*, ed. James J. Gigantino II (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 106-107.

In 1860 like the rest of the state, northwest Arkansans were mainly Democrats, but there were different kinds: old Jacksonian Democrats, new Hindman Democrats, and Family/Dynasty Democrats. They were joined by the old Whigs, some Republicans of dubious provenance, Constitutional Unionists, and, perhaps even some stereotypically apolitical backwoodsmen of questionable criminality. Many of the older Democrats in northwest Arkansas still viewed themselves and their party as adherents to Jackson's commitment to both the South and the Union. There were some, however, who were Family/Dynasty Democrats, tied as much to the party run by the Johnson, Sevier, and Conway families of the delta and Little Rock as to the national organization. Even those Democrats, however, were facing an internal schism, as Thomas C. Hindman, late of Mississippi, but married into a Helena, Arkansas family sought to wrest control of the state from the Family in the 1860 election. Those unhappy with the Democrats found no want of options, but few truly viable ones. Constitutional Unionists earnestly offered a way to preserve both slavery and the Union.<sup>58</sup> Some Arkansans even claimed after the war that they had been members of the Republican Party during the 1860 election, even though no Republican votes were cast.<sup>59</sup> The political situation was fractured and dynamic in 1860 and into 1861. Voting men made decisions based on a wide variety of factors, from habitual support of one part to personal assessments of the dangers of secession. With few extant newspaper sources or diarists willing to explain the complicated political climate in detail, the best a historian can make of this is to find some meaning in the congruence of origins and background with voting patterns.

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<sup>58</sup> For more on the political situation in Arkansas in 1860, see, James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> Deposition of W.C. Graham, Elizabeth Martin (Washington County, AR) claim no. 10861, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

The slaveholders reflected the politics of their day, with both Democrats and Whigs among their ranks. Washington County men like Thomas Jefferson Kelley, Joseph Rieff, and Archibald Yell, had personal connections to Andrew Jackson.<sup>60</sup> Others, like the Bean brothers and David Walker were Whigs. As these slaveholders grew older, having already claimed the best land, they invested further in slaveholding, expanded into proto-manufacturing ventures, and built economic and political connections with family and counterparts both in Little Rock and back east. They continued to cultivate connections to the U.S. Army and the Cherokee to the west. Many of these slaveholders and their sons fought together in the Mexican War and traveled together to the California goldmines. Despite the economic and social influence of the slaveholding class, however, they were divided in their politics for most of the 1850s. After the election of 1860, many slaveholders—especially former Whigs—were willing to cooperate with the federal government. They did not immediately embrace secession and hoped for a compromise that would protect both the union and slavery. For the most part, it was only after secession was decided that most northwest Arkansas slaveholders came to support the Confederate war effort as a class.<sup>61</sup>

Yeomen farmer Democrats, as non-slaveholders, had larger concerns about the fracture of their party in the 1850s and its evolution from a national organization that protected slavery to a regional one that advocated secession. Though some northwest Arkansas yeomen held slaves,

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<sup>60</sup> Michael B. Dougan, “Archibald Yell,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed September 13, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> David Walker and W. J. Lemke, *The Life and Letters of Judge David Walker of Fayetteville, Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court, 1848-1857, 1866-1868, 1874-1878*, Vol. 21 (Fayetteville, Ark.: Washington County Historical Society, 1957). “Letter from David Walker to David C. Williams, January 29, 1861,” in *Slavery and Secession in Arkansas: A Documentary History*, ed. James J. Gigantino II (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 101-103; “Broadside: To the People of Washington County, J. H. Stirman, February 5, 1861,” *ibid.*, 109-112.

most did not, and few were strong supporters of secession. Further, based on the results of the election of 1860, it is clear especially in Benton and Washington Counties, that the Democratic party in the state was split, not over the issue of slavery, but by Thomas Hindman's attempt to wrest control of the party from the Family. Concerns about the possible election of the "abolitionist" Lincoln were articulated in local newspapers, but northwest Arkansas had not seen the same population shift as the rest of the state in terms of a growing majority with stronger ties to the Deep South.<sup>62</sup> People in northwest Arkansas voted Democratic because they always had. Breckenridge carried majorities in Benton, Carroll, and Madison Counties. Washington County failed to deliver a majority to Breckenridge, likely because of the support of old-line Whigs enjoyed by Bell.<sup>63</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of Lincoln's election, most in northwest Arkansas took a cautious view, though many recognized there were more radical elements around the state. Resolutions from Benton and Carroll Counties in December of 1860 and January of 1861, respectively, were decidedly against immediate secession. "There is being nurtured in the South a spirit of anarchy," the Benton County resolution asserted, "which, unless chastened and modified by *southern conservatism*, will set at defiance all law, all rights, and involve our country, our whole country in civil war and irremediable ruin."<sup>64</sup> The Carroll County resolution, which was also supported by residents of adjacent Marion, Newton, and Searcy Counties, explicitly stated, "We do not regard the election of Mr. Lincoln to the presidency as a just cause

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<sup>62</sup> Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 91-92, 109.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-111, 189.

<sup>64</sup> "Resolution of the Citizens of Benton County," in *Slavery and Secession in Arkansas*, 70.

for a dissolution of the Union.”<sup>65</sup> Mark Bean, despite his investment in the slave system, stated in a letter in January 1861, “What have we to gain in a division of our glorious union,” though he too expressed concern about the more radical elements in the state and questioned their influences. “I see no compromising spirit by any of our members in Congress,” he said, “are they reflecting the will of Arkansas, or are they sympathizing with poor South Carolina, which I cannot do.”<sup>66</sup> He was not alone in his concerns. Many wealthy old Whigs feared the damage that would be done in a civil war, and put protection of their property above immediate secession.<sup>67</sup> With many of those clamoring for secession located in the delta, Benton County helpfully offered a resolution to move the state capital to Bentonville—away from those radical influences—during such perilous times for the Union. Noting that “the strongest hearts and wisest minds of our country should be placed as the head of public affairs,” they argued their county had produced “a few distinguished statesmen who have sprung like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter” who might provide better leadership.<sup>68</sup> Not logic, resolve, patriotism, prudence, or even sarcasm, however, stopped the movement toward secession, and northwest Arkansas soon found itself girding for a convention on the question.

When the secession issue arrived on the local political scene, despite the economic power of the slaveholding class in northwest Arkansas in 1861, the vibrancy of nineteenth-century politics made the question a hotly contested public battle. Those seeking to sway opinion brought up a number of concerns. In February of 1861, J. H. Stirman, an ally of Bean, urged caution on the secession question, “I am not one of those who would *hurry* Arkansas out of the Union,” he

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<sup>65</sup> “Resolution of the Citizens of Marion, Carroll, Newton and Searcy Counties,” *ibid.*, 93.

<sup>66</sup> “Letter from Mark Bean to David Williams, January 30, 1861, *ibid.*, 107.

<sup>67</sup> Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 127.

<sup>68</sup> “Resolution on Location of Capital City, *ibid.*, 73.



hedged, “nor do I believe that the best way to save the Union, is to *destroy* it, then reconstruct it.” He also addressed the fact that northwest Arkansas was a border area, presciently noting, “The western portion of our State is but sparsely settled, bordered by Indian Territory, and from this circumstance, will be more exposed to hostile incursions and military forays than any one of the Southern States.” A line of federal forts from Kansas south into Indian Territory kept order among the removed “civilized” tribes and also protected them from hostile tribes to the west, not the least of which were the Comanche. Concerns about the proximity of those federal troops, as well as exposure to hostile Indians should those troops depart weighed on the minds of northwest Arkansas residents. Stirman was an example of the Unionist-Cooperationist strain in northwest Arkansas politics. They hoped to negotiate some kind of agreement between the seceded states and the Union that would ensure peace and stability.

Others in northwest Arkansas were unconditional unionists, rejecting the secession of other states and unwilling for any reason to support Arkansas doing the same. A week after Stirman’s broadside, another one was circulated in Benton County that discouraged secession even more strongly. After outlining reasons the state and its rights would be more secure in the Union, the authors brought in one of the largest concerns of non-slaveholders in northwest Arkansas—whether or not they would be equal with slaveholders in the new confederacy. “Do you KNOW that in that confederacy your rights will be respected?” the broadside demanded, “That you will be ALLOWED A VOTE unless you are the OWNER OF A NEGRO? These things you do not know.”<sup>69</sup> Other unionists were concerned about the impact of war itself. John Hermann, a German immigrant who voted at Boonsboro knew first hand “the horrors that go with civil war” and articulated them to his neighbors. Despite his “anxious manner” on the

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<sup>69</sup> “Broadside: An Appeal to the Voters of Benton County, February 12, 1861,” *ibid.*, 119-123, quotation, p. 123.

subject and encouragement to “Never desert the old ship Union,” his words fell on deaf ears in his part of Washington County. Boonesboro (Cane Hill), with a high slaveholding population, saw some of the most enthusiastic support for secession.<sup>70</sup>

On February 18, 1861, Arkansans voted for a secession convention but seated a majority of anti-secessionist representatives to attend it. There was a certain ambiguity in the voting. Arkansans did not want secession immediately, but by supporting a convention at all, they signaled openness to the possibility. The secession convention met in March of 1861, and was headed by northwest Arkansas’s own David Walker. Though a large slaveholder himself, Walker was also former Whig and a lawyer. As the secession convention proceeded, it was clear that the Unionist-Cooperationists put most of their faith in plans that would preserve slavery where it existed and, notably, extend it westward as the only options for also preserving the Union. After meeting for seventeen days, the convention adjourned having avoided secession and with a plan to refer the question to a public vote on the second Monday of August. Secessionist were bitter, but many unionists clearly hoped negotiations for national reconciliation would be worked out over the summer. Instead, in April, South Carolina fired on federal troops at Fort Sumter and forced its surrender.<sup>71</sup>

Lincoln’s call for Arkansas to send troops to suppress the rebellion ended any fence-sitting by Unionist-Cooperationists in northwest Arkansas. Many of them had made clear they would not tolerate federal “coercion” of southern states. A widely-known story asserts that even in previously unionist Bentonville, as soon as the call for troops was announced—during a speech by former Senator Robert W. Johnson—the crowd was aghast and unanimous in its

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<sup>70</sup> Clarence Evans and Karl Friedrich Hermann, “Memoirs, Letters, and Diary Entries of German Settlers in Northwest Arkansas, 1853-1863,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 6 (Fall 1947): 229-230.

<sup>71</sup> Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 113-152.

rejection of such action. As word spread throughout northwest Arkansas, many came to support secession, though some more reluctantly than others. Walker was cautious in calling the convention back into session, although he eventually agreed to meet again on May 6.<sup>72</sup> The call for troops did force northwest Arkansas men to choose a side, but not everyone abandoned their support for the United States. George Foster of Benton County related, “As soon as President Lincoln issued his Proclamation calling for troops I saw that we were going to have a war over the question and rather than risk breaking up the Government I at once took side with the union. I preferred to abandon my Southern proclivities rather than hazard the dissolution of the Union.”<sup>73</sup> Other unconditional unionists hoped for cooler heads to prevail, and awaited the results of the secession convention with concern, but few would be as willing as Foster to abandon “Southern proclivities.” On the day the convention opened, it voted to secede. David Walker attempted to obtain a unanimous vote, but Isaac Murphy of Madison County refused to change his vote. For nearly a month, the delegates—including Murphy—worked to rewrite and recreate the state government. Most importantly for the coming conflict, plans were made for the defense of the state. Northwest Arkansas, however, still housed a number opposed to secession.<sup>74</sup>

On the eve of the Civil War, northwest Arkansas, with the exception of parts of Washington County, was a lightly settled but rapidly growing region with towns and communities defined by both kinship and commerce. With the best land in the Ozarks, northwest Arkansas had a solid agricultural economy and a vibrant and expanding manufacturing sector. The people who lived there had a long tradition of westward movement, and while many had clearly settled to make a life in Arkansas, others offered indications they could be tempted by

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 155-158.

<sup>73</sup> Deposition of George Foster, George Foster (Benton County, AR) claim no. 19431. Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 159-164.

opportunities elsewhere. Though predominately white, the region was more racially and ethnically diverse than it would be for another 150 years, with a notable African-American population, enclaves of foreign-born settlement, and ties to the Native-American communities to the west. The population was divided about the coming war, and while uneasy agreement on the necessity for secession may have been achieved, disagreement with that path lay just beneath the surface, ready to emerge again as both armies converged on the region.

## Chapter Two

### Northwest Arkansas Faces War

Most Americans have heard the story of how Robert E. Lee came to the Confederate cause. In his home overlooking the half-built Washington Monument, the U. S. Army officer and former West Point superintendent struggled with his conscience. As the story goes, he came to a deeply felt resolve to support his state over the country he had served for most of his life.<sup>1</sup> One thousand miles away, the men of northwest Arkansas faced the same choice. But most of the men who would eventually serve in one army or the other—or both—during the war were substantially younger, less experienced, and less tied to either state or country than Lee. As with Lee, however, the choices they made throughout the war would shape their lives and their state for many decades to come. Unlike Lee, many northwest Arkansas men chose the Union, or came to support it as the war went on. This chapter maintains a tight focus on the choices men of fighting age made during the war, especially in relation to military service in the Union army. The civilian experience—women, children, elderly men, both black and white—in northwest Arkansas, is the focus of Chapter Three. Wartime events led to the departure of many from northwest Arkansas, but their wartime experiences will be considered mainly in relation to their return to the area, in Chapter Four.

The term “loyalty” has been much utilized in discussions of Confederates and unionists. As early as Col. A. W. Bishop’s 1863 publication, *Loyalty on the Frontier*, the term has been

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Poole, *On Hallowed Ground: The Story of Arlington National Cemetery* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010) Ch.1.

prominent in discussions of northwest Arkansas.<sup>2</sup> Historians of the broader South have utilized the term as well, in contributions ranging from Richard Nelson Currents's *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy*, to Margaret Storey's *Loyalty and Loss*, a study of unionism in northern Alabama, to John Inscoe and Robert Kenzer's collection of essays *Enemies of the Country*, which considers loyalty, unionism, and divided communities across the South.<sup>3</sup> All of these studies wield concepts of loyalty in one form or another, but rarely do they probe the meaning of the term. No standard definition of loyalty, nor, for that matter, even a common understanding, emerges from their work. Thus, the concept of loyalty is not particularly useful in studying northwest Arkansas. Take, for example, Elisha McGinnis. He enlisted with the Confederate Army in December of 1861.<sup>4</sup> He signed up for a year. During that time, the Confederate Army lost the battle of Pea Ridge, was pushed back to Fort Smith, burned Fayetteville, and left his widowed mother and younger siblings to whims of Union occupation and general lawlessness. When his year of service to the Confederate army was complete, he did not re-enlist. He departed Fort Smith, and, a few days later, enlisted with the Union army at Fayetteville.<sup>5</sup> How should McGinnis be judged? Loyal? Disloyal? Opportunistic? Survivalist?

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<sup>2</sup> Albert Webb Bishop, *Loyalty on the Frontier; Or, Sketches of Union Men of the South-West: With Incidents and Adventures in Rebellion on the Border*, ed. Kim Allen Scott (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992); Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer, *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Elisha McGinnis deposition, Elisha McGinnis file, Pension Files.

<sup>5</sup> Elihu [Elisha] McGinnis, Confederate Service Record, Union Service Record, Fold3.com (accessed June 10-15, 2014).

There is often a certain level of judgment inherent in the term; loyalty is a positive personal attribute.<sup>6</sup> But some northwest Arkansas men avoided service until forcibly conscripted or coerced by one side or the other. Technically they may have remained “loyal” to that side but there did not seem to be much enthusiasm in their allegiance. On the other hand, some early enlistees deserted the Confederate Army to protect their families when Confederate military authorities ordered them from the area but never enlisted with the Union Army. They remained known locally as “Confederate men.” At what point, if any, did such a soldier become disloyal to one side or the other? Who merits the status of “loyal?” Are there shades of loyalty? What is the measure? Ultimately, determining a definition of loyalty and then categorizing northwest Arkansas residents by that definition would add little to an understanding of the war and the region. The term loyalty will, therefore, be avoided in this study. Reducing the myriad methods of navigating the war to a simplistic dichotomy of loyal or disloyal obscures the complexity and evolution of decision-making of northwest Arkansas citizens. Terms like “affiliated,” “aligned,” or “supported” will be utilized instead. This allows the historic understanding of loyalty to show clearly when it is used in context, but shifts the focus from the inherent state that “loyalty” implies to the process of establishing allegiances, as individuals took actions and made decisions that positioned them throughout the conflict. An understanding of the pragmatism and complexity of wartime decision-making, separate from a value-laden or static assessment of loyalty, is ultimately a more profitable way to examine the war itself.

In the kinship-based society of the region, the strongest commitment was not to the state or nation, but to family and community. There is a vast difference between expressing a political

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<sup>6</sup> For an example of a study that considers time of service and loyalty of Arkansas soldiers, see, Georgena Duncan, “Uncertain Loyalties: Dual Enlistment in the Third and Fourth Arkansas Cavalry, USV,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 62 (Winter 2013): 305-332.

belief and being willing to die for it. An even larger distance exists between a willingness to kill for a political belief and a willingness to let loved ones perish for the cause. In two years, the Civil War in northwest Arkansas went from a public debate among voting men over of the limits of the federal government to a bloody guerrilla war that involved the entire society. Northwest Arkansas men initially selected their affiliation for different reasons—momentary enthusiasm, family pressure, social pressure, sweetheart pressure—and then reassessed that commitment after battles, raids, the deaths of loved ones, hard winters, or changing family and social pressure, over years of consideration. Affiliation was flexible for many northwest Arkansas residents, which is why this chapter, though focused on unionists, includes so many Confederates. While some men were clearly supportive of one side or the other, as evidenced by their service in only one army through the entire war or public support for one side until the armed conflict ended, many were less consistent. Understood as a region built on kinship connections, the flexibility of wartime affiliation is more logical; if honoring the commitment to family meant switching affiliation during the war, many individuals sacrificed whatever honor might be lost in switching sides to maintain the more important role. McGinnis never clearly discussed his decision to leave Confederate service for the Union, but with vulnerable family members in harm's way, it is obvious he felt there was some benefit to doing so.

For most men of enlistment age in northwest Arkansas, the road to service in one or both of the armies began in 1861. As discussed in Chapter One, the area was generally opposed to secession, despite strong Democratic leanings. But once war was declared, northwest Arkansas residents were soon caught up in what historian Carl Moneyhon has defined as the “fever” or “fervor” of enlistment excitement for the Confederate cause. Enthusiasm appears to have spread



by contact, rather than personal reflection.<sup>7</sup> Moneyhon considers how James McPherson and James McCaffrey—preeminent scholars of soldierly motivation—explored the ideas of duty, patriotism, and desire for personal glory, and puts their conclusions to the test in Arkansas. A deft quantitative scholar, Moneyhon examined lists of soldiers, their political leanings, places of birth, and economic status, and cataloged the language of their letters to attempt to find the motivations of, if not formula for, their mobilization. Ultimately, Moneyhon found duty at the heart of many soldiers motivation, specifically “a sense of commitment derived from one or a combination of three major cultural institutions . . . their religion, sense of citizenship, or their concept of family.”<sup>8</sup> He also determined that they “were much less clear about the character of the moral challenge that required them to act” to protect those institutions, but were nonetheless convinced “the threat was present and duty demanded their service.”<sup>9</sup> Other soldiers, Moneyhon found, were motivated by nascent Confederate patriotism, “seeing the war as an assertion of the South’s peculiar nationalism.”<sup>10</sup> The ready transfer of their allegiance from the United States to the Confederacy is evidence that despite its recent settlement and frontier nature, Arkansas was not immune to the sectional issues plaguing the nation. Its explosive growth was, in fact, the product of slavery. The state was an expansion of the existing nation, not a liminal frontier space populated by individuals seeking escape.

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<sup>7</sup> Carl Moneyhon, “Why They Fought: Arkansans Go to War, 1861” in *The Die is Cast: Arkansas Goes to War, 1861* ed. Mark Christ (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2010), 55; Thomas DeBlack, “‘A Remarkably Strong Union Sentiment’: Unionism in Arkansas in 1861,” *ibid.*, 82. Carl Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 102; Mark K. Christ, *Rugged and Sublime: The Civil War in Arkansas* (Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Moneyhon, “Why They Fought,” 57.

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

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

Further, Moneyhon identifies “the threat the North presented to one’s family and local community” as key in the decision to fight for many men. This was not simply a threat to their physical safety; after all, few in the early days of the war believed Northern troops would breach the South. Moneyhon identifies a more dire concern that “a Northern victory would somehow enslave the people of the South and their families.”<sup>11</sup> Finally, personal glory, often cast as “honor,” was a motivating factor for many men. “Honor,” Moneyhon states, “gave the soldier distinction and ultimately greater status in his community.” These last two motivators, fear of subjugation and concern for personal honor in the eyes of their community, resonated most clearly with northwest Arkansas men. “Rebellion and treason will be linked with your names,” Capt. S. R. Bell imparted to Confederate soldiers upon their May 26, 1861, departure from Fayetteville, “but when has independence sought to wrest her rights from the hand of tyranny that it has not been called treason?”<sup>12</sup> Bell tapped into concerns about subjugation as well as honor. Though more a dare than a warning, he captured the complexity of the decision facing northwest Arkansas men. Bearing arms against their country might make them criminals, but like their Revolutionary forefathers, if they won the war, they would be revered as patriots. Who could resist such a call? Bell led a group from Washington County that, from all contemporary observances, displayed an enthusiastic willingness to take his dare.

In 1861, Arkansans were hopeful about the coming war and enthusiasm trumped organization when it came to joining the Confederate cause. In his essay on early mobilization in Arkansas and the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, William Garrett Piston notes, “three distinct organizations competed for recruits across the state: the Confederate Army, the Arkansas militia,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Capt. S. R. Bell, *Fayetteville Democrat*, May 30, 1861. Bell died at Wilson’s Creek less than three months later.

and the Arkansas State Troops,” which created significant confusion.<sup>13</sup> Arkansas State Troops in northwest Arkansas were under the command of General Nicholas Bartlett “Bart” Pearce of Benton County in 1861. Brigadier General Ben McCulloch was in command of Confederate troops at Fort Smith, and eventually made his way northwest Arkansas.

Northwest Arkansas abounds with stories of community mobilization, but it is rarely clear exactly with which Confederate authority, if any, the troops were affiliated, especially in 1861. Further, official records are frustratingly inexact. One of the best indices of Arkansas Civil War service records dedicates four, three-columned pages to explaining the many ways records are incomplete, lost, confused, or of otherwise questionable accuracy.<sup>14</sup> Units were often combined or reorganized, and the eventual resolution of the conflict (if not outright feuding) between and among Arkansas and Confederate officials over who would control troops from the state inevitably led to changes as well. In terms of recordkeeping, this means the same man may appear on multiple rosters. Records for individual soldiers rarely consisted of more than name, rank, unit, and a few dates. Not even age was consistently collected, much less place of birth. This makes connecting service records to an individual listed in the census or tax rolls, for example, difficult. Combined with nineteenth-century disdain for consistent spelling of surnames, and the sheer volume of Thomases, Williams, and Johns as first names, an effort to trace an individual’s enlistment history strictly through military records is frustrating. Eliminating duplicates, counting enlistees, and matching them back to census or tax records, in order to obtain a clear understanding of who enlisted and from where, is nearly impossible. What

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<sup>13</sup> William Garrett Piston, ““When Arks Boys Goes By . . .”: Arkansas in the Wilson’s Creek Campaign of 1861” in *The Die is Cast: Arkansas Goes to War, 1861* ed. Mark K. Christ (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2010), 105.

<sup>14</sup> Desmond Walls Allen, *Index to Arkansas Confederate Soldiers*, (Conway: Arkansas Research, 1990), vii-x.

is clear, however, is that many men of fighting age did join the fight, especially if they lived in a town of any size, or were from a family with local prominence.

Despite the challenges in connecting them with official records, local sources nonetheless record numerous troop departures, often with great fanfare. Thomas Jefferson Kelley, a veteran of the Seminole and Mexican Wars, organized a company of the Thirty-fourth Arkansas that left Fayetteville in April of 1861, an event that eventually earned it a plaque on the town square.<sup>15</sup> Bell's speech to his Pike's Guards was conducted about a month later. In July, the *True Democrat* in Little Rock ran the effusive dedication of Josephine Wright of Carroll County as she presented a homemade flag to troops. Apparently concerned with the delay in secession, she notes somewhat critically that Arkansas "has lacked the agility of some of her southern sisters in defying the norther [*sic*] foe," but continues in a lengthy confirmation of Moneyhon's idea that some Arkansans feared enslavement by the north. She intones, "Though the demagogues and fanatics of the North, exultingly and unfeelingly talk of our *subjugation*—of conquering a people who *never knew* subjection"—but ultimately focuses on how the banner she made will, of course, never be dishonored by Carroll County's men.<sup>16</sup> Even, as Piston noted when he considered her words, should they need to die to the last man.<sup>17</sup> Many northwest Arkansas troops marched from home with similar fanfare and eloquence from local women as they joined the camps of the area.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Confederate Veterans and Families*, Washington County Historical Society, 2014. The plaque is located on the northwest corner of the building that currently houses the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History on the Fayetteville Square.

<sup>16</sup> Carroll County, Ark," *Arkansas True Democrat* (Little Rock), July 4, 1861. For more on Crump's wartime experiences, see, Josephine Crump Papers (MC 845) Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Arkansas.

<sup>17</sup> Piston, "When Arks Boys Go By," 105.

<sup>18</sup> DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 32-34.

Men who joined Confederate units in the spring and summer of 1861 generally stayed in the area for training. While Fort Smith was the Confederate command center for western Arkansas in 1861, and Washington County hosted a small camp, Benton County was the site of the largest training camp in the region, Camp Walker, and headquarters for the Arkansas State Troops. Furthermore, both armies drew men from across the region, with roughly two thousand troops under Pierce, and McCulloch adding the Fort Smith troops to Camp Walker by late July. Arkansas men were joined by recruits from Louisiana and Texas. The decision to locate the camp in northwest Benton County likely fulfilled a dual purpose. As discussed in Chapter One, during the secession crisis Stirman and others noted the proximity of Native Americans and federal forts in Indian Territory. Placing a training camp in most northwest corner of the state made military sense. However, Benton County residents were among the more vocal opponents of secession too. Placing a training camp in their midst also ensured compliance with decisions made in Little Rock.

The presence of troops has been found to have had an impact on local society in other parts of the south. Yael A. Sternhell's *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South*, focuses mainly on Virginia. She places a great deal of emphasis on the unifying effect on Virginians of out-of-state troop arrivals. Against the backdrop of an original state with multiple generations of native-born citizens, it is easy to see how the arrival other Southerners committed to the war effort affected the identity of people who rarely thought of themselves as anything other than Virginians, much less had considered the nationalist implications of secession.<sup>19</sup> However, Sternhell does not address how similar circumstances—the arrival of out-of-state soldiers to local training camps—affected identity in an area like Arkansas,

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<sup>19</sup> Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 260.

celebrating only its silver anniversary as a state. The majority of local men of fighting age had been born somewhere else, so the arrival of new people may have been less novel. It would, however, have brought home the reality of the coming conflict—although correspondence from soldiers at the time indicates more excitement than trepidation at the prospect—and an effective show of numbers for the Confederacy to those still debating affiliation.

The Battle of Wilson’s Creek in Missouri in August 1861, and the Battle of Pea Ridge in northwest Arkansas in March 1862 destroyed illusions that the war would be “glorious, brief, and victorious.”<sup>20</sup> The two battles exposed flaws in the structure and functionality of the various Confederate military units. Though Wilson’s Creek was a Confederate victory, troops failed to hold the position in Missouri and had to fight Federal troops the following March in Arkansas. Pea Ridge was a Confederate loss. Idealistic view of warfare and optimistic assessments of the potential length of the conflict were challenged. Captain Bell never knew whether his men successfully wrested their rights from the hands of tyranny, as he was killed in action at Wilson’s Creek.<sup>21</sup> Ben McCulloch was cut down at Pea Ridge. It was clear both campaigns had been plagued by problems with supply lines and organization. The continued problems with supplies and leadership did not inspire confidence among northwest Arkansas residents or the soldiers they fielded.<sup>22</sup>

The battles also strained the commitment of northwest Arkansas’s Confederate enlistees. Addressing desertions and commitment to the cause, Piston’s study of Arkansans in the Battle of

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<sup>20</sup> DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> An account of the Battle of Oak Hills (Wilson’s Creek), including Bell’s death, was printed in the *Fayetteville Democrat*, August 14, 1880.

<sup>22</sup> For more on these battles, see, William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher, *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 408; William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 417.

Wilson's Creek noted that one of General Pearce's commanders had concerns about men who might refuse to cross into Missouri. "There is several others now in the company who stated publicly that they would go no further than the state line," John J. Walker related, "and endeavored to induce others to join them." Upon reaching the line, the men decided to continue, but in the same letter, Walker had earlier noted that two men had already deserted.<sup>23</sup> Piston relates the story with little commentary, save for a mention that most Arkansans were eager for the fight. While refusal to cross the state line may well have been an excuse for simple cowardice, when combined with Moneyhon's identification of "the threat the North presented to one's family and local community" as motivation for enlistment, threats to desert when crossing a state line become more interesting.<sup>24</sup> There is a major difference between defending Arkansas until the issue of secession was settled, and invading Missouri as a strategic move for the Confederacy. In August of 1861, the Confederacy was merely an idea to the average soldier. Wilson's Creek, then, was significant not only in a strategic sense, but in how it shaped Arkansans' understanding of the war and their role in it. If they left that battle uncommitted, the events of 1862 would be a severe test.

In his study of the Wilson's Creek campaign, Piston convincingly describes powerful nineteenth-century ideas of masculine honor as the key to unit cohesion during the campaign. He also saw the lack of wholesale desertions during the campaign as a sign that men with concerns about the invasion came to terms with it. But Pea Ridge changed things. The battle was a disaster. Key leadership figures had been killed and a high level of disorganization exposed. Subsequent orders to retreat from the area for points east and south, and to burn key resources in the leaving, may have reopened debate, or at least inspired personal contemplation about the

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<sup>23</sup> Piston, "When Arks Boys Go By," 112.

<sup>24</sup> Moneyhon, "Why They Fought," 58.

purpose of the war being to protect hearth and home. Entering Missouri may have been palatable during the Wilson's Creek campaign because it could have been viewed as critical to the defense of northwest Arkansas. When Van Dorn's army went east after Pea Ridge—leaving northwest Arkansas vulnerable—desertions spiked.

After the Battle of Pea Ridge, an acquaintance of Bell, William Baxter of Fayetteville, observed the Confederate men of the area and noted “They bore themselves as neither heroes nor martyrs; there was an entire lack of enthusiasm for the cause in which they had battled, no hope as to the final result. Not one, that I now recollect, expressed a wish to rejoin his companions in arms in the field of danger; the only strong desire was a wish to get home.” Of course, Baxter had an agenda, as his words, published during the war, sought to encourage a merciful reconstruction and cast Confederates as merely misled, but his observations also capture the reality of the war in 1862. The actual, physical protection of home and family became paramount in any policy debate, even one as critical to the economy and stability of the South as slavery, and certainly to aspirations of revolutionary glory. Baxter also related the level of destruction in Fayetteville that followed the Confederate retreat. The Confederate command burned as many resources as possible to keep them out of Federal hands, and left much of Fayetteville and the surrounding area in ruins.<sup>25</sup> The situation in northwest Arkansas by the early summer of 1862 reopened discussions about affiliation.

Men who had enlisted with the Confederate Army faced the decision to stay or leave. And, to be clear, for many of them, the process of assimilating to military life and committing to the Confederate cause was cemented, not shaken, by Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, and their aftermath. When orders came to leave the area, they followed them. When orders came to retreat

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<sup>25</sup> William Baxter, *Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove, Or, Scenes and Incidents of the War in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000; 1864), 126.



to Fort Smith, they were not tempted to desert. Some men held a passionate belief in the cause. Many others were no doubt committed to their comrades, and loathed being the ones to leave lest they later hear of missed glory on the battlefield. Those with family situations that were more stable—sons of wealthy families, unmarried men, or those without young children at home—may have had an easier time with the decision to leave the area than those who were the sole bread winners and protectors of their families. Some men late of Confederate service in mid-1862 decided to part ways with their units. Richard H. Bean, son of the largest slaveholder in the region stayed with the Confederate army; Elisha McGinnis, with lesser means, a widowed mother, and younger siblings did not. The situation in the Ozarks was unstable, and Captain Bell’s “hand of tyranny” could take many forms, from the torches of the departing Confederate Army, to the arriving Union troops, to unaffiliated guerrilla bands taking advantage of the chaos. Yet, even after leaving formal Confederate service, individuals found themselves with more decisions to make about affiliation. They faced a number of options, from joining Confederate guerrilla bands or home guards to mustering in with the Arkansas units raised by Federal troops. And, of course, some simply opted out of the conflict entirely, at least in northwest Arkansas, and moved their families out of harm’s way.

Gaining a clear idea of exactly who left Confederate service and when falls prey to the confusion of Confederate records. Some men are clearly listed as deserters after both Wilson’s Creek and Pea Ridge. Others simply disappear from the rolls without notation. Many men had signed up for only three or six month commitments. Having technically served their time, they could leave without formal penalty, although departure from the community-based units of the Civil War was never without social and political threats to personal honor. The memoirs of some

officers who survived the war mention steady desertion.<sup>26</sup> What is clear is that some men refused to leave northwest Arkansas to fight for the Confederacy somewhere else. And in a region that had been strongly against secession, they found many friends. Estimates vary, but those who have studied Arkansas's Federal units estimate that anywhere from fifty to seventy-five percent of the 10,000 men who eventually served the Union began in the war in Confederate ranks.<sup>27</sup>

Some northwest Arkansas men never entered Confederate service. Unionism in the upcountry South is not a new concept, nor an unstudied one. Although it was certainly quieted, unionism in the Ozarks did not completely disappear between the secession vote and the Battle of Pea Ridge. The confusion and destruction that followed the battle justified its resurgence. The typical understanding is that southern unionists—generally yeoman farmers perched in the mountains—were politically, ideologically, and economically distant from their lowland, slaveholding neighbors, at so cast their fates with the Union, rather than the Confederacy. But Chapter One showed a great many yeoman farmers who found political and economic common ground with their slaveholding counterparts, and vice versa. The ranks of unionists in northwest Arkansas were certainly filled with yeoman farmers, but so too were the Confederate units. Furthermore, slaveholding was not necessarily a deterrent to Union enlistment. Scholars of other border states, such as Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, have found high numbers of slaveholding unionists, though they tended to be smaller slaveholders.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Pearce, N. B. "Arkansas Troops in the Battle of Wilson's Creek." *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. 1. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds. (New York: The Century Co., 1887), 298-303, online at ehistory.osu.edu (accessed July 20, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed study of these patterns, and speculation as to the causes, see, Brian K. Robertson, "Men Who Would Die by the Stars and Stripes: A Socio-Economic Examination of the Second Arkansas Cavalry (US)," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 69 (Summer 2010): 120-137; Duncan, "Uncertain Loyalties."

<sup>28</sup> For more on slaveholders and enlistment in Missouri, see, Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); for Kentucky, see, T. R. C.

In Arkansas, scholarship has been more limited, but among northwest Arkansas men, many had connections to slaveholding. Some were unconditional unionists, who never supported the Confederacy or secession; others enlisted after first serving in Confederate units. In the Billingsley area of Washington County, a number of men from slaveholding families enlisted in Federal service as early as 1862, among them John, Thomas, and William Dye, and John, Noel, and William Rutherford, all brothers and cousins. Richard Dye claimed he that had “30 head” of slaves stolen by Confederates during the war.<sup>29</sup> The Dyes’ aunt, Miriam Dodson, owned fifteen slaves in 1860. Noel Rutherford owned two slaves.<sup>30</sup> And they were not the only Union men from the Billingsley area with connections to slaveholding. The grandfather of brothers Henry, J. J., and Archibald Sawyers owned ten slaves in 1860. By all accounts, these young men were not rebelling against their families; their own fathers hosted Unionist meetings about enlistment in their homes.<sup>31</sup> It is obvious that commitment to the Confederacy ebbed and flowed according to youthful enthusiasm, well-thought ideology, battlefield victories and losses, guerrilla activity, family connections, and the cajoling of pretty girls, or any number of factors. Understanding the flexible affiliation of northwest Arkansas residents is central to understanding how the war was waged in the region, and eminently useful in understanding the hurt feelings and conflicts of the

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Hutton, *Bloody Breathitt: Politics and Violence in the Appalachian South* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Deposition of Richard Dye, Richard Dye (Washington County, AR) claim no. 20214, Allowed Case Files, Southern Claims Commission (SCC), 1871-1880, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 217, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, reproductions at Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013) [hereinafter Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com]

<sup>30</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Washington County, AR.

<sup>31</sup> Deposition of Richard Dye, Richard Dye (Washington County, AR) claim no. 20214, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013); Deposition of John Rutherford, John Rutherford (Washington County, AR) claim no. 20497, *ibid.*

post war years. Margaret Storey's work shows northern Alabama unionists, who were also a mix of conditional and unconditional unionists, as well as slaveholders and non-slaveholders.

In *Loyalty and Loss*, Storey utilized records of the Southern Claims Commission, a federal agency established in 1871 to investigate, consider, and pay upon approval the claims of loyalist losses to the federal cause. Building on the approved claims, Storey identified a cohort of unionists that she traced from 1860 through Reconstruction. She found economic diversity among unionists that challenges a strictly class-based classification for affiliation. Storey did not "strive to isolate a single cause for unionism," rather, she focused "on the multiple factors shaping the formation and expression of Union loyalty on the Deep South homefront."<sup>32</sup>

Northwest Arkansas is far from being in the Deep South, but Unionists in the Ozarks were also more diverse than generally recognized. Their commitment to either side during the war was not necessarily built on common economic or social ground, but was instead a response to what Storey described as 'the threat of losing one's nation and home, of betraying one's family and friends, and of abandoning long-treasured ideas about loyalty and honor.'<sup>33</sup> Where this study diverges from Storey's findings is its explicit interest in those who came to the Union cause during the war.

Conditions in northwest Arkansas after the Battle of Pea Ridge were unstable, but the Union Army was present in the region, offering protection to those who had never waived in their support of the Union, and an alternative to those who grew disillusioned with Confederate service. After the loss at the Battle of Pea Ridge, Confederate General Van Dorn's troops were

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<sup>32</sup> Margaret Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

ordered to east to support the Army of Mississippi, leaving Arkansas virtually undefended.<sup>34</sup> The Union Army attempted to secure the region. White men between eighteen and forty-five years of age in the early summer of 1862, were increasingly pressured to make decisions about enlistment. The Federal Army was present in the area, headquartered in Cassville, Missouri, on the Missouri/Arkansas state line bordering Carroll County, and actively recruiting in Arkansas. Further, an unknown number of Arkansas unionists had gone north in 1861, enlisted in the Federal army, and were eager to welcome fellow Arkansans to the ranks. At the same time, Confederate conscription began in the state as General Thomas C. Hindman enforced both Arkansas and Confederate laws, and set a deadline for men to voluntarily form Confederate units with the power to elect their officers, or face involuntary conscription after.<sup>35</sup> Avoiding service to either side was also an option, pursued by those who would not or could not leave their families, or those caught in an ideological no-mans-land between distaste for the Confederacy and dislike of Federal occupation. A final option was evacuation. Conscription was not yet in operation in the North, and Federal troops, seeking to support southern unionists, quickly found themselves in the business of escorting refugees.

The decisions made in the summer of 1862 set a number of men on a path that would shape the political and social landscape of northwest Arkansas for years to come. For some men, choosing Union service would bring them and their families' social influence. Many would become the first official members of the Republican Party in the state of Arkansas. In Fayetteville, in June 1862, Thomas Jefferson "T. J." Hunt gathered a group of roughly 120

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<sup>34</sup> Derek Clements, "Earl Van Dorn," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*. Butler Center for Arkansas Studies. [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed October 31, 2015).

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

unionist men and rode north to Cassville to join the First Arkansas (US). It is unclear whether Hunt was influential in Washington County before the war, but he quickly rose to prominence and became one of the most important local unionists of the war. He was elected captain, and by the end of the war, achieved the rank of lieutenant in the First Arkansas Cavalry and served as provost marshal at Fayetteville. John I. Worthington, who had resided in Neosho, Missouri, just across the state line in 1860, but had family connections to Carroll County, transferred from a Kansas unit to be a captain in the First Arkansas. He oversaw the enlistment of other Carroll County men and died a major. His son (and namesake) was an influential Republican in Carroll County into the twentieth century. James Johnson of Madison County, who eventually served as a Republican lieutenant governor, enlisted in the First Arkansas in 1862. Johnsons remain active in Madison County politics to the present day. Richard Wimpey, of Benton County, also achieved the rank of major by the end of the war and served as a representative in the Arkansas state legislature in 1864.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, most northwest Arkansas men entered Union service as privates and left with that rank. After the war, they were small farmers and did nothing more noteworthy than filling the ranks of the local Republican Party and Grand Army of the Republic posts. Most of them served in the First Arkansas Cavalry, first organized in the summer of 1862. Under Colonel Marcus La Rue Harrison, the First Arkansas was originally organized at Cassville and Springfield, Missouri, in 1862, but many northwest Arkansas men enlisted later when the unit was at Fayetteville. The unit was mustered into service on August 7, 1862, and mustered out on

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas J. Hunt, *First Arkansas Cavalry, Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Arkansas*, National Archives Microcopy 399, reproductions at Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015) [Cited hereafter as *Union Service Record*, Fold3.com]. John I. Worthington, *ibid.*; “Judge John I. Worthington for Representative,” *Eureka Springs Fountain*, August 27, 1896, p. 1; James Johnson, *Union Service Record*, Fold3.com, (accessed September 20-27, 2015); Richard Wimpey, *ibid.*

August 20, 1865. The second most common unit for northwest Arkansas men was the First Arkansas Infantry, which was mustered into service in Fayetteville on March 25, 1863. This unit mainly served in Fayetteville and Fort Smith and was mustered out August 10, 1865. The remaining enlistees were divided between the Second Arkansas Cavalry, the Second Arkansas Infantry, the Fourth Arkansas Cavalry, and the First Battery Arkansas Light Artillery. These units served almost exclusively in northern Arkansas and southern Missouri, with occasional campaigns to the south.<sup>37</sup>

Men from the four counties of northwest Arkansas joined these units throughout the war and by comparing the 1860 census rolls for the counties against the compiled service records of the Arkansas regiments, a picture of enlistment trends emerges. The bulk of northwest Arkansas enlistment occurred in 1862 and 1863. In the summer of 1862, Arkansas men flocked to southern Missouri, as the First Arkansas organized there. Enlistments slowed but held steady through the fall as the Union army moved into Arkansas. After the Battle of Prairie Grove in December, recruitment efforts ratcheted up in the region. On January 27, 1863, Colonel Harrison urged John S. Phelps, the military governor of Arkansas to consider supporting the recruitment of Arkansas men, “A Union meeting will be held at Huntsville on Saturday” and described the loyalty of the area, the organization of Home Guards, and how little pay and food the men would require, to illustrate the region was receptive to recruiting efforts.<sup>38</sup>

An article in the *Christian County [Missouri] Historian* also sheds light on the climate in northwest Arkansas and southern Missouri in 1863. The reminisces of Lyman G. Bennett, a Union recruiter in western Arkansas in 1863, described the area as “practically loyal,” and

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<sup>37</sup> Desmond Walls Allen, *Arkansas' Damned Yankees: An Index to Union Soldiers in Arkansas Regiments* (Conway, AR: D.W. Allen, 1987).

<sup>38</sup> *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol 22, 78.

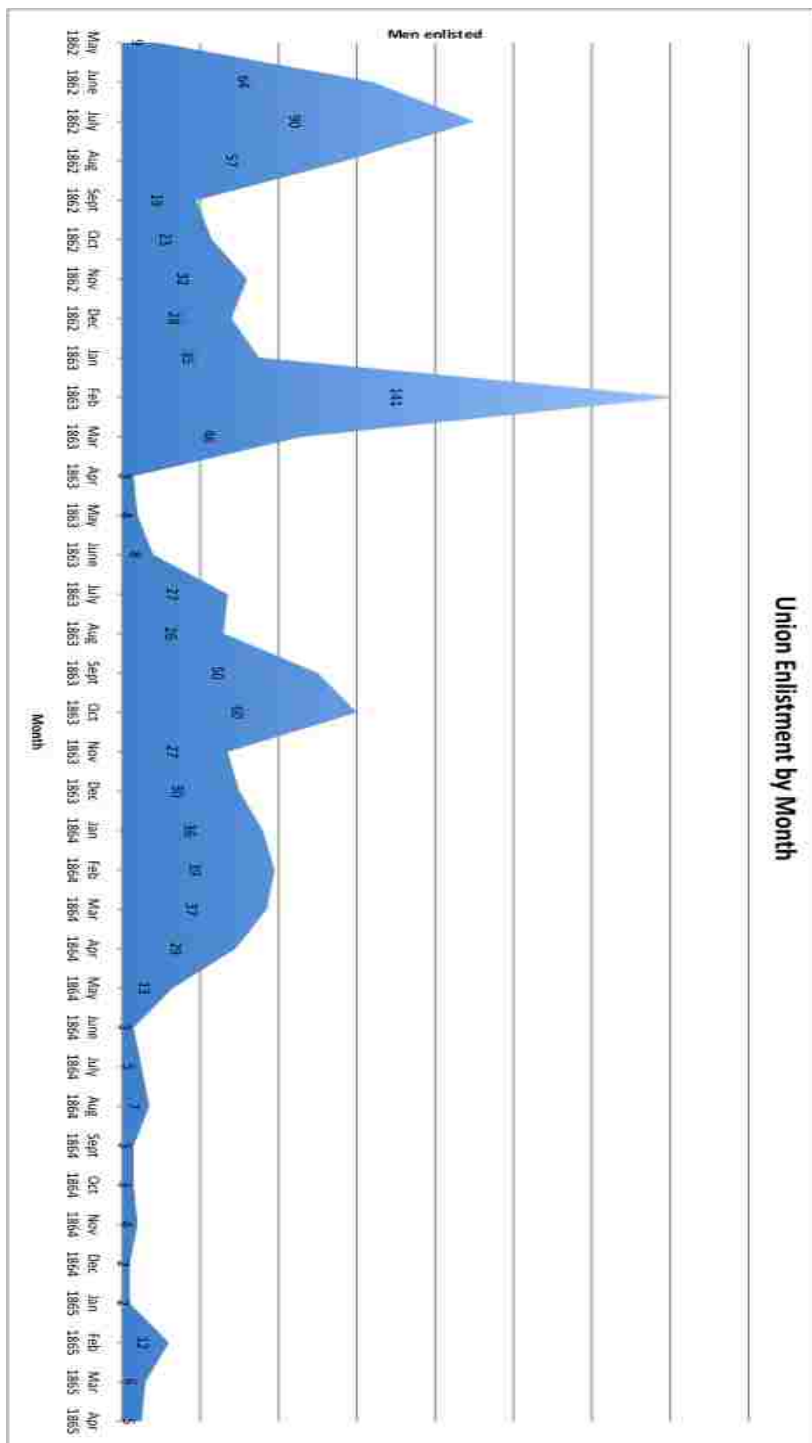


Figure 1. This graph was created by matching the 1860 population schedules for Benton, Carroll, Madison, and Washington Counties against an index of compiled service records for all of the Arkansas Union regiments to obtain a list of Northwest Arkansas men who served. Transcriptions of the census were accessed at Ancestry.com, with verification made against images of the original census. The index of service records used was Desmond Walls Allen's *Arkansas' Damned Yankees: An Index to Union Soldiers in Arkansas Regiments* with verification made against original compiled service records, reproduced online at Fold3.com.



recalled that “the Magazine and Boston Mountains as well as the hills and valleys of the White River were thronging with loyal refugees”<sup>39</sup> Bennett’s descriptive, if rambling, memories of the war and his role recruiting men in Arkansas and Missouri testify to the fact that the Union was actively recruiting, and combined with the reach of Union troops in winter quarters across the counties, such as Colonel Herron’s troops near Huntsville, led to the peak recruiting month of February 1863.

The proximity of the army to potential recruits was an especially important factor in enlistment trends. The choice to enlist was not necessarily a simple result of unionism. The first northwest Arkansas men to enlist were the ones with the means to get themselves to Cassville, Missouri. Not every family could spare a horse or a mule. As Federal troops and recruiters penetrated deeper into the region, more men enlisted, especially during the winter of 1863. The best illustration of importance of proximity is the Battle of Fayetteville, in April 1863.

Technically a win for the Union Army, as it succeeded in holding off the attack, the battle ultimately led to the abandonment of the garrison at Fayetteville, as Colonel Harrison’s superiors judged his position too vulnerable, despite his protestations to the contrary.<sup>40</sup> The result, in terms of enlistment, was a severe decline, from over 140 northwest Arkansas men joining Arkansas units in February, to only 15 in April, May, and June, combined. As Federal troops returned to the region in the fall, enlistment numbers rebounded to another peak in October. After that, recruitment settled into a trend of around thirty men per month through the first half of 1864. By the summer of that year, most civilians were leaving the area for greener and safer pastures, which severely limited the number of potential recruits.

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<sup>39</sup> Lyman Bennett. “Recruiting in Dixie,” in *Christian County Historian*, v. IV (Spring 1991): 61.

<sup>40</sup> Scott, Kim Allen. “The Civil War in a Bottle: Battle at Fayetteville, Arkansas.” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 54 (Autumn 1995): 239–268.

Analysis of the age of men at enlistment reveals that many eighteen-year-old enlistees may have actually been younger. While some of these young men may have simply wanted to serve, there was a policy in place that encouraged refugees, dependent upon aid from the government, to offer able-bodied men for service. This may also have led to youth enlistment.<sup>41</sup> Officially, the Union army limited enlistment to men between eighteen and forty-five. Allen W. Sams (son of Warren Sams, who had died on the Huntsville square in 1859) enlisted at Cassville, Missouri, on August 13, 1863. According to the census, Sams was twelve in 1860, but according to his service record, he was eighteen by the time he arrived at Cassville. His mother, Indiana Sams, was affiliated with known unionists in Madison County and had young children. The Sams family's situation, like that of many northwest Arkansas families, was complicated. It is likely that the eldest son was the same James E. Sams who enlisted in the Confederate Second Arkansas Mounted Rifles in December 1861. He appeared on muster rolls until April 1862. Whether he continued to serve, deserted, or was killed is unknown. The winter of 1862-1863 was difficult for many families. It is likely Sams evacuated her family to Cassville for safety, which put her son Allen in close enough proximity to be recruited.<sup>42</sup> As the war went on, eighteen year-olds, or those purporting to be "eighteen year olds" made up larger and larger percentages of the enlistees. They were only twelve percent of the men recruited in 1862, but made up forty percent of the northwest Arkansas men who enlisted in 1865. This is reflective of both the simple fact

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<sup>41</sup> John F. Bradbury. "'Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy' Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks." *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 57 (Autumn 1998): 233-264.

<sup>42</sup> The Sams family's situation may have become even more complicated as Allen Sams was disciplined for desertion near Fort Smith later in the war. Allen W. Sams, Union Service Record, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015); James E. Sams, Service Record, National Archives Microcopy 317, reproductions at Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015) [Cited hereafter as Confederate Service Record, Fold3.com]. Full names for the Sams family were located in the 1860 census, U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), Madison County, AR.

that these men had to wait to come of age while their neighbors and kinfolk enlisted, and also, perhaps because of the efforts of family members to hold younger men back until circumstances or patriotism finally drove them to enlist. There is no indication the Union Army was forced to recruit younger and younger boys as was the case among Confederates. There was pressure to recruit loyal Arkansas unionists, but no desperation for child soldiers. Desperation on the part of families, however, may have been a factor, as a son in federal service would have made the family more likely to secure rations and protection.

Age on the other end of the spectrum was less a factor, but it still affected some recruits. Some older men were turned away from recruiting efforts. Junius Farrar of Benton County, forty years of age in 1863, stated in his pension file that he attempted to enlist in 1862 at Fayetteville, but was turned away because of his age. He then successfully enlisted in Springfield the following year, and served as a sergeant in the Second Arkansas Cavalry. Some older men did lie about their age to enlist.<sup>43</sup> Lemuel J. Duncan of Madison County, for example, indicated he was fifty-five in 1860, but stated he was forty-five when he enlisted with two of his sons in 1862.<sup>44</sup> A small number of men probably followed Farrar's and Duncan's examples. It is also noteworthy that both men enlisted at the same time as sons or younger relatives, illustrating once again the power of kinship networks in rural Arkansas, and the influence of heads of household.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), Benton County, AR; Junius Farrar deposition, Soldier Certificate no. 821050, Pension Files; Junius Farrar, Union Service Record, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Lemuel Duncan, Union Service Record, Fold3.com, (accessed September 20-27, 2015); U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), Madison County, AR.

<sup>45</sup> James M., Lemuel J. and William M. Duncan, all of Madison Co., lived the same household in 1860 and enlisted on July 24, 1862. Ibid; Desmond Walls Allen, *Arkansas' Damned Yankees: An Index to Union Soldiers in Arkansas Regiments* (Conway, AR: D.W. Allen, 1987). Nicholas, John, and Junius Farrar lived in the same household in Anderson

By 1864, not only did the age at enlistment skew younger, but the location of enlistment was very likely to have been *outside* of the northwest Arkansas region, even though these men had been residents in 1860 and served in Arkansas units. This trend reflects the depopulation of northwest Arkansas. In 1862 and 1863, northwest Arkansas men enlisted in southwest Missouri or northwest Arkansas. Union recruitment in 1864 was occurring further south and east as the Union army penetrated deeper into Arkansas, but they were finding northwest Arkansas men in those places, and especially younger and younger men. This is evidence of a population in motion, a point that will be made a greater length in Chapter Three. These men were probably from refugee families. Many with unionist leanings evacuated their families north early in the war, so finding Union enlistees farther into Arkansas may also indicate an initial Confederate affiliation for these individuals or their families. That is not to say enlistment later in the war was limited to men in Arkansas; there were also men enlisting in the Arkansas Union units at known refugee centers such as Rolla and St. Louis, Missouri.

Examining the demographics of the roughly one thousand northwest Arkansas enlistees also reveals patterns. Union soldiers in northwest Arkansas were not Yankees or northerners. The birthplaces of northwest Arkansas's Union enlistees are reflective of the general population of northwest Arkansas, with seventy-five percent of the men born in Arkansas or Tennessee.<sup>46</sup> Enlistment does not skew toward men born either in free states or in non-seceding slave states. In fact, less than four percent of enlistees were born in free states, which is again reflective of the

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township in 1860, near relatives Nicholas and Charles Nail. The Farrars enlisted on the same day, followed into the same unit five months later by the Nails, U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), Benton County, AR; *Arkansas' Damned Yankees*, 58, 119.

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu).

general population, and roughly ten percent were born in slave states that did not secede. Of that ten percent, most were born in Kentucky and Missouri. Place of birth was not a significant factor shaping Union enlistment.

While the census only asked for birth state, enlistment records yield birth county, which allows for more specific analysis. Most of the Arkansas-born men were natives of northwest Arkansas. They did not come from other parts of the state, nor had they moved within northwest Arkansas; their 1860 county and county of birth were almost always the same. If they had moved, it was from Washington County, already noted as the jumping off point for northwest Arkansas settlement. Men born in a certain county out of state tended to cluster in the same Arkansas county in 1860. For example, of the Tennessee-born enlistees from Madison County, half were born in Warren County, Tennessee. Men born in Lauderdale County, Alabama lived in Carroll County; Grainger County, Tennesseans showed up in Benton County. Enlistees from Washington County, with its larger population and status as the hub of commerce showed more diversity in terms of county of birth, but still had pockets of men with a common birth county in another state.

The birth counties of non-native Arkansans also reflect kinship connections and the regional consistency of upcountry southern unionism. Men who list the same birth county at enlistment, upon deeper research, are often revealed to be related, even when surnames are different. Brothers, cousins, uncles, and fathers enlisted together. This confirms what is already known about how kinship shaped movement west and emphasizes that family bonds played a role in the decision to enlist. When viewed on a map, almost every birth county in Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and even South Carolina, is in the upcountry. Many of these counties were also sites of unionism and wartime unrest. Lauderdale County, Alabama

features in Margaret Storey’s work on Alabama unionists; Noel Fisher finds Grainger County, Tennessee illustrative in his exploration of partisan politics and guerrilla warfare in that region.<sup>47</sup>

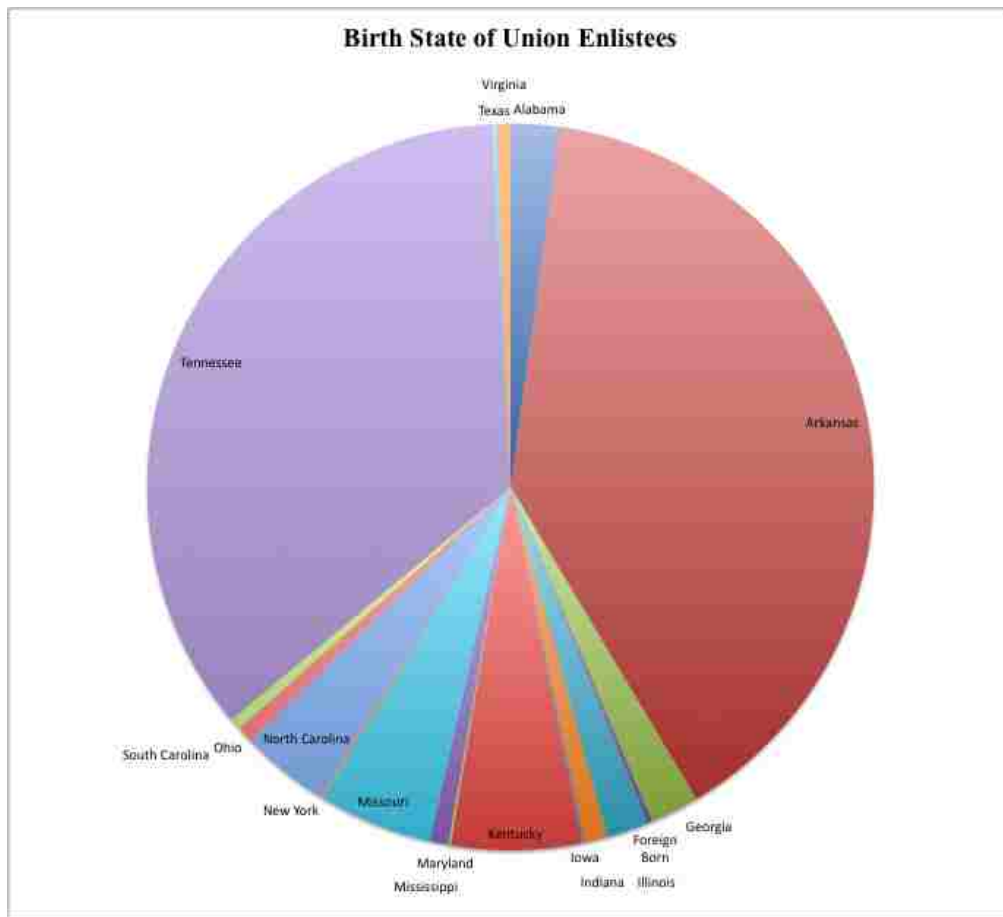


Figure 2. This chart reflects the birthplace of Union enlistee as noted on their service record. The index of service records used was Desmond Walls Allen’s *Arkansas’ Damned Yankees: An Index to Union Soldiers in Arkansas Regiments* with verification made against original compiled service records, reproduced online at Fold3.com.

Not all unionist men joined official Federal troops; many were also organized into local militias, or home guards. Exact records for these organizations do not exist, but documents from both during and after the war hint at the extent of service in northwest Arkansas. Writing from Fayetteville on January 2, 1863, General John Schofield suggested to Phelps, the military

<sup>47</sup> Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama’s Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 296. Noel C. Fisher, *Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

governor of Arkansas, that he consider “the propriety of organizing the militia of this part of the State, so that they may protect their homes.”<sup>48</sup> However, at the start of this effort to organize local men, Schofield also stated, “Very few volunteers for the general service can be obtained, but I believe all the loyal men will gladly do service as local militia.”<sup>49</sup> Schofield recognized the priority locals put on protecting hearth and home, and while he may have preferred official recruits and a larger official force in the region, the utility of a loyal local militia was not lost on him. Home guard units were also a place for older men to serve. Richard Arendale of Benton County, Nathan Hanks of Washington County, and Martin Johnson of Madison County, for example, were all in their fifties and sixties, and all served in the local militia or home guards.<sup>50</sup>

Enslaved men made up barely three percent of the prewar population of northwest Arkansas, making the military service of African-American men more difficult to measure than that of their white counterparts, but there is no doubt of the enthusiasm of African Americans for the cause.<sup>51</sup> “At the beginning of the rebellion,” Ran Maxey of Fort Smith, Arkansas, stated in 1871, “I sympathized with the Union cause, because I thought they was my friends, and if anybody would take me out of bondage, they would.” Maxey enlisted in the Second Kansas at Fort Smith.<sup>52</sup> African-American men in Arkansas were aware of the coming war and the meaning it may have for them. Though Maxey was enslaved in Crawford County when war

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<sup>48</sup> *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol 22, 8.

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

<sup>50</sup> Deposition of Richard Arendale, Richard Arendale (Benton County, AR) claim no. 9240, Deposition of Nathan Hanks, Nathan Hanks (Washington County, AR) claim no. 5370, Deposition of Martin Johnson, Martin Johnson (Madison County, AR) claim no. 15843, all three in Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu).

<sup>52</sup> Deposition of Ran Maxey, Ran Maxey (Crawford County, AR) claim no. 16328, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

broke out, there is no doubt his sentiments paralleled those of his enslaved brethren in the counties just north. The war and what it might mean were discussed among enslaved African Americans in northwest Arkansas. Frank Stewart, a neighbor of Maxey stated, “We frequently conversed about the war and wished that we might have a chance to assist the federal army in gaining our freedom.”<sup>53</sup> The strong unionist sentiment among the white population could only have aided in keeping African Americans abreast of news. Enslaved people in northwest Arkansas viewed the approaching Union army positively. Washington County slave Jackson Wallace stated, when asked how he felt about the Union during the war, “I wished the Union side to conquer, that if it did we would all be free.”<sup>54</sup>

The challenges in identifying exactly which African-American men from northwest Arkansas enlisted in the Union Army are many. Slaves were not referenced by name in the 1860 census. Combined with Federal military policy, which delayed recruiting African Americans in Arkansas until 1863, identifying large numbers of black men as both 1860 residents of northwest Arkansas and Federal soldiers is nearly impossible. Without a solid list of African Americans in 1860, the only way to know for sure if an African-American man was from northwest Arkansas would be if he listed one of the counties as his birth county at enlistment. But if only forty percent of white men named a northwest Arkansas county as their place of birth, it is likely that black men, who were brought with their masters to settle the region, would reflect the same pattern. Movement caused by the war also affected where African-American men may have enlisted. By the time the recruitment policy was settled on, much of the enslaved population of northwest Arkansas had shifted either through voluntary movement—ample scholarship shows

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<sup>53</sup> Frank Stewart deposition, *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Jackson Wallace deposition, Jackson Wallace (Washington County, AR) claim no.11367, *ibid.*



African Americans began a process of self-liberation from the time the Union Army set foot in the Confederacy—or through their owners removing them south.<sup>55</sup>

In Arkansas, no federal African-American units were formed until both political sensibilities and sheer numbers of refugees combined to force the issue. This occurred in mid-1863, at a time when even white enlistment patterns were showing the effects of displacement, and the units were formed across the state, at Helena.<sup>56</sup> There may have been African-American families from northwest Arkansas who had sought refuge with Union troops and travelled with them across the state, but they had no means or nor reason to identify northwest Arkansas as their origin. Despite all of this, however, a few men can be found, and linked to both their 1860 residence and federal service. Anecdotal evidence fills in other blanks in terms of where the enslaved population of northwest Arkansas may have made their stand.

It is likely some northwest Arkansas African-American men went north to enlist in the First Kansas Colored Infantry. The origin of the unit along the Kansas/Missouri border, roughly 150 miles north of Fayetteville, makes it possible it had northwest Arkansas fugitive slaves in its ranks. A close look at enlistees reveals possible connections. Organized at Fort Scott, Kansas, in August 1862, it was controversial in its very existence as a black unit and was not officially recognized for five months. Mustered into service in January 1863, it was later re-designated as the Seventy-ninth United States Colored Infantry (New).<sup>57</sup> Tantalizingly, there were a handful of

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<sup>55</sup> For more on the role of the Union army in emancipation, see, Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), Glenn David Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation: African Americans and the Fight for Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> For more on African-American enlistment at Helena, see, Mark K. Christ, “‘They Will Be Armed’: Lorenzo Thomas Recruits Black Troops in Helena, April 6, 1863,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 62 (Winter 2013), 366-383.

<sup>57</sup> Robert W. Lull, *Civil War General and Indian Fighter James M. Williams*, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2013).

men in the unit with surnames in common with Arkansas slaveholders, most notably a group of men with the surname Bean, who listed their birthplace as “Cherokee Nation.”<sup>58</sup> Given the extensive history of the slaveholding Bean family in the northwest Arkansas/Cherokee Nation region, the men had some connection to northwest Arkansas, whether or not they were enslaved there in 1860. Another northwest Arkansas slaveholding family was the Berrys, with connections to both Arkansas and southern Missouri. Black soldier Stephen Berry’s listing of his birthplace as Kentucky—as some of the slaveholding Berrys did in Madison County—offer interesting, but ultimately inconclusive suggestions of connections to northwest Arkansas.<sup>59</sup> In the end, it is likely that word of the First Kansas had traveled to northwest Arkansas and among its the slave population in 1862. The existence of a black unit, combined with the known abolitionists organizing it would have been news even if northwest Arkansas had not been under tenuous Union occupation. There is little doubt some northwest Arkansas slaves sought opportunities to serve in the Union Army rather than wait for emancipation.

There is a handful of African-American men whose 1860 location and military service is more clear. Caesar Bean, who had been enslaved by Mark Bean in Washington County, attempted to enlist in mid-1863 in the Arkansas River Valley, near where he and his family had been taken by Bean to avoid Federal encroachment in Washington County. While Caesar Bean was turned away, presumably because he was nearly sixty years old, he did find work in a Federal sawmill in Crawford County.<sup>60</sup> In January and February 1864, eight African-American men, Adam Buchanan, Andrew, David, Mark, and William Crawford, and Washington, Samuel,

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<sup>58</sup> Arthur, George, and John Bean, Seventy-ninth United States Colored Troops, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Berry, *ibid.*; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), Madison County, AR.

<sup>60</sup> Deposition of Caesar Bean, Caesar Bean (Crawford County, AR) claim no. 17418, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

and Richard Spencer, enlisted in the First Battery Arkansas Light Artillery at Fayetteville. With large tracts of land under cultivation near Cane Hill, the Spencer, Crawford, and Buchanan families were among the larger slaveholders in Washington County in 1860. It is likely all of the men had been enslaved in the area. Adam Buchanan and William Crawford filed pension claims after the war, and indicated such.<sup>61</sup> The First Battery Arkansas Light Artillery was a white unit, and the rank of the men was listed as “under cook,” a common position for former slaves with white units.<sup>62</sup> The men served only briefly, with most of them dismissed in July 1864 in Fort Smith due to a regulation that limited the number of under cooks allowed.<sup>63</sup> These men sought out Union service like many of their freedmen counterparts across the country.

Outside of enlistment records, there is evidence of active recruitment of African-American men in northwest Arkansas, if not outright conscription. Wesley Dodson and Wesley Mecklin, both of Washington County, related experiences with recruiters after the war. Dodson was taken from his farm in central Washington County by men he initially thought were Confederates. He escaped from them and ran to Fayetteville, only to learn from the Federal troops there that his would-be kidnappers were Federal soldiers. Mecklin’s owner spoke of

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<sup>61</sup> Both Adam Buchanan and William Crawford state in their pension files that they were enslaved in Washington County, Arkansas. Adam Buchanan, Soldier Certificate 982628, Pension Files; William Crawford, Soldier Certificate 987193, *ibid.* The 1860 slave schedules for the Spencer, Crawford, and Buchanan families have a number of entries, which could be these men. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Washington County, AR.

<sup>62</sup> Allen, *Arkansas’ Damned Yankees: An Index to Union Soldiers in Arkansas Regiments* (Conway, AR: D.W. Allen, 1987); Victor Hicken, “The Record of Illinois’ Negro Soldiers in the Civil War,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Autumn 1963): 533. All of the men are identified as black in later military or census records.

<sup>63</sup> Adam Buchanan, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

keeping him away from recruiters with great glee, and Wesley Mecklin himself mentioned evading attempts to recruit him and force him into service.<sup>64</sup>

Northwest Arkansas's men faced challenging circumstances and difficult decisions during the war. African-American men enlisted after traveling north to find a unit, or being taken south and enlisted when the Union Army came to them. They may even as the undercooks of the First Battery Arkansas Light Artillery have enlisted in northwest Arkansas. That the enlistment patterns of men initially in bondage seems to mimic the patterns of white enlistment, from travel north to join the earliest forming units, to seeking service when the Union Army drew near, to enlisting after heading south, is a testament to the strength of their desire to serve, as well as to the pragmatism of the Army of the Frontier in taking advantage of that desire. For white men, commitment to the ideas and rights discussed in town streets and secession meetings in 1861 were quickly put to the test. After battles and Union encroachment into northwest Arkansas, their ideological commitments and bonds with comrades may have conflicted with fear for family in harm's way. Each man reassessed his affiliation, and probably more than once. Some realized a stronger commitment to their chosen path; others switched sides, or even left the state. Enslaved men considered their options as well, and weighed the freedom that could come with service against the desire to protect their families in the midst of war. While understanding the why, who, and how of wartime enlistment will be critical to deciphering the recovery from the war in northwest Arkansas, so too will understanding what the fight was like in the region. Regular

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<sup>64</sup> Deposition of Wesley Dodson, Wesley Dodson (Washington County, AR) claim no. 19121, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013); Deposition of Wesley Mecklin, Wesley Mecklin (Washington County, AR) claim no. 9234, Barred and Disallowed Case Files, Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 233; National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, reproduced at Fold3.com (accessed June 5-11, 2014) [hereinafter Barred and Disallowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com]

troops, guerrillas, and the civilians of northwest Arkansas interacted for four years, further testing affiliation with a level of violence and hardship no one could have expected in 1861.

## Chapter Three

### Wartime Ruin and Survival: The Civilian Experience of Northwest Arkansas

Civilians bore the brunt of the violence of the Civil War in northwest Arkansas. Confederate sympathizer Robert Mecklin of Washington County wrote, “No guerrilla warfare ever carried on in Mexico or any of the South American republics has been fraught with more evils than that now waged upon us in northwest Arkansas.”<sup>1</sup> Unionist Esther Robinson of Madison County concurred, “I was threatened to my face with being hung, choked to death and the burning of my house, and my husband's life was also frequently threatened, ropes were drawn and pistols too, accompanied with threats to shoot and hang him.” The potential ramifications of the war were known even among the enslaved. Wesley Dodson of Washington County recalled, “When the fighting commenced, I knowed if the Rebels won: the Blacks would not get free and I said (& knowed it) that the poor whites would be no better off than the niggers. I knew if the Union Army won the day I would remain a free man.”<sup>2</sup>

Northwest Arkansas civilians paid the price for those national forces at work in their corner of the state. Old men, women, children, and enslaved people saw all levels of society reshaped, from the individual household to the social and economic structure of the region itself. For women and slaves, the war brought greater autonomy and responsibility. For white men outside of formal military service, the war reduced their role in society and the home, no matter the side they professed to support. For all civilians, the war meant dislocation and forced travel,

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<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Mecklin, “The Mecklin Letters Written in 1863-64 at Mt. Comfort.” *Washington County Historical Society Bulletin Series*, 10-12, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Deposition of Wesley Dodson, Wesley Dodson (Washington County, AR) claim no. 19121 and Deposition of Esther Robinson, Esther Robinson (Madison County, AR) claim no. 14524, both in Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

often precipitated by violence or the threat of it. By the final year of the war, conditions were so desperate that civilians forged an unprecedented arrangement with the U. S. Army in the form of post colonies for security and subsistence. Of the experience in northwest Arkansas, Josephine Crump opined, “The women of ancient Sparta pointed out the heroic way and the women of North Arkansas sure trod it.”<sup>3</sup>

The situation in northwest Arkansas sits at the intersection of a great deal of scholarship. The region, which experienced a prolonged guerrilla war, was part of a Confederate state occupied by the Federal army. Slaves were emancipated. Women were forced out of traditional roles and into new ones. Thousands of civilians became refugees. Violence, deprivation, and displacement were constantly interacting factors in the lives of civilians. Race, age, gender, and political affiliation shaped individual experiences. Even within the same household, how an elderly white man experienced the war was very different from how a young black woman did. The scholarship most relevant to northwest Arkansas can be grouped into a few categories. Studies of guerrilla warfare, often linked with southern unionism, elucidate both the style of warfare that surrounded civilians as well as the political differences that precipitated it. Scholars of gender politics and the household during the Civil War also have much to offer in terms of understanding the civilian response to war, as do studies of people under occupation or forced into movement. Finally, there are a few short but useful studies of material conditions specifically in the Arkansas Ozarks that help contextualize civilian responses that would otherwise seem extreme.

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<sup>3</sup> Crump dictated her memories of the war in a series of undated reminiscences recorded sometime after the typewriter became generally available. “Personal Reminiscences 21 Series” Josephine Crump Papers (MC 845), Box 1, Folder 1, Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Arkansas.

Three works have specifically examined the violence of guerrilla war in the Ozarks. William Beall in his thesis, “Wildwood Skirmishers: The First Federal Arkansas Cavalry,” and Jay Prier in his thesis, “Under the Black Flag: The Real War in Washington County, Arkansas 1861-1865,” describe numerous regular and irregular interactions throughout Northwest Arkansas and the instability they created.<sup>4</sup> Beall’s work places the actions of the federal First Arkansas Cavalry closer to jayhawking than typical Union units, as the local men utilized their knowledge of the land to fight an often evenly matched foe. Prier catalogues the various Confederate-affiliated bushwhacking companies known or rumored to have operated in northwest Arkansas. Both works describe persistent guerrilla resistance to the Union presence, including cutting telegraph wires, harassing Union patrols, killing unionists, and theft. They also note similar harassment of Confederate-affiliated civilians by known unionists, including those in uniform. Robert Mackey in his chapter, “Bushwhackers, Provosts, and Tories: The Guerrilla War in Arkansas,” in *Guerrillas, Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, stated that, despite a number of policies aimed at quelling the guerrilla threat, “the quick-moving guerrilla bands still preyed upon small outposts, isolated detachments, foraging parties and Arkansas unionists.” In addition to possible attack by guerrillas, Mackey also found that families faced danger from Union troops themselves, as “local residents were held accountable for attacks, [guerrilla attacks on Union units] and their homes and farms became forfeit. Federal

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<sup>4</sup> Wendell P Beall. “Wildwood Skirmishers: The First Federal Arkansas Cavalry.” Thesis (M.A.) University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1988; Jay A. Prier, “Under the Black Flag : The Real War in Washington County, Arkansas 1861- 1865.” Thesis (M.A.) University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1998.



troops would loot, then burn the property of suspected guerrilla sympathizers.”<sup>5</sup> By late in the war, troops on both sides saw guerrillas behind every tree, and civilians lived in fear.

Arkansas was not alone in facing irregular warfare. The critical role of guerrillas in the Civil War has been well established in recent years. Though much of the scholarship has been focused on Appalachia, one of the best and most influential works is Michael Fellman’s exploration of violence and hardship, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War*.<sup>6</sup> Published in 1989, Fellman’s work was one of the first studies of the Civil War to see irregular warfare as just as critical to the final outcome of the war as traditional battles between the major armies. A scholar who came of age during the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam war, Fellman brought an interest in the psychological effects of the war on military men, guerrillas, and civilians. His understanding of the conflict as a complex interaction between an occupying army, irregular fighters of flexible affiliation, equally pragmatic civilians, and even the terrain of Missouri itself, made his work a turning point in the modern understanding of the Civil War.

By the late 1990s, several similar studies followed. Most crossed the border, however, and combined studies of unionism in Confederate states with examination of the irregular fighting their aberrant affiliation inspired. Examples include Brian McKnight’s *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia*, Jonathan Dean Sarris’ northeast Georgia study *A Separate Civil War*, John Inscoe’s and Gordon McKinney’s examination of the mountains of North Carolina in *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, the

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<sup>5</sup> Robert R. Mackey. “Bushwackers, Provosts, and Tories: The Guerrilla War in Arkansas,” in *Guerrillas, Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, ed. Daniel E. Sutherland, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 172-173.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

east Tennessee studies of Noel Fisher in *War at Every Door* and W. Todd Groce's *Mountain Rebels*.<sup>7</sup> Combined, the works brought guerrilla warfare and often southern unionism, to the forefront of scholarship on the Civil War in the upland south.

This trend culminated with the 2009 publication of Daniel Sutherland's *Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War*.<sup>8</sup> A prolific scholar of both the civilian experience during the Civil War and a number of well-known battles, Sutherland also drew on studies of guerrillas and unionists. His co-edited collection of essays *Guerrillas, Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* included scholarship on Arkansas.<sup>9</sup> *Savage Conflict* however, won acclaim because it combined a synthesis of two decades of scholarship on guerrillas, irregular warfare, unionism, and civilian suffering with Sutherland's own research and analysis, to make the provocative and ultimately convincing argument that guerrilla warfare was not merely a sad and brutal subset of the broader fight; it *was* the fight. Guerrilla fighting shaped all aspects of the Civil War and was essential to its end result. That could not be more true than in Arkansas.

The violence of the war in the Arkansas Ozarks also upended the social structure. In the pre-Civil War household, white men held power as the undisputed head of the household.

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<sup>7</sup> Brian Dallas McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).; Jonathan Dean Sarris, *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).; John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).; W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).; Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War*, 1st ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999).

Stephanie McCurry's *Masters of Small Worlds* emphasizes this status as a way of understanding the common cause cultivated between yeomen and planters in South Carolina, but her work resonates across the south, especially in northwest Arkansas where the population was dominated by yeoman farmers who nonetheless embraced secession. The household hierarchy she describes, reflective of the social hierarchy between yeomen and planters outside of the household, was destroyed by wartime conditions. In northwest Arkansas, white men were removed from the home by service or forced into dependent roles within the home due to conscription and bushwhacking. White women became the heads of many households, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and were responsible for feeding and protecting their families. Slaves used the war to escape the white household in many cases, or to negotiate expanded roles if they chose to stay. This experience resonates with McCurry's *Confederate Reckoning*, in which she places rural white women and slaves in a "political history of the unfranchised" to understand the Confederacy and its failure. She finds white women, especially rural white women, took an active role in challenging Richmond and demanded that the government provide for their families in the role of their absent husbands and fathers serving in the Confederate Army. They embraced their role as "soldier's wives" and used it to demand their due. Northwest Arkansas was more distant from the formal structures of the Confederacy, but the experiences of area civilians were nonetheless indicative of this same change in roles and power.<sup>10</sup>

As the war went on, daily life for civilians was increasingly shaped by outside forces. As early as the Battle of Pea Ridge in March 1862, and from that point on, conditions grew more dire for civilians as law and order were gradually replaced by military rule and covert violence in

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<sup>10</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

northwest Arkansas. As the area was controlled by both small groups of quick striking irregular fighters and larger occupying forces affiliated with a formal army, civilians faced a complex situation. Recent Civil War scholarship characterizes this experience for civilians as occupation, though “occupation” is a rather generous description of the level of control either Confederate or Union troops managed to maintain in the area. LeeAnn Whites’s and Alecia Long’s definition of an occupied space as one where “the home front and the battlefield merged, creating a new kind of battlefield and an unanticipated second front, where some civilians—many of whom were women—continued resisting what they perceived as illegitimate domination” has significant utility in understanding northwest Arkansas.<sup>11</sup> As described in chapter 2, Federal troops occupied northwest Arkansas for much of the war. However, not everyone viewed their presence as illegitimate; northwest Arkansas unionists welcomed occupying troops. Further, Federal troops and unionist civilians were continually harassed by Confederate-affiliated bands with varying levels of connection with formal military structures. This too could be considered a form of occupation. In terms of occupation, the Arkansas Ozarks were especially complex. An individual’s experience was affected by their own affiliation and that of the various groups of armed men who happened upon them.

Most civilians in northwest Arkansas experienced both occupation *and* motion. In contrast to Whites’s and Long’s descriptions of civilians suffering as outside military rule was imposed upon them, Yael Sternhell’s *Routes of War* brings attention to the issue of war putting people in motion. While Sternhell’s Virginia-focused study rarely makes direct connections between violence and civilian motion, and neglects the impact of guerrilla warfare entirely, she connects the movement of soldiers with the movement of civilians and slaves as a simple cause

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<sup>11</sup> LeeAnn Whites and Alecia Long, *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 3.

and effect. Federal troops brought freedom wherever they went, and even though their arrival in northwest Arkansas was well before the United States government had figured out exactly what to do with self-emancipating African Americans, northwest Arkansas slaves nonetheless gravitated to their lines. Sternhell also examines the effects of movement and the grinding reality of life on the road. She makes fascinating observations of how movement affected ideas of freedom and self for everyone. “White men [in military service] were now forced to ask for permission to move,” she states, “as white women were making their first independent decisions about travel.”<sup>12</sup> For white men, their status as soldiers curtailed their freedom; letters liken the strictures of military life to slavery. For white women, life on the road bestowed greater freedom but also another level of instability for women that first began when their men went off to fight. Not all women embraced their changed role with enthusiasm. Movement, in Sternhell’s view, was ultimately one of the most common experiences of southerners during the war; black or white, civilian or soldier. In Arkansas, the level of desertion discussed in the previous chapter may illustrate the reaction of white men to the restrictions of service, but while the war did put northwest Arkansas civilians in motion, they were a different population than the more established population in Virginia that Sternhell studied. Half of northwest Arkansas civilians had arrived in the area over the previous decade. They may not have welcomed displacement, but they were not unfamiliar with life on the road.

Both military occupation and displacement caused by it were influenced by material conditions on the ground in the Ozarks. Michael A. Hughes’ article “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military-Farm Colonies,” argues that many of the means for producing food, clothing and basic farm implements were destroyed in first year of the war.

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<sup>12</sup> Sternhell, *Routes of War*, 148.

Additionally, citing a number of primary sources, Hughes characterizes the war in Northwest Arkansas as “total war” and states, “Having been one of the first areas in this hemisphere to experience modern economic warfare, northwest Arkansas’s agricultural and subsistence economy were already badly damaged by 1863.”<sup>13</sup> Hughes describes a Union army increasingly involved in the lives of civilians, and not just through destruction. As early as 1863, civilians who remained in the area were reliant upon the Federal army for subsistence, a dependent condition many would remain in through 1865. John F. Bradbury Jr.’s article “‘Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy’ Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks” emphasizes this situation. Bradbury states “the interior of the Ozark Highland emptied gradually as a result of four years of military instability and utter exhaustion of the region’s modest resource base.” A key point in Bradbury’s article is that northwest Arkansas was not a stagnant home front. The region was constantly in flux, and usually in decline. As the shortage of food neared crisis levels “in areas repeatedly visited by armies, in 1861 and 1862 the only surplus food was that which the soldiers brought.” With livestock run off, stolen or requisitioned, crops destroyed, or in the later years of the war, never planted, the situation only got worse. “In recognition of the increasing numbers of Missouri and Arkansas soldiers whose own families needed relief the Department of Missouri issued general orders in June and October of 1863 which standardized the amounts of subsistence to loyal refugees and families of soldiers,” Bradbury explains.<sup>14</sup> These orders included detailed instructions for determining the loyalty of refugees along with admonishments to deny subsistence should “refugees make no efforts to sustain themselves or fail to avail

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<sup>13</sup> Michael A. Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military-Farm Colonies,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 46 (Summer 1987): 167-186.

<sup>3</sup> John F. Bradbury, “Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy, Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 57 (Autumn 1998): 233-264.

themselves of favorable opportunities to procure work.”<sup>15</sup> Bradbury highlights an important aspect of Northwest Arkansas occupation—Federal troops were not simply an army of occupation, they played a direct role in the survival of many civilians, whether or not they had relatives in federal service.

As both Hughes and Bradbury make clear, the combined presence of regular and irregular troops quickly strained the region’s meager supplies of food and shelter. Despite the population surge of the 1850s, the region was still lightly settled and unable to sustain the presence of anywhere from ten to twenty thousand additional people to feed at any given time during the conflict. Further, many of the means for producing food, clothing, and shelter were destroyed in the first year of the war. By 1863, after enduring two formal battles in the area and numerous shifts in regional control, the means for most residents of northwest Arkansas to subsist was nearing complete destruction. First neglected by, then isolated from, the Confederacy, the only surplus food into the region came through Federal supply lines. By the winter of 1862-1863, the civilians of northwest Arkansas were facing violence and starvation on a scale most other southerners, even in other border areas, would not see for another year. By late 1864, troops and guerrilla bands had relentlessly ground down residents and resources until nothing was left, no people, no crops, no livestock. Only those too poor to leave, especially dogged, or under the explicit protection of the Union army remained.

A final piece to understanding the Civil War in northwest Arkansas, however, is the idea that affiliation was subject to constant reassessment. Just as soldiers faced an evolving understanding of the conflict, so too did civilians. Northwest Arkansas tests our ideas about how the Civil War was fought, and its impact on civilians. Guerrilla warfare, occupation,

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<sup>15</sup> *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. 22, 600-601.

displacement, changing gender and racial roles, and the material impact of the conflict all intersect for the civilians on the ground. As Union troops advanced into the state and pleas to Confederate authorities in both Little Rock and Richmond seemed to fall on deaf ears, commitment to the Confederate cause faced scrutiny. With the official apparatus of state government gone, no sign of Confederate authority or aid, and Union troops feeding women and children, unionism seemed a logical response. On the other hand, violence at the hand of Union troops and collective punishment for entire communities after individual acts of sabotage alienated some civilians. Affiliation often became a pragmatic means to an end, which was to survive the war, but choosing affiliation was not without danger.

Civilian men found themselves in a strange position in northwest Arkansas.

Noncombatant men were generally either enslaved or formerly enslaved African-American men, white men outside the ages of conscription (which by the end of the war included men from 18 to 45) and finally, and more rarely, men who had been injured and were no longer able to fight. These men lived in the middle of a war zone that encroached on the sovereignty of their homes. Unlike women, expectations of military service and guerrilla bands forced white men to restrict their movements almost exclusively to the home (or hillside hideouts). Further, the war stripped white men of the status of slaveholder, both the reality of it and the potential for it. Men too old to join the army often found themselves dealing with military conflict anyway. Richard Dye and John Rutherford both in their early fifties, had been residents of the Washington County for at least twenty years in 1860.<sup>16</sup> Both had successful farms with large families, including sons in their late teens and early twenties, who were either in their household or farming nearby. After Lincoln's election, the men undoubtedly participated in the local political process that led to

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<sup>16</sup> Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, Population Schedule, Washington County, AR; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Population Schedule, Washington County, AR.



Arkansas's secession, though there is every indication that these two men were opposed to it, even hosting meetings in their homes to encourage the young men of the area to fight for the Union in the summer of 1862. Their sons, and over one hundred other young men from the area answered Hindman's 1862 call to enlist in the Confederate army or face conscription by riding to a federal post in Missouri and mustering in with the First Arkansas Cavalry. Dye and Rutherford were firmly established in the role of family patriarch, sending their sons off to war while holding the home front themselves. As the home front became the battlefield, however, Rutherford and Dye went from patriarchs to pawns in the resulting guerrilla war. Both men lost sons early in the war. John Dye became ill during his service and died at home in January of 1863. Less than a month later, Noel Rutherford was killed in a skirmish with guerrillas near Ozark. That same month, John Rutherford's wife Malinda died as well.<sup>17</sup> If nineteenth-century ideas of masculinity meant protecting and preserving the household, neither man was doing so. Further, Dye and Rutherford were harassed throughout the war by Confederate troops and sympathizers and became more and more dependent upon outside power, often in the form of the Union army, to secure their farms, families, and persons.

Rutherford was arrested by rebels in the summer of 1862 with several of his neighbors and taken to Fayetteville. He was released, only to be arrested again in the fall of 1863 by "Captain Tuck Smith's Bushwacking Company." On this second arrest, he stated he had been

taken along three days and nights with the company over into Madison County and there Tuck turned me loose and gave me a pass home after swearing me not to carry any news to the Federal Command at Fayetteville. . . . I think the only reason I wasn't killed was that my Boys were on the fight and the Rebels knowd that if I was killed some of their old men would have to answer for it, for the last

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<sup>17</sup> John Dye, Private, Co. K, D; Noel G. Rutherford, Corporal, Co. D, First Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015); Malinda Rutherford headstone, John Riggs, NRCS Archeologist, Field Notes from the investigation of the Bryant/Martin Cemetery (3WA1468). Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville, 2010.

time I was a prisoner my boys sent the Rebels word that if I was killed certain old rebels in the country would go under the sod certain, and then they turned me loose as soon as they got word.<sup>18</sup>

Richard Dye was probably a part of the group arrested with Rutherford, at least once. He stated:

I was taken from home and carried all about the country as they were scouting the country. They had 3 of my neighbors and one Union soldier (the latter they kept chained) prisoner with me. My son and a number of my neighbors who were in the Union Army at Fayetteville sent Smith word that if he hurt a hair of our heads they would kill every rebel in the county, the woman who brought the word got to camp about midnight and next morning we were turned loose.

Josephine Crump related stories after the war of similar actions against “old men” in Carroll County, but from actors focused more on robbery and murder. Whatever the intent of those harassing them, old men faced an often humiliating change in circumstances. They were harassed by men their junior and reliant upon communications carried by women. They found themselves in situations where they were unable to protect themselves, much less their homes or families. Elders of their community in 1860, a few short years later they had been reduced to the role of dependents in need of rescue, treated as pawns between guerrilla bands. This was not a proud role for a nineteenth-century husband and father.

Dye was a slaveholding unionist, and his experience provides an interesting contrast with that of his sister’s slave Wesley Dodson.<sup>19</sup> McCurry and Whites show that the relationship between master and slave supported nineteenth century ideas of masculinity. Men could define their masculinity through slave ownership as well as dominance over white women and children. Enslaved men answered to whites and rarely had power to independently protect their families,

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<sup>18</sup> John Rutherford deposition, John Rutherford (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim no. 20497, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>19</sup>Dye does not explain why he supported the war as a slaveholder. He held Dodson in enough regard to testify on his behalf in Dodson’s claim in the 1870s. Richard Dye deposition, Richard Dye (Washington County, AR) claim no. 20214; Richard Dye deposition, Wesley Dodson (Washington County, AR) claim no. 19121, *ibid*.

earn their own money, or even determine their own movement. The Civil War changed that. African American men found themselves with more control over their own lives and families than they had ever enjoyed before. Wesley Dodson was used to taking advantage of circumstances to carve out as much autonomy as he could, and used the war years to gain more. His master had been dead several years before the war and his mistress allowed him to accrue his own property. He had a family with at least three children and his mistress had freed him at the start of the war, but he chose to stay because he had always run her business. While he remained in his home until the last winter of the war, he regularly faced the threat of kidnapping and conscription. But Dodson deliberately built relationships with federal officials in Fayetteville. He smuggled information, protected and fed unionists hiding in the woods, and by the end of the war, was moving supplies alongside federal trains between Rolla and Fayetteville.<sup>20</sup> When northwest Arkansas households were turned upside down, Dodson was one who came out on top. He made himself invaluable to Federal forces, and was able to move through the countryside much more easily than his white counterparts. While Richard Dye, was stuck in a passive role awaiting rescue by his sons, Dodson was actively securing resources and protecting himself and his family. After the war, Dodson's savvy paid off. Former Union soldiers and Richard Dye himself testified on his behalf in his successful claim for government reimbursement.

White Confederate men fared no better than their unionist counterparts in northwest Arkansas during the war, neither in their increasing dependence nor in their relationship with the formerly enslaved. Confederate sympathizer Robert W. Mecklin of Washington County chronicled his experience in letters to his sister in 1863 and 1864. He was sixty-eight years old in 1863 and he and his slave Wesley Mecklin, appeared to be the only two men who remained in

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<sup>20</sup> Wesley Dodson deposition, Wesley Dodson (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim no. 19121, *ibid*, quotation 15-16.

his area of Washington County near Mount Comfort.<sup>21</sup> Robert Mecklin found himself heavily reliant upon the women in his neighborhood, which he would admit, and equally reliant upon Wesley Mecklin, which he would not admit. Women, in Mecklin's view, were compelled to execute too many decisions with limited and often-contradictory information. His wife and daughter nursed both neighbors and soldiers, bartered for scarce goods, hid resources from passing troops, and even protected themselves and their homes. In more than one instance, Mecklin seemed simultaneously proud and horrified at the roles his daughter and the other women were forced to take, noting some would be remembered "for their lady-like manners, which has saved their houses . . . and still others for their dexterity in the use of the broomstick, poker and wash basin on Federal noggins." Upon hearing men in the yard one day, his daughter Louisa "ran to her room, stuck her hatchet in her belt and was back by the time they had reached the north window." before recognizing the visitors as friendly.<sup>22</sup> In another incident, he related how robbers went through the area and took items from a number of homes, including his own. But at the McCormack place, where four men had stopped for the night on the way back to Cincinnati in the western part of the county, the robbers were confronted by the woman of the house as she protected her visitors.

"Miss Margaret . . . placed herself between [the men] and the muzzle of robbers' pistols . . . sprang to the middle of the pallet, claimed the soldier's blankets as her property and dared them to touch them, brandishing her fist in the faces of those who approached and set the hair of one of them on fire with her candle. They left, carrying off what they had already gotten. . . . Hurrah for Miss Mag."<sup>23</sup>

Mecklin disliked what women had to do for survival, but was nonetheless proud of them. "I always did love women better than men," he said, "and for that portion around us my

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<sup>21</sup> Mecklin letters, forward, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 7 (first quotation), 12 (second quotation).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

appreciation has quadrupled since the war began. Perhaps to their wise counsel and kind care I am indebted for the safety of my own noggin from Federal sabers and balls.”<sup>24</sup> Mecklin’s letters make it clear the women of the community, not the men, were holding things together; feeding, protecting, and caring for the neighborhood as sole providers. The women might have respected Mecklin’s presence and found comfort in his advice and authority, but the responsibility for their safety and security fell on the shoulders of the women, not him.

While Mecklin praised the new roles women were taking in protecting hearth and home, he was much less excited about the new role of enslaved men. Robert Mecklin, as noted earlier, was elderly during the war by nineteenth century standards. Wesley Mecklin was in his late twenties and married to woman named Harriet who lived on the neighboring Nolen farm.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Mecklin sent letters during the war, and in 1872, Wesley Mecklin filed with the Southern Claims Commission for reimbursement for a horse.<sup>26</sup> This exceedingly rare combination of documents provides a perspective of the war years from two very different vantages—slaveholder and slave—in the same household. Robert Mecklin’s commentary on his slaves, such

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 10. Robert Mecklin never refers to Wesley Mecklin’s wife by name, but Harriet Mecklin testified in Wesley Mecklin’s claim with the Southern Claims commission and lists herself as his wife. She testified as to items taken from Mecklin farm in 1863. Deposition of Harriet Mecklin, Wesley Mecklin (Washington County, AR) claim no. 9234. Barred and Disallowed Case Files, Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 233; National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, reproduced at Fold3.com (accessed July 5-11, 2012) [hereinafter Barred and Disallowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com].

<sup>26</sup> Wesley Mecklin captured lame or injured mules and horses and sold them back to soldiers at Fayetteville after nursing them back to health. At least one was simply taken from him without compensation. His claim was not paid because he could not prove ownership of the animals, some of which had Union brands. There is also a significantly different tone to testimony for Mecklin that is not present in testimony for Wesley Dodson. Mecklin is described as lazy and of questionable morality by a few of his white witnesses. Witnesses for Dodson make a point of describing him as better or different from other black men. This may have been a factor in the denial of the claim. Wesley Mecklin (Washington County, AR) claim no. 9234, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

as, “They all seem to be enjoying themselves finely” and had “done well when we consider the influences which have been operated on them to get them away from us,” in an attempt to emphasize his continued control of them despite the upheaval of war.<sup>27</sup> However, these statements contrast with what Robert’s own stories tell us about what Wesley was actually doing—Wesley Mecklin appeared to be the only able-bodied man in his neighborhood. Not only did he divide his time between the Mecklin farm and the Nolen farm where his wife lived, he chopped firewood, caught wild game for sale in Fayetteville, and even aided in the transport of a the body of a young Rebel son from Fayetteville to Benton County for burial.<sup>28</sup> While Robert Mecklin often spoke of hiding from passing troops or playing the feeble old man, Wesley Mecklin was more visible, and took advantage of Robert Mecklin’s inability to supervise him constantly. He stated in an 1872 deposition, “I gave information to Union soldiers whenever I had a chance. I took news often to soldiers at Fayetteville and that was one thing that made Rebels threaten to kill me and I stood in arms and helped defend Fayetteville when the place was attacked by the Rebels.”<sup>29</sup> While it is likely Robert Mecklin inflated his masculinity and power in his statements to his sister as much as Wesley Mecklin did to the federal authorities from whom he wished a paid claim, the conditions they describe are nonetheless telling. Wesley Mecklin was moving freely, making his own money, and even using firearms. Robert Mecklin was hiding in the house, watching the women in his home take control, and pretending to be more infirm than he actually was. Wesley Mecklin’s power and autonomy grew through the war as Robert Mecklin’s diminished.

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<sup>27</sup>Mecklin letters, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 10, 18, 35; Deposition of Wesley Mecklin, Wesley Mecklin (Washington County, AR) claim no. 9234, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Wesley Mecklin desposition, *ibid.*

By the last year of the war, displacement was a nearly universal experience for northwest Arkansans, and some men left their families in northwest Arkansas when they fled. Those who left the area headed north or south depending upon their affiliation. Mark Bean took his slaves south to his holdings on the Arkansas River, and eventually on to Texas.<sup>30</sup> Many unionists, such as Dearmond, headed to Kansas or to Missouri. Thomas Johnson of Madison County spent five months in 1863 in Springfield, Missouri, “for protection” while his family “remained in Madison County, Ark. all of the time during the war.”<sup>31</sup> William Farley was a slaveholder on a farm on the western end of the southern border of Benton County in 1860, south of Siloam Springs and took his sons and slaves and headed south to Texas.<sup>32</sup> For more than a year, he left his wife to fend for herself in Arkansas, before “the Feds gave the women on our place orders to leave their home. Said they owned it now . . .” As Dye, Rutherford, and Mecklin showed, men were indeed in danger in northwest Arkansas. This was not simple desertion on the part of men, however. Women were left behind in the Ozarks for a variety of reasons. There was no guarantee of increased security on the road for women, and some men may have decided women would be safer in the family home if they themselves were absent. Staying put spared women the hardships

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<sup>30</sup> Deposition of Caesar Bean, Caesar Bean (Crawford Co., Arkansas) claim, no. 17418, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013). The story of the removal of Mark Bean and his family and slaves to the Arkansas River Valley is also related in the slave narrative of Joe Bean. His narrative recalls that the war caused them to move around and that the “first move” was to Dardanelle on the Arkansas River, which is the same general area identified by Caesar Bean. Joe Bean never said what the subsequent moves were. “Joe Bean, Washington County,” in *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery, Narratives From the 1930s WPA Collections*, ed. George E. Lankford (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 382.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas M. Johnson deposition, Thomas M. Johnson (Madison County, AR) claim no. 18140. Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> No Farleys are listed as slaveholders in Benton County in 1860, so it is unknown how many slaves William Farley took to Texas. However, Mary Myhand indicated in her narrative that there might not have been a large number of slaves in the household. She and her siblings appear to have lived with their owners in the same dwelling. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Benton County, AR.

of nineteenth-century travel through a war zone. Some families may have hoped that passing troops of either army would be less inclined to harass lone women. For the Farleys, this does not appear to have been effective, as the house was burned and Federal troops confiscated their land anyway.<sup>33</sup>

As seen with Dodson and Wesley Mecklin, enslaved civilians experienced displacement, interaction with Federal troops, and freedom differently than whites. Among the forty-one slaves Mark Bean owned in 1860 was the Ceasar Bean family.<sup>34</sup> Ceasar and Mary Bean were parents to a number of children and were among the group Mark Bean evacuated to Johnson County after the Battle of Pea Ridge. When the Bean group moved on to Texas, Caesar Bean stayed in Arkansas, and was given a mule in consideration of his “former good services,” although he admitted, “the mule was not able to travel at the time,” thus casting doubt on the generosity of the gift. In his first stated interaction with Federal troops, Caesar Bean left his family in Johnson County in the winter of 1863, for Clarksville in an attempt to enlist in the Union Army. The inspecting surgeon rejected the nearly sixty-year-old Bean, and he went to work in a government sawmill instead.<sup>35</sup> Caesar Bean secured a place to farm for his family, a mule to help with the process, and set out to find work. Like some of his white counterparts, he was forced by circumstances to leave his wife and children on their own. He left in search of work as a way to secure resources for his family, but he was also, for the first time, able to claim his own labor and protect his family in almost the same way as whites. His displacement and separation from his

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<sup>33</sup> Myhand, Mary, Benton County, in *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery, Narratives From the 1930s WPA Collections*, ed. George E. Lankford (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 45.

<sup>34</sup> Bean owned forty-one slaves, making him one of a few northwest Arkansas slaveholders with planter status. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Washington County, AR.

<sup>35</sup> Deposition of Caesar Bean, Ceasar Bean (Crawford Co., Arkansas) claim no. 17418, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).



family, while similar on the surface, was very different in what it symbolized: freedom and autonomy.

The stories of the African-American families led by Dodson, Mecklin, and Bean run the risk of casting a rosy glow on the plight of African-American civilians in northwest Arkansas. Their stories are known because they survived the war, and surviving the war with intact families was likely more the exception than the rule. The population of African Americans in northwest Arkansas dropped by half between 1860 and 1870. Most simply disappeared from the historical record. Many were removed against their will to far away places. Mark Bean died in late 1862, for example, and while some of his former slaves returned to northwest Arkansas, extant records make it unclear what happened to the enslaved men and women who were taken to Texas. Age, the presence of a black family, and the security of connections to white owners were also factors in the movement of individuals after the war. Mary Farley, enslaved by William Farley, and Adeline Blakely, owned by the Blakely family were both young teens during the war with no adult slaves in their household. They relied exclusively on their white owners for survival, and unlike immediately independent black families, served their former mistresses well into adulthood. If northwest Arkansas freed people left their masters during the war, they may have faced death and disease in refugee camps, as described in Jim Downs' *Sick from Freedom*, or been preyed upon in their travels through the increasingly lawless and dangerous roads of Arkansas.<sup>36</sup>

Northwest Arkansas women endured a great deal of chaos and change during the Civil War. They made decisions about affiliation with the Union or Confederacy, or endured the consequences of those decisions if the men of the family made them. They found ways to feed

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<sup>36</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

and protect their families on their own, negotiated with armies, and armed themselves against guerrillas. Not only did they deal with the absence of men, they endured the violence inherent to northwest Arkansas and the displacement that violence often caused. “I lived in Benton Co. (25 miles south of west from Bentonville) on the Cherokee line,” Monarky Dearmond, Union sympathizer, said, “from April 1st, 1861 to the spring of 1862 when I moved to 8 or 10 miles from Bentonville where we staid and made one crop and then went to Kansas and staid nearly a year and then moved to Johnson Co. Mo, and staid until the war was over . . . I moved to Kansas with a Federal train.”<sup>37</sup> As refugees, women traveled great distances with children and the elderly and reestablished households in camps and new states on their own.

While nineteenth-century norms generally placed men as the exclusive head of the household, developments as large as rebellion and secession could not but affect marriages. “My husband was loyal at the start,” Elizabeth Martin of Washington County stated in her 1878 testimony with the Southern Claims Commission, “but then listened to [Confederate General] Hindman's big tales and turned Rebel and went South.” This was no short-lived estrangement; Elizabeth and James Martin remained separated for almost two decades.<sup>38</sup> Martin fits perfectly with what McCurry found of rural white women; she stepped into politics in a manner not common for antebellum women and undermined the Confederacy in her own small way. The

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<sup>37</sup> Deposition of Monarky Dearmond, Mondarky Dearmond (Benton County, AR) claim no. 9611, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Martin is listed a married and the head of the household in both the 1870 and 1880 censuses. Both Elizabeth and James died in the early 1880s and are buried side by side in the Bryant/Martin Cemetery outside of West Fork, Arkansas. An archeological survey of the cemetery documented a child's grave between their headstones. Elizabeth Martin (Washington County, AR) claim, no. 10861, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013); U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, (Population Schedule), Washington County, AR; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, (Population Schedule), Washington County, AR; John Riggs, NRCS Archeologist. Field Notes from the investigation of the Bryant/Martin Cemetery (3WA1468). Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville, 2010.

Martin sons followed the lead of their mother and served in the Union Army. Women like the Hermann sisters, Nani and Lina, are also examples of women who confronted masculine power. “I have been ordered to cook for the soldiers” Lina stated, “I have tied a bandage over one eye and tell them I am not well and will cook only for the sick and wounded. I am tired of cooking for secessionists.”<sup>39</sup> Lina displayed her own form of resistance to occupation by feigning sickness and shares a number of incidents in her diary that suggest she was not cowed by the presence of hostile troops.

Displacement, violence and loss, and interaction with military entities were all common, yet each experience was uniquely shaped by the circumstances of each individual. For example, displacement was one of the most common, if not universal, experience for many women and slaves no matter their pre-war status or wartime affiliation. Yet race and political affiliation strongly affected where, when, and how they were displaced. With only a few exceptions, northwest Arkansas women left their home or had it destroyed during the war years; some women moved to the safety of neighbors or Union lines within the same area, and some travelled to different counties or states. Even fiercely independent Elizabeth Martin had to move after her house was burned down. Before agreeing to leave western Washington County, the Hermann women debated for nearly a month how long their hidden supplies would last, their chances for survival on the road, and the advisability of staying. Two widowed Benton County women, Monarky Dearmond and Louisa Hawkins, benefited from Union support; both went to Kansas under the protection of a federal train in November of 1862.<sup>40</sup> Louiza and Laura Murphy of

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<sup>39</sup> W.J. Lemke. “The Romantic Story of Old Hermannsburg, Now Dutch Mills,” *Flashback* 9, (July 1959): 3.

<sup>40</sup> Deposition of Monarky Dearmond, Monarky Dearmond (Benton County, AR) claim no. 9611 and Deposition of Louisa Hawkins, Louisa Hawkins (Benton County, AR) claim no. 9798 both in Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

Madison County, daughters of Isaac Murphy were escorted out of the area for their own safety, but, as with many northwest Arkansas refugees, they took ill on the journey and did not survive long after arriving at their destination. The Hermann group, numbering nearly twenty, was granted permission to travel with a Union commissary train to Rolla, Missouri.

While displacement was a nearly universal experience for northwest Arkansas women, in most cases it was precipitated by violence; either the presence of fighting nearby, or actual violence against, and loss of, loved ones. Margaret Champlin Harris and Elizabeth High of Carroll County, Jane Lewis of Washington County, and Eliza Buttram of Benton County, testified to the murder of their husbands in front of them, either on their property or in their home. Champlin Harris' husband was killed by rebels in front of her in January 1864, leaving her widowed with four children under the age of 12.<sup>41</sup> High's husband was killed by "Rebel Bushwhackers" in 1863, in the family home, in front of her and her sons, ages eight and ten. She remained on the farm, located near the Missouri line even after her husband's death, until January of 1865, when she sought refuge with Federal troops at Cassville, Missouri, some forty miles away. "My reason for moving to Missouri," she stated, "was that the rebels had robbed me of about everything I had to live upon and I was compelled to leave to procure subsistence and I also went for the protection of the federal forces as I feared personal violence from the rebel bushwhackers."<sup>42</sup> On the night of October 5, 1864, Jane Lewis' husband, released from Union service due to an injury, was dragged from their home in Washington County and killed by rebel bushwhackers in front of her and their nine children. They then threatened to burn the house down with the children inside, but left with a warning to leave. Lewis packed up her family and

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<sup>41</sup> Deposition of Margaret M. Harris, Margaret M. Harris (Carroll County, AR) claim no. 18085, *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Deposition of Elizabeth High, Elizabeth High (Carroll County, AR) claim no. 21769, *ibid.*

moved closer to Union lines near Mt. Comfort.<sup>43</sup> Eliza Buttram's husband William was "murdered at home in July 1862 by the Rebel Bushwhackers because he was Union man, and they told me they killed him for that reason, and him a laying a corpse in the yard where they shot him down." Buttram quickly left Benton County for Missouri with her two small children and father-in-law.<sup>44</sup> The contested, occupied ground of northwest Arkansas was not just a place of resistance to an illegitimate military, as defined by Whites and Long, but a place where the home front and the battlefield merged. What that meant for many northwest Arkansas women, no matter their status before the war, was violence, death and loss. These men did not die on a faraway battlefield; these women abruptly lost the head of their household in their very presence. They had to adjust immediately and decide if, when, and where to move their families. Many had the support of extended family networks, but even that could not make up for the sudden loss of their husbands on the actual home front.

While violence led many women to leave northwest Arkansas, there was also a portion of the population that experienced displacement through their connection with the Union army. These were usually Union-affiliated women who had husbands, fathers or brothers in Union service in the Ozarks and subsequently moved inside Federal lines. At least a thousand men who were residents of northwest Arkansas in 1860 joined Arkansas' Union troops. These units stayed in Arkansas, and as noted by Bradbury, often brought their families in Union lines, for both food and protection. Robert Mecklin commented on this trend and expressed his displeasure, noting in August of 1863, "Some of the families that left in the spring with the Federals have returned . . . they are represented as a filthy, miserable, lousy pack of women and children and seem to have

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<sup>43</sup> Deposition of Jane Lewis, Jane Lewis (Washington County, AR) claim no. 9626, *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Deposition of Eliza Buttram, Eliza Buttram (Benton County, AR) claim no. 5780, *ibid.*

been in a state of starvation.”<sup>45</sup> Polly Clark and Nancy Carlisle, both of Madison County were two women who traveled with Union troops as wives of soldiers. Both Clark and Carlisle were in their late teens and early twenties at the time of the war, newly or recently married, and did not have established homes and families to maintain or protect. Polly Clark was married to Reuben Clark, and during the fighting often took care of him and his fellow soldiers at a home in Fayetteville.<sup>46</sup> Nancy Carlisle married Elisha McGinnis at Cassville, Missouri (a wartime refuge for Arkansas unionists) and resided with him in Fayetteville until his discharge. Clark and Carlisle probably knew each other; they were from the same part of Madison County, their husbands were childhood friends, and both served in the First Arkansas Cavalry. Both of them traveled to Linn County, Kansas in the summer of 1864 when McGinnis and Clark were given disability discharges from the military.<sup>47</sup> Both women were displaced by the conflict; during the course of the war, they both mentioned living in at least three different places. As wives of soldiers, Polly Clark and Nancy Carlisle McGinnis experienced occupation and war in a very distinct way. Their lives for most of the war were decided directly by Union commanders. They moved according to where their husbands or fathers chose to enlist, and later, in response to orders their husbands received.

Women with sons in military service also had a distinct experience in the war, whether they were unionist or Confederate. These women were in their late thirties or forties during the

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<sup>45</sup> Mecklin letters, 10.

<sup>46</sup> Soldier’s Certificate No. 361530, Reuben Clark, Private, Company L, 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas Infantry. Pension Files.

<sup>47</sup> Clark, *ibid.* McGinnis’ Confederate service record is brief and lists a one-year commitment that began on November 22, 1861. His desertion from Confederate service and subsequent enlistment in the Union army is related in his pension file. Elihu McGinnis, Pvt., Co. G, 17<sup>th</sup> (Griffith’s) Arkansas Infantry, Confederate Service Record, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015); Elisha McGinnis, Private, Company L, 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015); Elisha McGinnis, deposition, Soldier’s Certificate No. 366430, Pension Files.

war and had homes and families to consider. The service of their sons was known in the community, although with the divided affiliations of the Ozarks, that could be a double-edged sword. Amanda Braly was a widow residing with her children in Newburg, near Boonsboro (now known as Cane Hill), in Washington County. Her son William Carrick Braly, known as Carrick to the family, served in the Confederate Thirty-fourth Arkansas Infantry. Lucinda Sawyers had three sons serving in the Union Army; Henry Addison “Add,” Jephtha Jefferson “J.J.” and Alonzo. Her eldest son John did not serve, but was married in 1861 to Mary Jane Martin, the daughter of the previously discussed unionist, Elizabeth Martin. The Sawyers family lived on a farm in Billingsley, Arkansas, about ten miles east of Amanda Braly.

Braly’s correspondence with Carrick, her eldest son, throughout the war shows that even women among the upper class in the Ozarks, with well established farms and a number of slaves, experienced hardship during the war. Braly’s perspective is also interesting because she lived roughly 10 miles east of the Hermann families, but her experience was vastly different. Carrick Braly saw action outside of northwest Arkansas, but he was able to keep his mother’s letters safe during his service and the Braly collection includes extensive correspondence between the pair. A number of issues are important to note about Amanda Braly’s perspective on conditions in northwest Arkansas. First, she was widowed in 1856, not during the conflict as seen with other women. While certainly missing the contribution of her eldest son, it was not an entirely new circumstance for her to be facing independence during the war. In her letters, Braly often limited discussions of her own experience and focused on how she missed her son and requested visits, along, of course, with motherly admonishments to write more often. Technically Carrick Braly was the head of the household, but his mother may have related news and information of conditions at home to him differently than she might have done to a husband.

Braly's early letters conveyed wartime events but spoke more about the reality of running a home and farm. In an October 1862 letter, she mentioned both her efforts to secure proper clothing and supplies for Carrick and speaking to a neighbor about gathering corn and sowing wheat.<sup>48</sup> By November of 1862, Braly related the first movements of Federal troops in the area and expressed concerns about the food supply and theft. "If the army does not come up soon," she worried, "I fear we will have nothing left."<sup>49</sup> Yet in early 1863, by which time the Hermanns had evacuated the area, she reported that the situation had quieted with the passage of the Federal troops and the family was well supplied. Throughout 1863, however, as the fighting season wore on, conditions in Braly's area became more unstable. In nearly every letter she mentioned the destruction of homes, barns, or churches, as well as the deaths of neighbors and friends. This too resonates with the experiences of other women discussed. She noted the fact that a number of the Federal troops appeared to be Arkansans. In August of 1863, she noted the return of Federal troops and stated "I fear we will see hard times."<sup>50</sup> She was correct.

From the fall of 1863 onward, Braly chronicled the harassment and violence of both Federal troops and Indians. The family made it through the winter of 1863-1864 but dealt with searches and scavenging of supplies by Federal troops. In the summer of 1864, she tempered her usual requests for a visit from Carrick with the admission that she would not be able to rest if her son were present in the area. "It is awful to think how this war is carried on here," she stated.<sup>51</sup> In November of 1864, she related the worst news to date. "Our dear old houses are burnt to ashes," she stated, before revealing that the family spent two days and a night in the open air and relating

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<sup>48</sup> Amanda Braly to William Carrick Braly, October 1862, Amanda Malvina Fitzallen McClellan Braly Family Papers, 1841-1920, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

<sup>49</sup> Braly to Braly, November 15, 1862, Braly Family papers.

<sup>50</sup> Braly to Braly, August 16, 1863, Braly Family papers.

<sup>51</sup> Braly to Braly, August 20, 1864, Braly Family papers.



the details of the destruction.<sup>52</sup> Even a woman of Braly's means faced displacement and hardship. She interacted with troops, both friendly and unfriendly, and made the best for her family. She expressed both frustration and resignation about her situation, but above all, managed the survival of her family despite the conditions. While Braly had the means to maintain herself and her family on her own, other women relied on the financial support of their sons. Carrick Braly survived the war and returned in Washington County to help his mother rebuild. Lucinda Sawyers, however, would face a loss that ultimately threatened the livelihood of the family.

While Lucinda Sawyers was of more modest means than Amanda Braly, she and her husband James owned their farm and did well. But James was more than fifteen years her senior, so the family relied on their sons; as Union soldiers, the Sawyers sons often sent a portion of their pay home to their parents.<sup>53</sup> In May of 1864, Add was shot in the left wrist by Confederates near Little Rock, nearly blowing off his hand.<sup>54</sup> Braly's relationship with the Confederate military seemed distant: it was where her son was and not much more. The Sawyers' relationship to the Union army was much closer, as illustrated by letters from their son J. J. "I am going to try to come home when we draw money," he said, "you said you was coming down here, we wrote for you to come, you needant come till we draw money." The letter highlights a number of different things. First, even though Add was injured on May 14<sup>th</sup>, it is clear that Mrs. Sawyers already knew of the incident by June 10<sup>th</sup>, indicating communication was not severely hampered by the war, at least not for those on the Union side. Further, that Sawyers told his mother to stay

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<sup>52</sup> Braly to Braly, November 21, 1864, Braly Family papers.

<sup>53</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), Washington County, AR.

<sup>54</sup> Henry Addison Sawyers, Pvt., Co. L, First Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

in Washington County, at least until they got paid, indicates travel was possible for civilians, as well as the mail.<sup>55</sup>

Though the outcomes were different, both Braly and Sawyers illustrate another type of experience of northwest Arkansas women during the war. Their concerns were not simply focused on their situation at home, as with many of the other women, but also on the experience, safety, and support of sons directly participating in the war effort outside of their community. J. J. Sawyers was captured by Confederate guerrillas and found shot in the back of the head on August 11, 1864. The war left Lucinda Sawyers with one son crippled and another dead. She eventually applied for and received a mother's pension from the federal government as compensation for the lost support of J.J. Carrick Braly survived the war and eventually returned home. Amanda Braly and Lucinda Sawyers were older than Nancy Carlisle and Polly Clark, and lived on well-established farms. They were not destabilized by the abrupt loss of the head of household like High, Harris, Lewis, and Buttram, nor were they forced to define freedom for the first time in the middle of war like Dodson, Mecklin, or Bean. Yet, they were still shaped by circumstances outside of their control and faced new and challenging situations because of the war.

The civilian experience for most of this chapter has been focused on events prior to 1864. The records are clearer and more abundant for those years, but they illustrate the conditions under which most civilians lived as the region faced two formal battles, Union occupation, and Confederate countermoves. But a pattern emerges within these events as well: the more heinous ones occurred later in the war, such as J. J. Sawyers' execution after capture, Amanda Braly's

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<sup>55</sup> It is never made clear why in Lucinda's application for a mother's pension after the war, but James Sawyers, does not seem able to provide for the family. Lucinda Sawyers, Soldier's Certificate No. 245021, Pension Files.

admonition to Carrick to stay away, the murders of unionist men in front of their families. They point to the final piece of the civilian experience in northwest Arkansas. By the last year of the war, lines between civilians and the military were gone, not when civilians became guerrillas, but because unionists and the Federal army finally settled on a system to fight the guerrilla battle in the countryside.

Something broke in northwest Arkansas society in 1864. “Some sort of ethical dam, if leaking before 1864,” Daniel Sutherland argues of the guerrilla war in general, “seemed to burst after the Lawrence raid.” William Quantrill’s raid on Lawrence, Kansas in late 1863 destroyed most of the town and between 160 and 190 men and boys were massacred. The event was reported with an illustration in *Harper’s Weekly*, and its horrors were widely known. Evidence of the ethical decline noted by Sutherland could certainly be found in northwest Arkansas.<sup>56</sup> The instability created by years of contested military occupation in northwest Arkansas left the entire region vulnerable to opportunistic raiding, revenge-driven brutality, and plain robbery and murder by bands of bushwhackers with connections superficial at best to one side or the other. The endless death and destruction was numbing. “Theft, plunder, arson, murder and every other crime of the black catalogue have lost their former startling significance of horror by their daily occurrence among us,” Robert Mecklin observed in early 1864. “If we hear that one of our neighbors has been murdered, his house burned and family left to freeze and starve to death for the want of clothes and food, it is soon forgotten by us.”<sup>57</sup>

By 1864, conditions in northwest Arkansas had deteriorated to the point that most residents, if at all able, had fled the region. The Union Army itself took an active role in helping unionists leave. Some were granted passes to travel with commissary wagon trains to Missouri,

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<sup>56</sup> Sutherland, *Savage Conflict*, 201.

<sup>57</sup> Mecklin letters, 26.

as with the Hermanns and Murphys. Others, like a large group of families from Madison County organized their own wagon trains and were granted Federal passes. A Benton County man stated, “My wife's son (Frank Owen) came down from Ft. Scott Kansas with a [wagon] train and got the family and took them on to Ft. Smith (where the train was going to) and sent me word where they had gone, and I got in with a train going to Ft. Smith and met my family there and from there we all went to Kansas together, reaching Fort Scott on Christmas Day 1863.” Only the most dogged or destitute remained by late 1864.

After three years caught between guerrilla fighters and desperate civilians, the federal command in Arkansas was desperate for solutions to both problems. For those who could not or would not leave, and as a solution to the lawlessness and danger of the region, Colonel Marcus La Rue Harrison began organized military farm colonies (or post colonies) for civilians in northwest Arkansas in the fall of 1864. An innovative answer to brutal conditions, the post colonies were organized with two goals in mind. First, they put civilians back to work in the countryside, growing food crops and protecting one another, off of the government dole. Most garrison towns of southern Missouri and western Arkansas, including Fayetteville and Fort Smith, were filled with destitute civilians of both unionist and Confederate affiliation by late 1864; Harrison needed them out from underfoot. Second, the home guard units attached to each the colony would create an information and security network of loyal unionists across the broad region Harrison’s thin-stretched troops attempted to control. These colonies gathered people deemed loyal to the Federal cause together on abandoned lands for farming and protection. So desperate were civilians for food and safety, the colonies sheltered not only unionist families, but

the dependents of men in formal Confederate service as well.<sup>58</sup> The only extant outline of the post colony system is in a December 1864 letter protesting a troop withdrawal that would have virtually surrendered northwest Arkansas to the guerrillas. Colonel Harrison of the First Arkansas Cavalry at Fayetteville begged for the “thousands of old men, women and children left here yet” and spoke proudly of the post colony system he was in the process of establishing for their protection.<sup>59</sup>

Harrison’s post colony plan had four requirements before the colony would be recognized as official. First, fifty men had to band together and request to form a home guard and ask permission to settle on a “large tract[s] of abandoned land . . . all in one body,” approved by Harrison. Security concerns aside, the colonies needed to be produce food, so, out of both practicality and spite, the land chosen for the colonies was often the most fertile in the region, and usually owned by former slaveholders and Confederates.<sup>60</sup> Phillip Gregory of Washington County served as Captain of a Post Militia for the last seven months of the war on the “Pittman place, 11 miles South West of Fayetteville.”<sup>61</sup> Samuel Pittman was a slaveholder in 1860, and served the entire war in Company K of the Confederate Thirty-fourth Arkansas Infantry, including at the Battle of Prairie Grove.<sup>62</sup> Property titles were in flux during the war, especially

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<sup>58</sup> Hughes, 183; “Destitute” roll of Union Valley Colony, undated, signed by Captain J. R. Rutherford, Joseph Robinson Rutherford Collection (Special Collections, Mullins Library, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville).

<sup>59</sup> Col. M. La Rue Harrison to Col. A.W. Bishop, Adjutant General of Arkansas, December 23, 1864. Letters of Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, Main Series, 1861-1870. National Archives and Records Administration, microfilm publication M666, reproduced online at Fold3.com (accessed November 11, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Deposition of Phillip Gregory, Phillip Gregory (Washington County, AR) claim no. 3630, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Washington County, AR; Samuel Pittman, Thirty-fourth Arkansas Infantry, Confederate Service Record, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

in regard to those deemed disloyal, and northwest Arkansas was hardly the only place where Union officers took what they needed; that Harrison could punish a Confederate foe was no doubt an added bonus. The second requirement was that militia members were required to move their families to the selected acreage. There, they were to build “a block house or small fort at the best point on the land.” Finally, all were required to swear a loyalty oath. Not every family needed to provide an able-bodied man to join the colony; they welcomed anyone who signed a loyalty oath. Success in providing food would go a long way toward retaining the loyalty of civilians. Harrison’s letter estimated the six most well established colonies would yield sixty thousand bushels of corn in the coming season. General security was the other pressing concern that the posts were to address. Harrison himself personally recruited for the colonies, likely targeting men he viewed as loyal. Benjamin Haynie of Washington County stated, “It was my intention in 1864 to leave and go to Illinois. I went to Col. Harrison who was in command at Fayetteville for a pass, but he told me that he thought the war would soon be over and advised to hold on and join the Colony. Which I did.”<sup>63</sup> Harrison was attempting to return civilians to self-sufficiency. The food the colonies provided would make civilians less reliant upon federal rations. The collective protection agreements meant civilians would be in charge of their own security.

Significantly, the Union Army in aiding civilians recognized a distinction between Confederates and guerrillas. Families with Confederate ties were allowed to join, provided they swore a loyalty oath, but anyone affiliated with guerrillas was rejected. Not that Harrison thought this would be a problem, as he proclaimed to his superiors “Bushwhackers families have 1/3 of them been scared to Texas and the others are fast leaving: no bushwhackers can exist here next

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<sup>63</sup> Deposition of Benjamin Haynie, Benjamin Haynie (Washington County, AR), claim no. 15485, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

season if the government gives these poor people a little protection.”<sup>64</sup> An undated roster from one of the colonies lists thirty-four households “now destitute of both money and provisions and need assistance to prevent starvation.”<sup>65</sup> Many were headed by lone women, and the document tallied the members of the households by age and gender, their meager provisions, and, importantly, the affiliation or location of sons and husbands. Alongside “Sons in Federal service” and “Husband gone North” were the options “Sons in Rebel Service,” “Husband in Rebel Service,” and “Husband gone South.” Five households identified sons in Confederate service; three had husbands who had fled south. That Union authorities allowed this indicates that the focus of the battle in northwest Arkansas by late 1864 had indeed shifted to guerrillas. Families of men in formal Confederate service, or who otherwise did not pose a threat in the region, were eligible for the protection of Federal troops, but any family with even a hint of guerrilla association was forced to leave.

The existence of the colonies also challenged the regional power of guerrilla bands and the network of supporters on which they relied. Potentially, the colonies were strategically located throughout northwest Arkansas, although it is difficult to determine which became operational and which were merely planned before the end of the war eliminated the need for them. Harrison identified fourteen posts across three different counties. Six were already occupied in late 1864; Rhea’s Mill and Elm Springs in Washington County; Bentonville and Pea Ridge in Benton County; and Eagle’s Mill and Huntsville in Madison County.<sup>66</sup> However, a newspaper in Little Rock reported eleven posts in operation in “The Northwest” in May of 1865,

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<sup>64</sup> Harrison to Bishop, December 23, 1864.

<sup>65</sup> Union Valley destitute list, undated. Joseph Robinson Rutherford Papers (MSR993), Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

<sup>66</sup> Harrison to Bishop, December 23, 1864.

some of which were not on Harrison's list from late 1864.<sup>67</sup> The locations of the first colonies betray a critical purpose Harrison failed to articulate in his letter. While certainly providing security to the civilian members of the posts, these first colonies were also established in areas critical supply and communication routes linking the region to federal supply lines. Pea Ridge was on the route from Cassville to Fayetteville. Martin Crowder of Benton County was a member of an area militia in the fall of 1864 and "guarded Federal Commissary Trains several times from this place [Bentonville] to Fayetteville."<sup>68</sup> Bentonville and Huntsville were seats of county government. The mill sites of Rhea's Mill, Eagle's Mill, and Elm Springs were particularly useful to guerrillas for food and as meeting places. The colonies in the process of being organized—Mudtown, Mt. Comfort, Oxford Bend, Richland, McGuins, Middle Fork, West Fork, and Hogeye, were located in areas that had a strong unionist presence already in place. West Fork, for example, was home territory for the Richard Dye and John Rutherford. Harrison was not just creating safe havens for civilians, he was designing a network of safe havens for the federal troops charged with securing northwest Arkansas. Sutherland notes that "in other times and places, such settlements would be called "kibbutzim" and "strategic hamlets."<sup>69</sup> Long before American troops found themselves in foreign jungles, the First Arkansas was "draining the sea" in the Ozarks.

Harrison's post colonies were significant, but they were short-lived. Colonel Bishop, despite his own respect for northwest Arkansas unionists, distrusted Harrison, suspecting him of being as interested in building a base for a future political career as he was in helping defenseless

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<sup>67</sup> *Arkansas Journal* (Little Rock), May 31, 1865.

<sup>68</sup> Deposition of Martin C. Crowder, Martin C. Crowder (Benton County, AR) claim no.18478, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>69</sup> Sutherland, *Savage Conflict*, 209.



civilians. (He was.)<sup>70</sup> Further, the requirement that anyone within ten miles of a colony join it or be deemed a traitor was viewed as excessive coercion on Harrison's part, and complaints were made to his superiors. Ultimately, the war ended before most colonies were firmly established, and by the summer of 1865, returning Confederates were challenging post residents as squatters in the courts and eventually reclaimed their lands.<sup>71</sup> Finally, it should be noted that, problems with the system aside, the colonies allowed civilians the opportunity to take control of their lives and livelihoods and participate in wresting control of northwest Arkansas from the violent elements that had gained supremacy. They sheltered some of the most dogged unionists and treated the desperate with equal humanity no matter their affiliation.

When the war ended in 1865, the booming pre-war economy and society of northwest Arkansas was gone. Towns, farms, and mills were destroyed and the people scattered. Fayetteville was a half-burnt garrison, Bentonville was mostly leveled, Carrollton nearly emptied, and Huntsville a charred shell. The mill system that had been so promising in 1860 was destroyed. In the countryside, waterways were polluted with dead animals. What few livestock remained were preciously guarded, and the few crops that made it to market did so under armed guard. Numerous accounts describe the area as depopulated, and of the people discussed here, most had left the area. The Farleys and white Bean family were in Texas with their remaining slaves. Tuck Smith, the guerrilla fighter, and the black Bean family were in the Arkansas River Valley. The McGinnises, Clarks, and a number of other Madison County families were in Kansas. The Vaughns, Youngbloods and many Carroll County families were living with friends

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<sup>70</sup> Bishop published *Loyalty on the Frontier or Sketches of Union Men of the South-West with Incidents and Adventures in Rebellion on the Border* in 1864, which included many admiring profiles of northwest Arkansas men.

<sup>71</sup> Hughes, "Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military-Farm Colonies," 183-186.

and relatives in Missouri. The Buttrams, HARRISES, and other women featured who had lost husbands to bushwackers, and the less fortunate from across northwest Arkansas were in Missouri as well, often in federal refugee camps. The Murphy daughters were in St. Louis along with the Hermans, half of whom had returned to Germany; both family lost members to illness. Even families who had chosen to stay in the area were rarely living where they had begun, with most of them in the military farm colonies.

The civilian experience in northwest Arkansas, however, laid the foundation for postwar life in the area. By the end of the war, the civilian population was focused on survival, and Union or Confederate affiliation mattered much less than it had at the beginning of the war as civilians faced the undisciplined violence that had taken over the region. Even Robert Mecklin, who early in his correspondence was careful to identify the affiliation of every villain in the area, by the 1864 increasingly labels all as “robbers.”<sup>72</sup> The post colonies protected any civilian ready to swear loyalty to the Union, no matter their previous affiliation, but this common cause during desperate times would be challenged as the war ended and Confederates returned, even though unionists kept the upper hand in both northwest Arkansas, and the state government.

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<sup>72</sup> Mecklin letters, 1864.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Peace Returns: Battles on Other Fronts**

By the summer of 1865, most of those who had lived in northwest Arkansas in 1860 were scattered. Civilians sought refuge from Illinois to Kansas and south to Texas and Louisiana. Military service had taken some as far away as the Eastern Theater, or kept them in the southern part of the state as a part of the last of Arkansas's Confederate military. The few who remained in northwest Arkansas, like John Rutherford and Richard Dye, who had taken control of their lives and community through service in a militia, were holed up in post colonies or with their families at the federal garrison at Fayetteville. This chapter compares the condition of the population, agriculture, and industry of northwest Arkansas after the war to that discussed in Chapter One. With the war over, northwest Arkansans faced a devastated landscape and hostile neighbors. The challenges of returning and rebuilding were exacerbated by the fact the military victory for unionists turned quickly into a political loss at the state and eventually local level. Northwest Arkansas unionists were left to carve out political wins where they could and learn to work within a system that was eventually taken over by the very people they thought they had defeated. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, as residents rebuilt their lives, the battle for northwest Arkansas turned from a military fight to a political one, as both sides fought to shape the legacy of the war.

There was little practical difference between the end of the war and beginning of Reconstruction in northwest Arkansas. Both news and acceptance of the official end of the Civil War filtered slowly into western Arkansas in the summer of 1865. Union troops and the home guards for the farm colonies remained at their posts, but as word came of the surrenders of

Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston in April, Edward Kirby Smith in Arkansas on June 2, and Stand Watie three weeks later, northwest Arkansas's Confederates began to cease hostilities.<sup>1</sup> By this time, Thomas J. Hunt, who had organized a cavalry company of the First Arkansas (U.S.A.) in 1862, was provost marshal at Fayetteville.<sup>2</sup> From this position, he oversaw the oath-taking of his formerly Confederate neighbors. While administering the oath had been a tool of Federal occupation in northwest Arkansas throughout the war, these new oath-takers merited separate pages and accounting in the books of the provost marshal. Fayetteville offered a choice of two different oaths people could swear in the summer of 1865, either to Lincoln's December 8, 1863 oath, or to Andrew Johnson's May 29, 1865 oath, with the oath taken noted at the top of the page. The oaths were not substantially different. Both required allegiance to the Constitution and recognition of the emancipation of slaves. Lincoln's oath was more specific about possible changes to the status of freedmen should the Supreme court rule on emancipation, but by 1865 and Johnson's oath, those caveats were moot.<sup>3</sup>

There is no record of anyone swearing the so called "ironclad oath" favored by the Radical Republicans. That oath required an individual to swear he had never supported the Confederacy. The swearing of the Lincoln's and Johnson's oaths, however, focused only on future loyalty but did not prevent the provost marshal from noting beside each man's name his Confederate service, location during the war, or any aid given to the Confederacy if applicable. From June to August of 1865, Hunt recorded the oaths of 123 men and 14 women from all four counties of northwest Arkansas, as well as citizens of southern Missouri and further-flung

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<sup>1</sup> DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 140-145.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas J. Hunt, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward "The Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction," *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 13 (Boston, 1866): 737-39.

Arkansas counties. Most of these individuals were prominent citizens of the area who had been either ardent secessionists, or had served actively in the Confederate Army, or provided overt material support to the Confederate cause, Thomas Jefferson Kelley, who had organized a company of the Thirty-Fourth Arkansas Infantry (C.S.A.) near Fayetteville in 1861, and his son William Kelley, swore their oaths on July 27.<sup>4</sup>

The relatively low number of individuals swearing oaths in the summer of 1865 relates to the poor material conditions that persisted in the area. Food was scarce and the region was still plagued by theft and violence. Even if the situation did calm marginally by August and the Arkansas Union units were mustered out of service on the 20<sup>th</sup> of that month, it was much too late in the growing season to plant any crops, and supplies to rebuild or repair shelter for the coming winter were in short supply. Many of northwest Arkansas's mustered out Confederates did not return to the region that summer at all, and instead joined those refugeeing in Texas.<sup>5</sup> Enumerated in August, the 1865 Kansas state census records scores of Arkansans farming in the eastern counties, including Pyeatts and Combses from Washington County, the Clarks and Drakes from Madison County, and the Derreberrys and Hawkinses from Benton County.<sup>6</sup> Having established farms in Kansas, they would likely have been in no rush to return to

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<sup>4</sup> Register of Persons Taking Oaths of Allegiance and Lists of Passes Issued, 1863-1865, Provost Marshal, Fayetteville, Arkansas. RG 393. A1-4-1591, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

<sup>5</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 2002; 1994), 175-178.

<sup>6</sup> Jesse Pyeatt's whereabouts in particular are pertinent to a Southern Claims Commission file discussed in the next chapter. He was in Anderson Co., KS. Louisa Hawkins, discussed in the previous chapter, was in Douglas Co., KS. Kansas State Historical Society, *1865 Kansas State Census*, Schedule I (Free Inhabitants), Anderson, Douglas, Linn, and Franklin Counties, KS. Reproduced online at Ancestry.com (Accessed October 1, 2015).

northwest Arkansas in 1865. The post colonies remained in operation through the summer of 1865, collecting the harvest Harrison had promised Bishop the winter before.

As historian Carl Moneyhon found across the state of Arkansas, land ownership was a key factor in the decision to return to northwest Arkansas from where ever the war had deposited citizens.<sup>7</sup> For those without land, returning to the devastated Ozarks was not only unappealing, but often financially prohibitive. Wealthy Mark Bean died during the war, but his widow Nancy returned to their land in Washington County and began to rebuild when her son returned from Confederate service.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, young and landless Allen W. Sams does not appear to have returned to Madison County after the war and was working as a cattle driver in Gainesville, Texas in 1870.<sup>9</sup> Kinship networks also aided those who decided to return to the region. Elisha McGinnis, not much older than Sams and equally landless, by 1866 was married to Reuben Clark's sister, and moved to Kansas with other related Madison County refugees. Many of them returned to Arkansas in 1866 and 1867.<sup>10</sup> The Dye and Rutherford families, along with extended relations that included the Sawyers and Martins, returned their prime land along the West Fork of the White River in Washington County.

Former slaves were in the most precarious position after the war. Many had been removed from northwest Arkansas, and without land, they should have had little incentive to

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 179-181.

<sup>8</sup> Much of the property remained in Nancy's name early on, perhaps because the eldest Bean son, Richard H. had been known as a guerrilla.

<sup>9</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, Cooke County, TX. Sams does not reappear in a census of northwest Arkansas after 1860. He is likely the same Allen Sams who was arrested in Gainesville, TX in 1875, sent to the prison at Huntsville, TX, and killed by a deputy sheriff "resisting recapture" in "northern Texas" in 1877. Conduct Registers, vols. 1998/038-177–1998/038-236. Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas, reproductions at Fold3.com (accessed September 30, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Elisha McGinnis, , Solder's Certificate no. 366430, Pension Files.

return. The drive to reunite families would likely have draw them back to points east, as the most people enslaved in northwest Arkansas prior to the war had been there for less than twenty years. The largest slaveholders of northwest Arkansas, who before the war had controlled significant portions of the northwest Arkansas economy, were in as much of a bind for labor as their delta counterparts. Many enslaved people had long-standing relationships with slaveholders, having been brought along with whites into Arkansas in the 1850s. If the elite of northwest Arkansas were to reclaim the large share of the economic wealth they enjoyed in the antebellum period, they needed to secure labor. Freedmen were left to weigh the devil they knew against the uncertainty of making a new life elsewhere. Both Wesley Mecklin and Wesley Dodson remained in Washington County after the war and at least in proximity, remained near their former owners. The white Wilson family of Madison County informed family members back in Tennessee in May of 1866, “Father has the Negroes yet, they are working his land on halves this year.”<sup>11</sup> The Wilsons had secured their black laborers by allowing them to work, not for regular wages, but half of the crop when it was harvested. Black Wilsons are tenants on white Wilson land in 1870.<sup>12</sup>

Despite being one of the largest families of slave owners in the Madison County prior to the Civil War, the Vaughans in general and George Washington Vaughan in particular were said to have been staunch unionists. This may explain why they also appeared to have had a stronger, and perhaps more generous, relationship with their former slaves, as they acted as good

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<sup>11</sup> Donat, “Letters of Early Arkansas Family Tell Interesting Tale,” *Northwest Arkansas Times – Centennial Edition*, June 14, 1960.

<sup>12</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, Madison County, AR.

Republicans after the war.<sup>13</sup> In 1860, the forty-five slaves owned by the Vaughans in Prairie township were divided between Daniel Vaughan (thirteen), his son Isaac Vaughan (eight), and his deceased brother Samuel's two sons George Washington Vaughan (ten), and Andrew Jackson Vaughan (eight), with Samuel's widow Caty, holding the remaining five slaves.<sup>14</sup> Daniel, the head of the family at age 73 in 1860, died during the Civil War, murdered by bushwhackers after supposed treasure, according to a published family history. The same source states that Daniel's substantial holdings were divided among his children.<sup>15</sup> George Washington Vaughan took his uncle's place as the head of the Vaughan clan after the war. He served as county judge from 1868 to 1872 and seems to have maintained an unusual relationship with African-American labor. Added to the Vaughans in Madison County in 1870 is Manuel Vaughan, an African-American man with ownership of forty acres directly adjacent to George Washington Vaughan's land. Manuel Vaughan increasing that holding to more than 200 acres by 1880.<sup>16</sup>

Close relationships with African Americans were not new to the Vaughans. According to the family history *Vaughan Pioneers*, during the Civil War, when George Washington became fed up with the constant threat of bushwhackers "[i]n the spring of the year peace was declared," he moved the family to "Willard, Missouri...to the abode of a negro slave he had freed before

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis Elmo Vaughan, *Vaughan Pioneers: William and Fereby Vaughan of Russell County, Virginia, and their Descendants* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1979), 269-274; *Goodspeed's History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties*. Siloam Springs, Ark. : J. R. Huff, reprint, 1978, 1021.

<sup>14</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), Madison County, AR.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Vaughan, *Vaughan Pioneers*, 271.

<sup>16</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, Madison County, AR; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Population Schedules, Madison County, AR.



the war.” What follows is a listing of 21 family members and slaves that does not include his wife but does include his mistress.<sup>17</sup> “When they left there,” the story continues,

Al, the negro boy, was left with Uncle Dennis Vaughan and his wife Clara, former negro slaves of George Washington Vaughan. George Washington Vaughan had set them free before the war. He had given them 40 acres of land and a cow. After freeing him, he then hired him to oversee the other negroes on his place. Uncle Dennis had left for Missouri in the early part of the war. Al, the negro boy, now that he was free, wanted to stay with Uncle Dennis. He was allowed to do so.<sup>18</sup>

Family histories can overstate the benevolence of whites, and whether or not Dennis Vaughan’s legal status was officially changed before the war is unknown. But Dennis and Clara Clay (the name “Uncle Dennis Vaughan” used in most official documents) indeed owned land in Missouri after the war. They eventually welcomed other former Vaughan slaves to the household and maintained connections with the white Vaughans until their deaths.<sup>19</sup>

Like the Clays, not all African-Americans returned to northwest Arkansas. The African-American population of northwest Arkansas dropped by roughly half between 1860 and 1870.<sup>20</sup> The ability to own land was a factor, as were opportunities in other places with higher populations of African Americans. Though some of the Bean slaves did return to Washington County, some did not. Caesar Bean and other former Bean slaves settled after the war in adjacent Crawford County to the south. The largest operation on Mark Bean’s holding in 1860 was his

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<sup>17</sup> Vaughan, *Vaughan Pioneers*, 273.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 274.

<sup>19</sup> He also may have had an affair with a white Vaughan widow that produced a child and a wildly entertaining federal pension file. Benjamin Vaughan, Soldier’s Certificate No. 58661, Pension Files. Al, the boy allowed to stay with “Uncle Dennis” was living in Clay’s household in Missouri in 1870. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, Greene County, MO.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants), *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapservr.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapservr.lib.virginia.edu); U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, *ibid*.

cotton thread mill, but it had been torched under Gen. Ben McCulloch's orders in 1862. It seems a number of his former slaves obtained work in mills in Crawford and Sebastian counties, many of which were operated by the federal government during and after the war. The men from northwest Arkansas who had served as undercooks for the First Battery Arkansas Light Artillery also settled in the Fort Smith area after the war.<sup>21</sup>

These decisions to part ways were not always taken well by former owners. Joseph Jones, who had been enslaved in Madison County by Morgan Buck before the war, had to seek help in 1868 from the American Missionary Association and the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands to get his children back from Buck after the war. Jones was a stone mason, and, according to Buck, "his favorite Negro." Masonry was a valuable skill. Buck believed that after Jones went to Fayetteville, he had "tried to cause the Federals to injure him." Jones asserted that Buck and neighboring whites had threatened to kill Jones if he returned, as they suspected he had been involved in the murder of a neighbor. Buck assured investigators that the community no longer suspected Jones in the murder, and, gallingly, suggested he deserved compensation for the care of the Jones children. The children were eventually returned to their father, but only sometime after 1870, as they were still with Buck in the census for that year.<sup>22</sup>

The low level of racial violence in northwest Arkansas as compared to the rest of the state during Reconstruction can probably be attributed not only to the low population of freedmen in

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<sup>21</sup> Both Caesar Bean and William Crawford report residing in Crawford County. When found in the census, they are surrounded by black families with the same surname, with men often listing occupations in mills. Deposition of Caesar Bean, Caesar Bean (Crawford Co., Arkansas) claim, no. 17418, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013); William Crawford, Soldier Certificate no. 987193, Pension Files; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, Crawford County, AR.

<sup>22</sup> Joy Russell, "Former Slave's Children Retained in County" *Madison County Musings* 31 (Summer 2012): 59-66; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, Madison County, AR.

the area, but also to the close connections that existed between whites and blacks who chose to return. Not necessarily bonds of affection, these connections were clearly based on mutual benefit. It is unlikely freedmen simply wandered into northwest Arkansas looking for work after the war. The region was in poor condition and largely depopulated. Most freedmen, like their white counterparts, returned with some specific prospect of earning a livelihood. Despite the displacement of the war years, African Americans of northwest Arkansas in 1870s and 1880s more often than not had antebellum connections to local whites. Not only was the low population of blacks by 1870 less of a threat at half of the pre-war population—three percent—but many former slaves were tied specifically to a white family. These whites provided both protection from violence for blacks and the perception of control for the white community, even among those who may have been angered by the growing political rights of African Americans. Finally, the large Republican population of northwest Arkansas, though not a majority, was well-connected with the military and militia in the area and offered some protection to freedmen.<sup>23</sup>

Black or white, everyone who returned to northwest Arkansas in 1866 and 1867 faced challenges. Yeoman farmers returned to land that had lain fallow for at least one growing season, if not longer. Brush and brambles grow quickly in the Ozarks, and while some of the early settlers to the area prior to the war had claimed prairie land that was easier to break, most small farmers returned to land that was difficult to bring back into production. This difficulty was exacerbated by the level of destruction in northwest Arkansas. The majority of buildings had been burned during the war. A cattle driver who traversed northern Arkansas in 1866-7 recalled

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<sup>23</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu); DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 148-160.

decades later that burned out buildings and standing chimneys dominated the landscape.<sup>24</sup>

Wartime theft and requisition had depleted the region not only of livestock, but also farm implements. Securing basic supplies, such as plows and seed, was difficult.<sup>25</sup> The process of rebuilding would be long and markedly slower than the pace of growth enjoyed in the 1850s.

In terms of population, agriculture, and industry, the Civil War devastated northwest Arkansas. Take, for example, manufactured goods. The maps below show the value of manufactured products in each county in Arkansas in 1860 and 1870. While the total amount produced in Arkansas was not impressive in comparison to other more developed states, the numbers in 1860 indicate northwest Arkansas was an emerging center of manufacturing. Washington County led the state, and local mills produced a variety of goods—textiles, food, and finished wood products. In 1870, the region as a whole had rebounded to 1860 numbers and even shown a modest increase, but it had not returned to the antebellum pace of growth. Pulaski County, home of the state capital, took over as the center of production for manufactured goods. An even worse sign of the decline of northwest Arkansas was that the Little Rock area had seen the value of manufactured items increase six fold between 1860 and 1870. Northwest Arkansas had barely rebounded past 1860 numbers by 1870. And the recovery was nonexistent in Madison and Washington Counties. Most of the increase in production value was in Benton and Carroll Counties, and was driven not by the diversified production system of the antebellum years, but almost exclusively by the value of lumber produced.

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<sup>24</sup> Case, Perry “The Long Drive.”, 1960, *American Heritage*, XI (3): 65-80.

<sup>25</sup> Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas*, 175-180.

Value of Manufactures		
County	1860	1870
Benton	\$87,770	\$159,112
Carroll	\$17,600	\$146,229
Madison	\$44,475	\$14,980
Washington	\$390,904	\$275,742
Total	\$540,679	\$596,063

Table 1. Value of manufactured goods in Northwest Arkansas in 1860 and 1870. *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, mapserver.lib.virginia.edu

Part of this change in production value was due to population; residents of the area were slow to return in the years after the war, and when they did, they had little money. The constant influx of new settlers the region had enjoyed in the 1850s stopped. The population of the four counties of northwest Arkansas grew by less than five thousand people between 1860 and 1870. Even five years after the war, cash value of farms was still \$1.5 million lower. The value of farm implements in the region was less than half of the 1860 value. Total livestock value went from \$2.2 million in 1860 to \$1.5 million in 1870.<sup>26</sup>

Many mills were rebuilt, but postwar exigencies meant less variety in the types of mills brought back into production. Nearly all northwest Arkansas mills were burned by one army or the other during the war, with some of the most lucrative and technologically advanced—steam powered—burned by the Confederate Army prior to the Battle of Pea Ridge. Colonel Harrison burned mills in the summer of 1864 as an anti-guerrilla tactic, as mills were often used as meeting places and supply points for irregular fighters.<sup>27</sup> Mill and manufacturing establishments were rebuilt after the war, and the 1870 census of manufactures showing 97 in total, compared to 108 in 1860. But these were not the same mills. Washington County, near the bottom of cotton production in the state in 1860, had been the second largest producer of cotton products in the

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<sup>26</sup> All numbers compiled from the censuses of 1860 and 1870 via *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, mapserver.lib.virginia.edu.

<sup>27</sup> Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military-Farm Colonies,” 173-175.

same year, but by 1870, no cotton thread manufactory existed in Washington County.<sup>28</sup>

Likewise, all four northwest Arkansas counties had at least one wool-carding mill in 1860, with at least seven between the four counties. By 1870, there were only three, and Carroll and Madison County had none.<sup>29</sup> Connections to cotton production that had existed before the war were disrupted, and there were fewer sheep.

What had grown in number were sawmills. These had an obvious role in rebuilding the destroyed homes, barns and businesses of the area in the 1860s, and logging eventually became a lucrative interest in Carroll and Madison Counties as the railroad penetrated the area in the early 1880s. Logs from the Boston Mountains were floated down the White River to waiting mills.<sup>30</sup> There were five sawmills in the four counties in 1860, with some also working as gristmills. In 1870, there were eleven dedicated sawmills and six of those were in Carroll County. Not all of these had been in production for very long. The June 11, 1869, edition of Bentonville's *The Traveler* noted the competition of Claypool's mill only the previous Wednesday. Upon testing "all parts of it worked well, except the whistle, which when turned on could not be stopped, but kept shrieking for near twenty minutes," but ultimately served as a reminder "of the advancing prosperity of our place."<sup>31</sup> In 1876, two saw mills advertised their services in *The Carroll County Advocate*, one boasting of the fine road to the mill from the county seat, the other of its steam power.<sup>32</sup> Gristmills had rebounded as well, with 23 by 1870, as compared to 25 in 1860. The

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 176; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, 1867), 6-9; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, 1867), 15-19.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Brooks Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers & their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 72-73.

<sup>31</sup> *The Traveler* (Bentonville, AR), June 11, 1869, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *The Carroll County Advocate* (Berryville, AR), May 13, 1876, p. 4.

ability to locally mill wheat and corn into flour and meal was critical to farmers' livelihoods. As those facilities came into production, it made returning to northwest Arkansas possible.

Northwest Arkansas farmers were not alone in this experience. The plight of the upcountry's yeoman farmers was addressed in Steven Hahn's *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeomen Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*.<sup>33</sup> Hahn's work is geared toward understanding how the aftermath of the Civil War enmeshed yeoman farmers in the market economy in a more exploitative manner. These farmers were forced to borrow money to rebuild and participate in the cash economy to repay it, creating a cycle of debt that influenced participation in the Populist movement. Though focused on the upcountry of Georgia, what Hahn finds for yeoman farmers there speaks to the situation of many small farmers across the South. Faced with the damage of the war and the financial upheaval it caused, the yeomanry saw rising dependency and indebtedness, and, ultimately, rising tenancy in the years after the war. These men and women were no longer the independent citizens they were in 1860. Many across the upland South, who were subsistence farmers before the war, with little debt and need for cash, had a different experience after the war. They borrowed money to rebuild and needed cash to pay back those loans. This meant that many of them were cultivating cash crops for the first time, and experimenting with new crops for the area in hope of finding one that would provide income.

Cash was needed to purchase the supplies to rebuild, and even five years after the war, the 1870 census of agriculture for northwest Arkansas showed the influence of that need on the livestock raised and the crops grown. Abraham Wilson of Madison County told his family back in Tennessee in 1866, "We have never had anything but stock to bring money here and all that is

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<sup>33</sup> For more on the plight of the South's small farmers, see, Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeomen Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

gone. We can't have anything to sell for some time." And again in 1867: "Times are very hard here. We have no money in circulation, hardly."<sup>34</sup> Livestock numbers in 1870 had still not returned to 1860 levels, with cattle actually below 1850 numbers. Swine and sheep populations rebounded more quickly than cattle, not simply because both tended toward faster natural increase, but also due to their appeal on the cash market. Agricultural pursuits that lent themselves to sale would have been appealing. Sheep produced both wool and meat, and swine numbers grew quickly enough that they can be slaughtered and sold without affecting the next season's population. Swine also required the least attention and protection from farmers, as they could roam. Cattle might have brought a better price, but herds would have been much slower to grow. Working oxen were at one third of the 1860 total, and asses and mules, often used as draft animals as well, had not rebounded either. This affected crop production and the ability of farmers to plow the land for planting.<sup>35</sup>

<b>Change in Livestock Populations</b>				
<b>Benton</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>	<b>1870</b>
Horses & Mules	1,236	1,427	3,830	5,165
Cattle	3,074	3,739	10,032	6,855
Sheep	1,934	2,533	10,410	7,987
Swine	8,221	9,371	22,044	24,202
<b>Carroll</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>	<b>1870</b>
Horses & Mules	1,720	2,059	4,325	2,159
Cattle	4,300	6,574	12,460	3,952
Sheep	2,038	3,910	7,494	4,590

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<sup>34</sup> Donat, "Letters of Early Arkansas Family Tell Interesting Tale," *Northwest Arkansas Times – Centennial Edition*, June 14, 1960.

<sup>35</sup> All numbers compiled from the censuses of agriculture for 1850 through 1870. *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu).



Swine	10,429	17,174	27,409	14,174
<b>Madison</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>	<b>1870</b>
Horses & Mules	1,697	2,353	3,782	2,577
Cattle	3,341	8,241	8,817	6,154
Sheep	2,675	5,851	7,100	6,783
Swine	11,534	21,787	21,834	26,283
<b>Washington</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>	<b>1870</b>
Horses & Mules	4,564	4,531	6,413	5,797
Cattle	11,734	12,822	13,565	10,065
Sheep	7,947	10,916	11,115	7,597
Swine	35,829	33,257	33,556	33,431

Table 2. Change in Livestock Populations for the four counties of northwest Arkansas from 1840 to 1870. Growth in Livestock Populations. Compiled from the Censuses of Agriculture for 1840, 1850, 1860, and 1870. *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu)

<b>Change in Northwest Arkansas Livestock Populations</b>				
	<b>Horses &amp; Mules</b>	<b>Cattle</b>	<b>Sheep</b>	<b>Swine</b>
<b>1840</b>	9,217	22,449	14,594	66,013
<b>1850</b>	10,370	31,376	23,210	81,589
<b>1860</b>	18,350	44,874	36,119	104,842
<b>1870</b>	15,698	27,026	26,957	98,090

Table 3. Change in Livestock Populations for the four counties of northwest Arkansas from 1840 to 1870. Growth in Livestock Populations. Compiled from the Censuses of Agriculture for 1840, 1850, 1860, and 1870. *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu)

Grain production was also below 1860 levels in the 1870 census of agriculture. Rye, corn, and oats each showed a decrease in production. Wheat made modest gains, but likely as a result of farmers shifting land to wheat production from other grains, rather than an increase in overall utilization of land. There were 174,862 acres of improved land in the four counties of

northwest Arkansas in 1860, which only rose to 176,717 acres in 1870. The cash value of farms in northwest Arkansas was a little over \$5 million in 1860. In 1870, they were worth only \$3.5 million.

With the need for cash, Northwest Arkansas farmers experimented with new crops. One of the only crops to see an actual increase in production between 1860 and 1870 was tobacco. Tobacco production in northwest Arkansas rose rapidly after the war, both in total pounds produced, and as a percentage of the state’s production. By 1880, production in northwest Arkansas was so high it warranted a chapter in the tobacco section of the *Compendium of the Tenth Census, (June 1, 1880)*.<sup>36</sup> The report that year also indicates “[t]here are no warehouses for the inspection and sale of tobacco in the district,” which may indicate tobacco was shipped elsewhere for sale. No “tobaccoists” appear on the 1870 census of manufactures either.<sup>37</sup>

	1860	1870	1880
Pounds of Tobacco produced in Benton, Carroll, Madison and Washington Counties	148,468	181,081	464,037
Pounds of Tobacco produced in Arkansas	989,980	594,886	970,220
% of state production	15.00%	30.44%	47.83%

Table 4. Tobacco production in Arkansas. Compiled from Census Office reports from 1860, 1870 and 1880. *Agriculture of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census.; A Compendium of the Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870); Compendium of the Tenth Census, (June 1, 1880)*. Washington, Government Print Office, 1883.

Other crops appear on the 1870 census of agriculture that indicate experimentation in growing them for cash sale. Some are strange for the region and most were on a small scale of

<sup>36</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census. “Culture and Cultivation of Tobacco in Arkansas,” *Compendium of the Tenth Census, (June 1, 1880)*. Washington, Government Print Office, 1883, 25-29.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the expansion of burley tobacco cultivation, see, Billy Yeargin and Christopher Bickers, *A History of Burley Tobacco in East Tennessee and Western North Carolina* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015).

production. Cane sugar was reported in northwest Arkansas for the first time in 1870.<sup>38</sup> There were 107 bales of cotton grown in 1870, an increase from the 23 bales grown in 1860, despite the fact none of the local ginning and cotton thread facilities seem to have survived the war. Colonel Albert Bishop had observed of the area during the war, “Grapes . . . grow wild in great abundance, and if given any attention, are very superior in flavor. The vine-grower could there find his paradise.”<sup>39</sup> The reported 601 gallons of wine produced in northwest Arkansas in 1870 (none were reported in 1860) may have proved him right. In August of 1878, the staff of Bentonville’s *Weekly Advance* boasted of the delivery of “a basket of luscious grapes from the famous nursery of John B. Gill & Co,” and in return noted that Gill had both grapes and vines for sale for those “wishing value received on investment.”<sup>40</sup> Orchard products were also on the rise in northwest Arkansas in the 1870s and 1880s, but would not become a large cash crop until farmers turned away from tobacco.

These efforts to diversify agriculture and identify lucrative new crops were not enough. By 1880, in the four counties of northwest Arkansas, nearly twenty percent of farms were rented or cultivated for shares of the crop.<sup>41</sup> Of that twenty percent, the majority were sharecroppers—working the land for a share of the crop as payment. Though sharecropping as a system is usually linked to the cotton belt and often identified as a system of racial oppression, African Americans made up less than four percent of the population of northwest Arkansas by 1880. There is no correlation between race and the number of sharecroppers in northwest Arkansas. Carroll County

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<sup>38</sup> *A Compendium of the Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870.)* Washington, Government Print Office, 1883.

<sup>39</sup> Bishop, *Loyalty on the Frontier*, 114.

<sup>40</sup> “Local Dots” *The Weekly Advance* (Bentonville, AR), August 3, 1878.

<sup>41</sup> *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, [mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu).

had the highest percentage of dependent farmers, yet had the lowest black population at 0.45%.<sup>42</sup>

In northwest Arkansas, white farmers made up the majority of sharecroppers and tenant farmers, illustrating the changing financial and agricultural landscape of the postwar years.

County	Total Farms	Farmed on Fixed Rent	Farmed on Shares	Percent Rented or Farmed on Shares
<b>Benton</b>	2,725	50	436	18%
<b>Carroll</b>	1,378	20	315	24%
<b>Madison</b>	1,586	16	297	20%
<b>Washington</b>	2,966	63	503	20%
<b>Totals</b>	8,655	149	1551	20%

Table 5. Sharecropping and Tenancy in Northwest Arkansas in 1880. *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia Libraries, mapserver.lib.virginia.edu.

As grim as the postwar situation was for northwest Arkansas in economic and social terms, the area's unionists had reason for cautious optimism on the political front. Early in the war, Lincoln had put perhaps too much faith in the unionist sentiment of the border South, but the administration was encouraged by reports of unionists in Arkansas upon the invasion of the Union Army in 1862, which in turn led to federal support for the reestablishment of civil government as the most expedient means of shifting the state from military occupation to self-governance. It would take almost two years, however, before civil government was established, and even then, it was weak.<sup>43</sup> Both during and after the war, northwest Arkansas men found their way into leadership positions in Little Rock. By late 1864, Madison County's Isaac Murphy along with Huntsville doctor and former colonel of the First Arkansas, James M. Johnson, had

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 2002; 1994), 288.

taken active roles in the civilian government in Little Rock.<sup>44</sup> Washington County's Lafayette Gregg was also in the capital, aiding Gen. Samuel R. Curtis from the military side of government.<sup>45</sup> Outside of the unionists, former Whig and emerging Democrat David Walker of Washington County took a prominent role in the Confederate government and Presidential Reconstruction.

During the war at the state level, or at least, for half the state, as the Union attempted to hold the territory it had taken in 1862 and 1863, two main factions had emerged among Arkansas unionists. The Little Rock-centered Conservatives, with businessmen, newspapermen, and slaveholders in their ranks, advocated for a slower reconstruction and welcomed the military governorship of General Curtis. The other group was more radical and drew membership from the western and northern portions of the state. They pushed for more immediate normalization of relations with the Union, elections, and a completely new state constitution, to be drafted at a convention. Led by William Fishback of Fort Smith, most northwest Arkansas residents were more in line with this group. The men were what historian Moneyhon and contemporary commentators referred to as "unconditional Unionists," those who had never supported secession and had suffered for it until the arrival of the Union Army. In 1864, Isaac Murphy was elected to governor, and Johnson had been elected to Congress.<sup>46</sup>

Between 1864 and 1868, northwest Arkansas unionists saw their fortunes rise only to fall dramatically. Murphy assumed the governorship in April. Moneyhon characterizes the Murphy administration as "unsympathetic with the elite and their interests," and traces the path of a

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<sup>44</sup> John I. Smith, *The Courage of a Southern Unionist: A Biography of Isaac Murphy, Governor of Arkansas 1864-68* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Rose Publishing Co., 1979).

<sup>45</sup> Lafayette Gregg, First Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas*, 158-163.

government that was interested in bringing equality and full representation to Arkansas—including for African Americans.<sup>47</sup> The Murphy administration struggled under military oversight, however. Establishing a civilian government during occupation, combating a nasty guerilla war, and managing economic crisis were challenging. The political situation was even worse. The more conservative unionist elements in the state preferred military leadership and were especially resistant to granting full political rights to freedmen. The unconditional unionists who backed Murphy wanted blood for the devastation of the state they felt was caused by the wealthy minority that had dragged the rest of the state into chaos for their own benefit. Murphy struggled to accomplish anything.<sup>48</sup> For their part, Federal commanders were focused on conquering the rest of the state, as well as the broader goals of subduing the entire South. Murphy's government was expected to handle civilians, preferably in a manner that kept them out of the way of Federal troops. The more radical plans of the Arkansas unionists in Little Rock, especially in terms of embracing freedmen and cutting the former elites of the state out of any future form of government, were unpalatable for many, and ultimately unsuccessful. By 1865, Murphy's unionists were in a battle for control of the state, against both fellow unionists, albeit those who had come to the Union side later in the war, and those who hoped to rejoin the fold after April of that year. Then, President Johnson's Reconstruction policies in 1866 proved disastrous for the Murphy administration.

In 1866, northwest Arkansas Republicans counted Isaac Murphy as governor in Little Rock, James M. Johnson as congressman, and Thomas J. Hunt as provost marshal at Fayetteville. None of this protected them from the resurgence of the Conservatives in the 1866 elections. Under President Johnson's generous amnesty program, many former Confederates

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 164-167; Smith, *Courage of a Southern Unionist*, 64-76.

became voters once again, and in 1865, an attempt to disfranchise this group at that state level was ruled unconstitutional by the state supreme court.<sup>49</sup> “For a short time, kind and harmonious feelings seemed to be restored between the late warring elements.” Murphy stated, but that ended in 1866.<sup>50</sup> The Murphy administration was accused in public discourse with fiscal irresponsibility and characterized as lower class, with a willingness to grant African Americans political rights. So serious was the backlash that Murphy worried for the safety of unionists.<sup>51</sup> After the August elections, Conservatives took control of the state, leaving Murphy, who had not been up for consideration, a politically isolated lame duck. Moneyhon notes that low turn out of unionists was a problem in northwest Arkansas.<sup>52</sup> This was likely due to the continued low population of the region. In government documents after the war, many unionists who left during the war spoke of farming where they ended up for at least a few years after the end of official hostilities. Some of the group from Madison County that evacuated in the summer of 1864 stated they did not return to the county until at least 1867.<sup>53</sup> The political unrest of 1866 likely convinced many to stay way.

The Radical Republicans’ repudiation of President Johnson’s Reconstruction plans in 1867. The Reconstruction Acts removed many Arkansas Conservatives from power, and should have helped northwest Arkansas’s unionists retain some control at the state level, but it ultimately did not. The state was put back under military control and forced to write another constitution. Isaac Murphy did not run for reelection, choosing instead to return to northwest

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<sup>49</sup> The case determined that laws adding requirements to voting beyond what was written in the state constitution—such as a loyalty oath—were illegal. *Rison et al. vs. Farr*, 24 Ark. 161, 1865.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas*, 199.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>53</sup> Elisha McGinnis, Soldier Certificate no. 336430, Pension Files.

Arkansas. Former U. S. Army officer Powell Clayton's subsequent election inspired high levels of violence across the state, which required he declare martial law. Between his election in March and the presidential election in November 1868, the state saw a great deal of political unrest, including the assassinations of Dr. A. M. Johnson of Mississippi County in August and Congressman Hinds in September.<sup>54</sup> Clayton built a new state militia and guard to combat political and racial violence. In August, John Rutherford, former captain of a post colony, received a letter from the Adjutant General at Little Rock requesting names of men to lead a command of state militia to be mustered in Bentonville. The letter was not clear as to where the militia would serve. Clayton gathered loyal men from across Arkansas and even southern Missouri; Colonel William Monks led a militia force into Mississippi County in the aftermath of Johnson's death.<sup>55</sup>

The request that Rutherford raise a militia company in northwest Arkansas was likely made out of an abundance of caution rather than a clear need for a local militia. Compared to the rest of the state, the area was generally quiet. Not only was there a higher population of unionists than in other parts of the state, the slow return of residents kept total population numbers low. Further, due to Harrison's efforts to drive bushwhackers out and arm civilians through the post colony system, unionists were better organized and armed than their now defeated counterparts. Rebuilding efforts may have kept everyone occupied as well. That is not to say that there was no violence in northwest Arkansas. There were still deep concerns about theft that led to occasions

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<sup>54</sup> William B. Darrow, "The Killing of Congressman James Hinds," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 74 (Spring 2015): 18-55.

<sup>55</sup> Assistant Adjutant General to J.R. Rutherford, August 8, 1868, Rutherford Collection, Special Collections, Mullins Library, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; William Monks, John F. Bradbury and Lou Wehmer, *A History of Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas: Being an Account of the Early Settlements, the Civil War, the Ku-Klux, and Times of Peace* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003; 1907).



of vigilante justice, especially related to horse theft and cattle rustling. There were surprisingly few events of retaliation related to wartime actions. One was the 1870 killing of James “Jim” Ingram, a bushwhacker mentioned to dramatic effect in *Loyalty on the Frontier*.<sup>56</sup> Ingram was allegedly shot to death by the son of a man named Stone he had killed during the war; Ingram had called the man to his front door and killed him. The son, a child at the time, had vowed to kill Ingram when he grew up, and he did so. He found Ingram on a Sunday outside of a church in what is now Lowell, Arkansas, and shot him to death in front of a number of witnesses.<sup>57</sup>

Northwest Arkansas’s most prominent Republicans left state government between 1868 and the final victory of Democrats at the state level in 1874, many of them pushed aside by the Powell Clayton’s preference for his carpetbagger allies over local Republicans. Many of these men, however, continued to pursue goals locally that had eluded them at the state level, especially in terms of African-American equality, education, and recognition for and compensation of those who had suffered for the Union cause. Often times, however, their work was hampered by the material conditions of the postwar recovery, and resistance from local Democrats as the political system was rebuilt. Northwest Arkansas became a new kind of battlefield in the years after the Civil War, one where ideas about the influence of the federal government were at issue and a Republican Party that provided a check on Democrats. Further, in the immediate postwar years, two strong symbols of the Republican Party and the federal government were embedded in northwest Arkansas by unionists—the Fayetteville National Cemetery and Arkansas Industrial University.

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<sup>56</sup> Bishop suggested a note Ingram sent could have been written in blood. Bishop, *Loyalty on the Frontier*, 156-157.

<sup>57</sup> *Fayetteville Democrat*, September 17, 1870.

During the upheaval of the years immediately after the war, northwest Arkansas's unionists witnessed perhaps one of the most enduring actions of the Federal government in the postwar period: the placement of a national cemetery at Fayetteville. Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* examines how Americans viewed death during the Civil War and how the massive death toll of the conflict changed how the federal government both managed and memorialized the dead.<sup>58</sup> In the years between Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs's decision to plant dead Union soldiers in Mrs. Lee's rose garden at Arlington Plantation during the war and Quartermaster Edmund B. Whitman's grim assignment to identify the burial places of thousands of Union dead across the South in 1866, popular expectations of the government grew in terms of the locating, returning, burying, or otherwise caring for those lost in the conflict. In February of 1867, Congress passed a law officially creating a system of national cemeteries for the Union war dead.<sup>59</sup> Many of these cemeteries were located near battlefields, which meant most of them were in the South. Authorized in 1867, the cemetery at Fayetteville saw the disinterment and reburial of over 1,000 men—most from the battles of Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove—within a few years.<sup>60</sup> In 1868, a notice from the Quartermaster of the Department of Louisiana ran in Little Rock's *Morning Republican* soliciting bids for a picket fence around the cemetery.<sup>61</sup>

The creation of the cemetery was an example of federal action in northwest Arkansas that prompted a response from those who had claimed Confederate affiliation during the war. Drew

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<sup>58</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-238.

<sup>60</sup> Fayetteville National Cemetery. National Park Service. [www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/national\\_cemeteries/Arkansas/Fayetteville\\_National\\_Cemetery.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/Arkansas/Fayetteville_National_Cemetery.html) (accessed September 30, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> *Morning Republican* (Little Rock), November 11, 1868.

Gilpin Faust noted “It did not pass unnoticed in the impoverished South that during the five years that followed Appomattox, more than \$4 million of public funds would be expended exclusively on dead northerners.”<sup>62</sup> With a well-maintained and well-funded national cemetery in town, it is not a coincidence that the Southern Memorial Association, one of the oldest women’s organizations dedicated to the collection and preservation of Confederate war dead, was founded in Fayetteville in 1872. The women of the S.M.A. did exactly what the national cemetery had done but for the opposing side; they gathered scattered Confederate dead from across the region to a central cemetery located in Fayetteville. Many of the dead had been killed in the battles of Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove. Most who had been buried at the battle sites were out of state and had had no family nearby to claim their bodies. The Southern Memorial Association conducted grave decoration events on an annual basis like many of their counterparts across the South.<sup>63</sup> The Grand Army of the Republic (discussed in the next chapter) assumed care of the Fayetteville National Cemetery. The Fayetteville Confederate Cemetery and the Fayetteville National Cemetery decorate graves on different Memorial Days into the present.

At the same time northwest Arkansas unionists were securing the war dead, they were working to leave a mark on the living through education. Just as with the national cemetery, however, their work would provoke a response from former Confederates. In July of 1862, President Lincoln signed into law the Morrill Land Grant Act. The act set aside a land for each state to be sold to raise funds for the creation of a college within five years. When previously introduced, the act had been strongly opposed by the likes of Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, later president of the Confederacy, and vetoed by President Buchanan. Their

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<sup>62</sup> Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 238.

<sup>63</sup> Derek Allen Clements, “Southern Memorial Association of Washington County,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed October 8, 2015).

opposition was grounded in the idea the act was a violation of state sovereignty. That the act was reintroduced and passed without Southern representation was no accident, but the Republican governments of the states under Reconstruction embraced the legislation.<sup>64</sup> Some of the most proudly Southern institutions of higher learning in the former Confederate states—and most those blatantly nostalgic for the era—are products of this Civil War-era piece of Republican legislation. The University of Arkansas, established in 1871 as Arkansas Industrial University, is Arkansas's land-grant institution. The institution's lack of a Confederate general statue like some of her southern land-grant counterparts is perhaps reflective of the stronger Republican presence in northwest Arkansas even after the end of Reconstruction.<sup>65</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One, education had been a tradition in northwest Arkansas. The schools, colleges, and institutes of northwest Arkansas, however, were destroyed during the war. Most institutions shuttered early on as students and even teachers and professors enlisted in the fight. The individuals running and supporting educational ventures in northwest Arkansas prior to the war reflected the general political landscape and many were Democrats. Few begrudged the necessity of closing. The war was the end of almost every institution in the area, however. Even if the institutions had had the financial resilience to endure the war years without income from students—which is doubtful—they certainly did not have the funds to rebuild. The physical structures of the institutions, none particularly impressive or sturdy, were occupied, damaged,

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<sup>64</sup> Robert A. Leflar, *The First 100 Years: Centennial History of the University of Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Foundation, 1972).

<sup>65</sup> The explanation of the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue at Texas A&M University, Texas's land grant institution founded through Republican legislation with the explicit support of black Texans, curiously fails to mention Ross's Confederate service. <http://campustours.tamu.edu/audio/transcript/0462> (accessed October 8, 2015). For more on African Americans involved in the founding of a land grant institution, see "Matthew Gaines" in *Black Leaders: Texans for Their Times*, Alwyn Barr and Robert A. Calvert, eds., (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1981).

and, many, like Arkansas College, were burned to the ground.<sup>66</sup> Yet education returned to northwest Arkansas before the war was even over. It was reported in the May 10, 1865, issue of Little Rock's *The Arkansas Journal* that Col. Harrison has communicated to Gov. Isaac Murphy, "I have organized a free school at Fayetteville, which already numbers two hundred scholars—at Bentonville there are two schools—at Pea Ridge one, and none of the colonies will have less than one. The Sanitation Commission in St. Louis are furnishing books free of expense."<sup>67</sup> Education in northwest Arkansas had become a political issue.

While many of the goals of northwest Arkansas's Republicans failed after the war, with the placement of the Arkansas Industrial University in Fayetteville, they won a major victory. Unfortunately, the unionist and Republican history of the University of Arkansas, as it is now known, is rarely discussed. Aside from the oft-repeated myth that the north tower of Old Main on campus is taller to symbolize the Northern victory, few make the connection between the founding of the institution and northwest Arkansas's unionists.<sup>68</sup> The first history of the University, Reynolds's and Thomas's *History of the University of Arkansas*, repeats many of the usual Dunning School tropes about the Republican government of Arkansas; their "tyranny and oppression," debt, and fear of African Americans. They also note that local newspapers made little mention of the proposed location of the institution and fretted over the idea of African-American students enrolling.<sup>69</sup> This is unsurprising, as the only extant local newspapers from the early 1870s are of the Democratic persuasion. One would assume the local Republican papers

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<sup>66</sup> Charlie Alison, "Arkansas College," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed September 14, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> "The Re-populating of the State," *The Arkansas Journal* (Little Rock), May 10, 1865, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Building of Old Main*, University of Arkansas. [www.uark.edu/about/history.php](http://www.uark.edu/about/history.php), (accessed September 5, 2015).

<sup>69</sup> John Hugh Reynolds and David Yancey Thomas, *History of the University of Arkansas*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1910).

had a different tone. Despite all of this supposed opposition, Fayetteville won the day. Reynolds and Thomas credit not the hard work and commitment to education of local Republicans, but vague “historic causes,” i.e., the fact that academies, seminaries, and Cane Hill College operated in the area before the war. In the view of Reynolds and Thomas, it was not Republican sentiment in the area that led to the creation of the institution at Fayetteville, it was merely a tradition for education to be done there; an idea that persists into the present.<sup>70</sup> Robert Leflar’s *The First 100 Years: Centennial History of the University of Arkansas* does slightly better in contextualizing the founding of the institution, with the exception of the optimistic statement “The Democratic-Republican schism was not of major importance . . . the erstwhile enemies had already learned to live together again.”<sup>71</sup> He seems to base this assertion on the fact that Democrat and former Confederate David Walker worked closely with Lafayette Gregg, former Union officer and current State Supreme Court Justice to secure Fayetteville as the home of the institution. With typical twentieth-century Fayetteville-centrism, Leflar writes off the opposition from the western part of the county as a sort of misplaced localism; they were not upset about Republican influence and power in education, they were merely concerned that an institution in Fayetteville would “hasten the death of Cane Hill College, a struggling little school.”<sup>72</sup> What Reynolds, Thomas, and Leflar miss is that, just like the placement of the national cemetery in Fayetteville, the blatantly Republican institution of AIU in northwest Arkansas in 1871 prompted a response. There was local resistance, and that resistance broke along partisan lines.

Most Cane Hill College alumni were former Confederates. Opposition to AIU was about politics *and* protection of an institution they had every reason to believe could flourish. The

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 64-67.

<sup>71</sup> Leflar, *The First 100 Years*, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

resistance of former Confederates to AIU's location in Fayetteville was the "Republican-Democrat schism," Leflar negated. Leflar also cast aspersions Cane Hill College's financial struggles which seems disingenuous coming from anyone who chronicled the late nineteenth-century budget troubles of the AIU. At the time, the later demise of the Cane Hill College was not at all obvious. In 1871, Cane Hill was still home to some of the wealthiest families in Washington County, and the College counted many sons of those families among its graduates. Cane Hill native William Carrick Braly, late of the Confederate Thirty-Fourth Arkansas Infantry for example, was a graduate of the institution. He had returned to northwest Arkansas after the war, rebuilt his mother's house, and took up the life of a country gentleman. He also likely took up public opposition to the placement of the University at Fayetteville as he was named a Trustee for Cane Hill College in 1873.<sup>73</sup> A Democrat, he was elected to the state legislature later in the 1870s and went on record as a critic of the high level of public debt leftover from "carpetbag rule."<sup>74</sup> Further, he took an active role in the challenges to paying the bonds to support the University in 1879 and 1880. He and other Democratic supporters were rightly concerned about the placement of a competing institution, but politics and the late unpleasantness of the war were clear factors. The University was not simply a competing institution. It was created by the Republican legislature with a pro-Fayetteville campaign led by none other than a high-ranking local Union Army veteran. The first president of the institution was none other than Col. A. W. Bishop, who had occupied northwest Arkansas during the war with Union army, and published his chronicle of northwest Arkansas's unionists, *Loyalty on the Frontier* just a few years earlier. Just like the national cemetery, the University was an example of the federal government

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<sup>73</sup> *Fayetteville Democrat*, December 28, 1920.

<sup>74</sup> *Fayetteville Democrat*, August 12, 1876.

operating in northwest Arkansas. But it was not just resistance to federal influence that riled locals. Race was also more of a factor than either Reynolds and Thomas or Leflar account.

The inclination to divorce the early history of the Arkansas Industrial University from the politics of its beginning includes the issue of African-American education. It is likely some of the two hundred students Harrison boasted of attending the free school at Fayetteville were black. Colonel Lafayette Gregg, incredibly influential in the founding of AIU at Fayetteville, had donated the land on which the first African-American school in Fayetteville was built in the late 1860s.<sup>75</sup> African-American students were likely taught at AIU in the early years, and tellingly, one of the original trustees was a free-born African-American Ohioan by the name of Joseph Corbin. Highly educated, he held a Master of Arts degree in mathematics and spoke several foreign languages. After working in banking, teaching, and publishing in Ohio and Kentucky, Corbin arrived in Arkansas in 1872. As a reporter for the *Daily Republican* in Little Rock, he became involved with state politics and was nominated by one faction of Republicans for the position of state Superintendent of Instruction in late 1872.<sup>76</sup>

Education in Arkansas, both the local public schools and higher education, was over seen by the state Superintendent of Public Instruction during Reconstruction. Pennsylvanian doctor Thomas Smith was the first elected to this position in 1868. Under his supervision, the public school system was established and Arkansas Industrial University founded. He lost his bid for reelection to Corbin in 1872.<sup>77</sup> Though both candidates were Republicans, factionalization within the state Republican party pitted them against one another. Corbin's prior history in Ohio served

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<sup>75</sup> "Lincoln School Here Best in State for Colored Kiddies," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, September 2, 1941.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Clara Kennan, "Dr. Thomas Smith, Forgotten Man of Arkansas Education," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1961): 303-317.



him well with the *Daily Republican* reprinting articles from the *Cincinnati Gazette* in his support.<sup>78</sup> Corbin won the position, but due to allegations of fraud with the ballots, was not certified as the winner until January 1873. The Superintendent of Public Instruction was also the ex-officio president of the Board of Trustees for the Arkansas Industrial University. As such, Corbin would come to be the single most powerful influence on African-American higher education for the next 20 years.

Reynolds and Thomas discuss none of this, and Leflar only mentions Corbin. It is clear, however, that the Arkansas Industrial University threatened, in the view of former Confederates, to serve both white and black Arkansans. In terms of universal public education, black Arkansans worked with white Republicans after the Civil War in introducing legislation to create and fund a system for the state. Though there were only six African-American legislators at the time, the bill clearly provided for both white and black education, and was signed in to law by the state's white, plantation-owning Republican governor, Powell Clayton. White disinterest in or fear of universal education for blacks was not the dominant force in the Arkansas, though there was certainly opposition. African-American legislators, lacking the majorities seen in other Southern states, had to work closely with whites, but they succeeded in establishing the publicly funded education system that would benefit both black and white Arkansans.<sup>79</sup>

Legislation and laws are often passed with one intention, but how people actually follow or interpret them may be very different. When the Arkansas Industrial University opened its doors in 1871 there was no formal system of segregation in place. An 1873 article in Little

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<sup>78</sup> *Daily Republican* (Little Rock), September 7 and 28, 1872.

<sup>79</sup> Hinshaw, Jerry E. *Call the Roll: The First 150 Years of the Arkansas Legislature*. (Little Rock: Rose Publishing, 1986). Nancy Hendricks, "University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (UA)" *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed December 9, 2015).

Rock's *Daily Republican* noted that while "several colored youths have been appointed as beneficiaries," few if any were able to attend.<sup>80</sup> One African-American student did attend, however, a man by the name of James McGahee. Noted as a "preparing himself for the ministry of the Episcopal Church," Little Rock's *Daily Republican* also recognized the significance of McGahee's enrollment, "We are glad to learn the fact [of his enrollment]—better one than none in this case."<sup>81</sup> Legislators could and did nominate African Americans to attend the University, and black students did attend. The state's institution of higher learning was not explicitly segregated in its founding legislation, nor was it exclusively white in operation when it opened. That mattered to locals opposed to the creation of the institution.

The fact that African Americans and their allies continued to advocate for additional and more accessible options for African-American higher education at the state level does not prove that the Arkansas Industrial University was intended to be an all white institution when it was created. In higher education in Arkansas, white Republicans did not predicate their support for black higher education on the requirement for industrial, labor-based programs as some scholars have argued.<sup>82</sup> The founding later of Branch Normal in Pine Bluff, Arkansas was the result of collaboration between African-American Joseph Corbin and white northerner, fellow AIU trustee, Republican John M. Clayton. Corbin was an advocate of classical education. Clayton supported the establishment of Branch Normal despite the fact he managed a plantation in the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., February 7, 1873.

<sup>81</sup> *Daily Republican* (Little Rock), February 8, 1873, reproduced online at [www.fayettevillehistory.com](http://www.fayettevillehistory.com) (accessed December 8, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

very county where it would probably be established. He was certainly aware the highly educated Corbin was not planning for the institution to simply produce good farm hands for him.<sup>83</sup>

In the establishment of Arkansas Industrial University and the funding of Branch Normal, African Americans worked with whites to create a system of education to serve diverse needs of the state, not simply those of the planter class. From a modern vantage point, pressure for an institution closer to the African-American population centers of the state paved the way for segregation in higher education. However, from the vantage point of 1871, with both African-American political power and black school attendance at all time highs, it was simply a logical step. A February 1873 column in the Little Rock *Daily Republican* summarized the argument for additional higher education options in the state, but tellingly displays an assumption that students of color would continue to be welcome in Fayetteville, even if physical barriers might lower enrollment numbers. Of first concern was the location of the only normal school for the state, Fayetteville, “where the colored population is very sparse; and, consequently, will not be likely to have any very considerable number of colored students for some time.” The column goes on to note that while “several colored youths have been appointed as beneficiaries,” few if any were able to attend. The column then argues “[o]ne of the most pressing needs of that portion of our citizens [African Americans] is a supply of thoroughly qualified teachers of their own race.” Finally, the letter discusses how other states, including Georgia and Virginia had put forth funding specifically for African American education, implying Arkansas could certainly afford to do the same.<sup>84</sup> This movement for black education was threat to Democrats across the state, and northwest Arkansas was not immune to Democratic pressure.

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas Rothrock, “Joseph Carter Corbin and Negro Education in the University of Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 30 (Winter 1971): 277-314.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Republican* (Little Rock), February 7, 1873.

While Corbin and Clayton represent the state politics involved in the creation of the Arkansas Industrial University, William McIlroy and Lafayette Gregg were the players in local politics. Both men were active politically and known as staunch Republicans. McIlroy was the Fayetteville businessman and landowner whose land eventually became the campus. At his death in 1886 he was noted “for his deeds of charity and his liberality toward the poor.”<sup>85</sup> Lafayette Gregg was a Union Army veteran and local businessman as well who played a critical role in the placement of AIU in Fayetteville.<sup>86</sup> It is likely both men, as well as other local unionists and Republicans were involved in at least the land negotiations and placement of the national cemetery as well. Northwest Arkansas’s unionists did not disappear at the end of the war and despite a focus on rebuilding their own lives and fortunes, embraced two of the most visible national goals of the Republican party, protection of the war dead and universal education.

What is frustrating—and telling—about the postwar years in northwest Arkansas is that for every story of partisan strife, there is usually a notable moment where the lines between former Confederate and former unionist were crossed, often, admittedly, due to money. There is no doubt that former Confederates and former unionists worked together in economic endeavors after the war and collaborated in rebuilding towns and seats of county government. Former slaveholder and secessionist Peter Van Winkle supplied the lumber for University Hall (Old Main) on the AIU campus, likely working directly with Lafayette Gregg.<sup>87</sup> David Walker, not only a slaveholder and secessionist, but active within the wartime Confederate government, sold

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<sup>85</sup> *Fayetteville Democrat*, September 17, 1886.

<sup>86</sup> James N. Wilhelm, “Lafayette Gregg (1825-1891)” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed September 14, 2015).

<sup>87</sup> Blevins, *Hillfolks*, 71.

to the federal government the land that became the national cemetery.<sup>88</sup> Popular local memory may put more emphasis on the Confederate Cemetery than the federal one, and gloss over the unionist and Republican roots of the University of Arkansas, but the two institutions are nonetheless landmarks to those who were against secession and active in preserving the unionist legacy in northwest Arkansas. Northwest Arkansas unionists faced many defeats during Reconstruction, but with these successes, maintained a visible presence in the region. As a minority in a Democratic state, these new Republicans soon found even stronger ways to leverage their connections with the federal government, this time for financial gain and security.

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<sup>88</sup> Fayetteville National Cemetery. National Park Service. [www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/national\\_cemeteries/Arkansas/Fayetteville\\_National\\_Cemetery.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/Arkansas/Fayetteville_National_Cemetery.html) (accessed September 30, 2015).

## Chapter Five

### Southern Republicans in a Hostile State

Unionism may not have bestowed the postwar political benefits that many had hoped, but northwest Arkansas Republicans grew more adept at utilizing the growing power and influence of the federal government through the rest of the nineteenth century, especially its willingness to financially reward those who had supported the Union through the late rebellion. Many unionists in the cash-strapped Ozarks benefited from the onetime payments of the Southern Claims Commission and a movement for permanent soldier pensions grew. Part and parcel of this recognition of the usefulness of the federal government and the desire for pensions was membership in the most successful lobbying group of the era, the Grand Army of the Republic (G. A. R.). Growth of government subsidized railroads and the population shifts that came with it were also useful in bolstering connections to the federal government, as northern transplants of the Civil War generation arrived in Northwest Arkansas. By 1900, the Ozarks battered unionists had carved out a distinct place in late nineteenth century life, despite the secure hold of the Democratic Party on the state, and were connected to the federal government in a manner unique in Arkansas history.

The Southern Claims Commission was created by Congress in 1871, on the tenth anniversary of Lincoln's first inauguration, to provide compensation to loyal Southerners who sustained financial losses at the hands of the Union Army during the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the creation of the commission, reimbursement to civilians for goods and supplies requisitioned by

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the creation and history of the Southern Claims Commission, see, Frank Wysor Klingberg, *The Southern Claims Commission*, Vol. 50 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955).

the U. S. Army had fallen to the Quartermaster General. When those payments were contested, civilian petitioners could take their case to Congress for settlement. Much debate existed in Congress as to how to determine both the loyalty of a citizen and value of the goods taken, as well as the rules of war and whether or not those in a war zone had any legal claim to compensation at all. Sen. Charles Sumner was one of the more vocal supporters of the creation of the commission, even though he held the view that Southerners, no matter how committed to the United States, had no legal claim under international law governing war. Sumner supported the creation of the commission out of awareness of the sensitivity of the issue, and the fact that it organized the claims for more effective consideration by Congress.<sup>2</sup> To receive payment, citizens needed to apply and prove their case on two main points. First, they had to prove they were loyal to the Union cause through the entire war. This included never having given any voluntary aid to the Confederacy or Confederate-affiliated individuals. Each applicant was required to provide witnesses as to their loyalty. Second, they had to prove that the claimed loss had indeed occurred. This could be achieved through presenting a receipt if one had been given by the procuring federal soldiers, or, more often as it turned out, through testimony of reliable witnesses. Claims could be disallowed if either of these points could not be proved, or barred, if the application was not completed by the deadline. The claims of undoubtedly loyal citizens could be disallowed because they could not adequately prove a loss had occurred. Likewise, citizens presenting actual receipts were denied for questionable loyalty. Citizens claiming less than \$10,000 had their claims heard and examined at the local level. Claims larger than \$10,000

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 70.

not only had to appear in person in Washington, D.C., their witnesses were required to appear as well.<sup>3</sup> Few claims made by northwest Arkansans came anywhere near \$10,000.

As northwest Arkansas unionists actively pursued claims, prominent Republican figures from the war effort and state politics turned their skills toward navigating this new government bureaucracy. They focused on securing compensation both for their allies and those who were victims of some of the worst violence of the war. Individuals testifying to character, vouching for loyalty, or supporting loss claims included no less than Isaac Murphy, James Johnson, Thomas J. Hunt, Lafayette Gregg, generals Phillips, Blunt, and Harrison, and the leadership of the post colonies discussed Chapter Three. For loyal Arkansans who had stuck with the Union during the war only to see their hopes for power in the postwar period dashed, the cash payments offered by the Commission were cold comfort—and late, considering some claims were paid as late as 1878—but at least it was something. Nationally, 22,298 claims were made, of which 7,092, or thirty-two percent, were approved for settlement.<sup>4</sup> Northwest Arkansas claims were approved at a slightly higher rate, with 217 out of 556 claims approved, or thirty-nine percent. Northwest Arkansas is a small sample of one of the most consistently unionist portions of the South, but the higher approval rate likely also reflects the benefit of federal troops raised from and stationed in the region for most of the war. The First Arkansas Cavalry and her officers knew who in the region was loyal and who had suffered financial losses.

An examination of the claims reveals several patterns. First, it is clear local Republicans were working with the Commission to make sure those who had suffered especially horrific circumstances were compensated for their financial losses. A number of women who received

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>4</sup> Gary B. Mills, *Civil War Claims in the South: An Index of Civil War Damage Claims Filed Before the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880* (Laguna Hills, CA: Aegean Park Press, 1980).



payment had husbands who were killed by guerrillas. For example, Mary Willhite was the wife of Hiram Willhite and the mother of Lt. Thomas Willhite of the First Arkansas Cavalry (U.S.) and secured compensation. Both Hiram and Thomas were shot to death in front of her in 1864, and she was harassed, threatened, mock hanged, and “everything else they could think of” throughout the war.<sup>5</sup> While this story in itself is not especially unique in the claims, Thomas had been discharged from the First Arkansas under complicated circumstances. He was originally discharged for incompetency related to a raid on a local farm in which he and his men oversaw the theft of cattle and hogs. Forcible requisitioning was hardly out of the ordinary in northwest Arkansas and, outside of his official service record, this incident was never mentioned. Speculation and rumor after the war instead blamed his discharge on his aggressive tactics with guerrillas and friction with those in command of the First Arkansas. A letter in his service record from some of the men, requesting Gen. Schofield to at least allow Willhite an honorable discharge (which was granted) noted “He does not claim to be an educated officer,” perhaps as an allusion to his uncouth, but effective ways.<sup>6</sup> Willhite’s dismissal was controversial and became even more so when it led to his death. The Willhites, father and son, were murdered by guerrillas shortly after the discharge. While Mary Willhite did not mention the reason her son was at her home to be executed, the deposition process gave her a space to share her experience with a government authority. Among those who vouched for the loyalty of her family was Thomas J. Hunt, an officer in the First Arkansas. Willhite received the entire \$115 she claimed. Approximately \$2150 in 2014 dollars, the amount that Willhite received was not especially

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<sup>5</sup> Deposition of Mary Willhite, Mary Willhite (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim, no. 10853, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Willhite, First Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

noteworthy, nor was that of many other widows, but the payment was compensation, at least, for her many losses.<sup>7</sup>

The Commission took a negative view of the flexible affiliations of northwest Arkansas residents. Claims were not paid to those who had waffled, even though they often reflected the flexible affiliation common of many northwest Arkansas residents. Jesse Pyeatt of Boonsboro in Washington County, for example, explained that he had initially supported the Confederacy and enlisted in the state militia in 1861. But, he subsequently had a change of heart, became a Union man, and evacuated to Kansas in 1863, staying there for the rest of the war.<sup>8</sup> The Commission was unimpressed, “When the state militia was organized in the spring of 1861 under the state law of Arkansas it was represented to the claimant that they were organized to protect the frontier against the indians and he enlisted. He fought in the battle of Wilson's Creek.” Bitingly, they noted, “We hope he did not think he was fighting indians” and rejected the claim.<sup>9</sup> Service in the Union Army was also insufficient at erasing previous material support to the Confederacy. Caleb Martin, late of the First Arkansas Infantry (U.S.), had enlisted in the surge of February 1863. He was denied a claim because he hauled lumber for the Confederates for several days in the winter of 1861-62, possibly to avoid conscription. “Proof of continuous loyalty is far from satisfactory

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<sup>7</sup> The modern value of Willhite’s payment was calculated at *MeasuringWorth*, w [www.measuringworth.com/uscompare](http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare). Matilda Lofton is another woman whose husband had been discharged from Union service (sore leg) and was subsequently murdered. Deposition of Matilda Lofton, Matilda Lofton (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim no. 1322, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Kansas State Historical Society, *1865 Kansas State Census*, Schedule I (Free Inhabitants), Anderson County, KS. Reproduced online at [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com) (accessed October 1, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Commissioner of Claims notes, Jesse Pyeatt (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim no. 13517, Barred and Disallowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

& the claim is rejected” was the verdict.<sup>10</sup> Martin was the son of Elizabeth Martin in Chapter Three who kicked her husband off the farm for listening to Hindman. Despite the apparently questionable loyalty of her son, her own claim was paid. Caleb Martin eventually secured a veteran’s pension for his service in the Union Army.

The Commission did weigh the willingness of service rendered to the Confederacy. Coerced service in or aid to the Confederate Army did not automatically cause a claim to be denied. Leroy Stone of Washington County was “arrested on the charge of being a Union man & forced in to the rebel army where he staid 5 or 6 weeks before he was discharged for ill health,” but his claim was paid.<sup>11</sup> Martin Crowder of Benton County was also looking for Indians:

In the summer of '61, myself and other citizens of this county were ordered out by Captain Doke, who claimed to have authority to order us out. He said that the Indians and Jayhawkers were coming into the County to destroy it. He furnished us old shot guns, and took us twenty (20) miles west of this, to the waters of "Spavina" [Spavinaw?] Creek, and within six (6) miles of Maysville. There were no Federal soldiers in the state at that time, that I know of. We staid in that part of the County, three (3) or four (4) days, and were disbanded, and returned to our homes. We were not sworn into the service.<sup>12</sup>

Despite bearing arms for the Confederacy as Pyeatt had, however, Crowder’s claim was paid because he never engaged Federal soldiers and was otherwise deemed loyal.

Union veterans and other otherwise loyal individuals could be denied claims for failing to prove that items were actually taken by the Union Army, or were of any value, indicating that the Commission was not simply in the business of compensating the loyal as some kind of late-game reward. William Tucker of Madison County found his claim denied because he could not

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<sup>10</sup> Commissioner of Claims notes, Caleb B. Martin (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim no. 1324, *ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Deposition of Leroy Stone, Leroy Stone (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim no. 814, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Deposition of Martin Crowder, Martin Crowder (Benton Co., Arkansas) claim no. 18478, *ibid*.

actually prove ownership of the horse he said was taken from him by a superior officer. The Commission found it suspicious the horse was taken without receipt, and the documentation about a grey mare that Tucker had provided indicated the animal was so cheap as to be “worthless for Army use” and denied the claim.<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Davidson of Benton County was found to be loyal, but could not prove that the “Cherokee Indian Brigade” that cleaned out her house and barn were a part of the Union Army, and that claim was denied as well.<sup>14</sup>

Claims could be made by individuals who had been minors during the war or on the behalf of the estate of deceased individuals. The ages of claimants and heirs were taken into consideration and the Commission did not believe those under the age of sixteen during the war could be judged on the question of loyalty. For claims made by underage heirs, the question of loyalty was set aside; claimants had only to prove items were taken and their value. Willis Wallace, son of William Wallace of Washington County made a claim “grossly extravagant in every respect,” according to the Commissioner, but was noted as “a boy, about 10 years of age when the war broke out.” William Wallace owned seventeen slaves in 1860 and sent his eldest son into Confederate service, but none of that mattered in paying the claim; Willis Wallace was still a minor at the end of the war. That does not mean the Commission was generous, however. Wallace received \$300 of the \$2260 he had claimed.<sup>15</sup> Another example of this policy is the estate of a miller who had died during the war. The four youngest heirs of wealthy Washington County farmer and miller Tandy Kidd were still under sixteen years of age at the close of the

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<sup>13</sup> Commissioner of Claims notes, William W. Tucker (Madison Co., Arkansas) claim no. 15851, Barred and Disallowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Commissioner of Claims notes, Elizabeth Davidson (Benton Co., Arkansas) claim no. 10844, *ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule 1 (Free Inhabitants), Washington County, AR; Commissioner of Claims notes, Willis Wallace (Bexar Co., Texas) claim no. 12223, Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013).

war—a son who was administrator of the estate in 1871 and three daughters. Despite the fact that “the family were all ardent Confederates,” the Commission did careful math to determine how to portion the \$8797.93 they felt was the legitimate claim against the government. “Our allowances are for the shares of the administrator and his younger sisters . . . which, excluding the widow’s third and the shares of the elder children, are equal to 8/27 of the whole.” Had all the heirs been loyal, the entire amount would have been granted. Instead, disloyalty meant the Confederate-affiliated heirs forfeited their portion of the claim. The Commission granted only the youngest four heirs their portion; \$1172.07 to be split four ways.<sup>16</sup> Situations like these are proof that the commission was conscious of its image and the impact the paid claims could make: the federal government was not in the business of stealing from children, even if those children were of families that had supported the Confederacy.

All told, the Southern Claims Commission poured roughly \$130,000 into northwest Arkansas by 1880, equal to almost \$2.5 million in 2014 dollars.<sup>17</sup> While the money might have been most useful during the leanest years of the late 1860s, the economy of Arkansas was hardly booming in the 1870s either. Most claims were paid to individuals during the years of economic depression following the Panic of 1873. Families benefited from these payments in the short term, and likely used the funds to continue to rebuild northwest Arkansas. The process of hearing claims and resentment from neighbors who did not see paid claims made the process and commission controversial. George Foster of Benton County, for example, was called in to re-

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<sup>16</sup> Commissioner of Claims notes, Cornelius H. Kidd (Washington Co., Arkansas) claim no. 20367, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Total estimated from claims submitted and paid in Madison, Carroll, Benton, and Washington Counties. Claims made by those living out of the area, like Caesar Bean (Crawford Co., Arkansas) or Willis Wallace (Bexar Co., Texas) were not included. Allowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013). Modern dollar valuation calculated at *MeasuringWorth*, [www.measuringworth.com/uscompare](http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare).

testify after neighbors suggested his loyalty was fake; he suggested they were simply jealous or resentful of the money he would receive.<sup>18</sup> While the one-time payments from the Southern Claims Commission were useful, other families were receiving monthly compensation for the loss or disability of a family member in military service through the federal pension system.

An oft-quoted line from Lincoln's Second Inaugural is the vow "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."<sup>19</sup> In the federal government, this task fell to the Bureau of Pensions, which had actually begun caring for the Civil War's disabled veterans, widows, and children well before the war ended. Housed under the Department of the Interior during the lives of most Civil War veterans and their dependents, the size and scope of the Bureau expanded dramatically from the beginning of the Civil War until the deaths of all of those involved. At the beginning of the Civil War, pensions were granted, upon application, to those disabled during their service—for nearly any reason—and dependents, including wives, children, and mothers, of those who perished during their service. Important legislation was passed in 1862, 1873, 1874, and 1877 that modified and expanded benefits within these parameters. In general, amounts were adjusted, grades of disability were defined and redefined, and the Commissioner of Pensions was given increasing power to determine pension rates in unusual circumstances.<sup>20</sup> These provisions, however, applied to all veterans of service in the United States Army and Navy, no matter the conflict; the Bureau of Pensions served all veterans equally. The first act that created special provisions for Civil War veterans was passed in 1879.

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<sup>18</sup> Deposition of George Foster, George Foster (Benton Co., Arkansas) claim no. 19431, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Lincoln: "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1865. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25819](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25819) (accessed October 1, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Gustavus Weber, *The Bureau of Pensions: Its History, Activity and Organizations*, Institute for Government Research, Service Monographs of the United States Government, No. 23 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1923) 4-5.

The “Arrears Act” stated that pensions were payable to Civil War veterans from the date of death or disability, even if the application for pension was not filed until years later.<sup>21</sup> In northwest Arkansas and across the country, this led to a surge in applications, especially among the disabled, who sought to prove their current troubles originated during their service. There was also a surge in widow’s claims, many of which were of questionable veracity.

The Arrears Act transformed the pension system into a program that affected the country on a number of levels. For many, it brought the federal government into their private lives in ways never before experienced. Widows, orphans, and injured soldiers across northwest Arkansas had started receiving monthly pension payments in the 1860s, and, just as with the Southern Claims Commission, they relied upon their friends and neighbors to testify to their benefit. Length of service, onset of disability, or, if the soldier was dead, proof of marriage and/or paternity were all easier to prove with witnesses. This was a level of scrutiny that was not present in the mere loyalty testimony of the SCC. But for those willing to endure it, the benefits could be quite large. When the Arkansas legislature voted to give pensions to Confederate veterans, the payments were about \$25 per year. Some Union veterans could receive that much per month.<sup>22</sup> Witness testimony—on issue ranging from intimate health details, romantic liaisons, work ethic and moral character—were especially useful to Elisha McGinnis, for example (introduced in Chapter Two as a soldier who fought for year for the Confederacy before switching to the Union side just before the Battle of Prairie Grove). He made a disability claim in 1877, which was denied, but challenged the denial in the wake of the Arrears Act. He was

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>22</sup> Steven L. Warren, “Civil War Pensions,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed October 8, 2015).

eventually successful—after multiple agents from the Pension Office investigated and interviewed dozens of witnesses—and was awarded a pension in 1886.<sup>23</sup>

As impactful as the pension system had been after the war, the real turning point for the pension law, veterans, their dependents, and, frankly, the country, came with the passage the act of June 27, 1890. Strongly supported by the Grand Army of the Republic, the law made it such that survivors of the war were eligible for pensions if they were currently in a condition that prevented them from earning their own support. It is difficult to overstate the impact of this change. Veterans needed only prove a current disability; the reason for their incapacity did not have to have been caused by their service. Simply put, the act of June 27, 1890, created an old-age pension system for Union veterans. Anyone who had served more than ninety days, was honorably discharged, and currently suffered a permanent physical—or mental—disability was eligible for anywhere from \$6 to \$12 of support from the federal government each month. Numerous advertisements by lawyers offering guidance in the application process appeared in the Republican newspapers of northwest Arkansas for months after the passage of the legislation.<sup>24</sup>

Theda Skocpol's work of historical sociology, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, explores the development of both the veterans' pension movement and protectionist women's welfare policies.<sup>25</sup> As a sociologist, Skocpol is very interested in understanding the impact of the pension system on the development of the welfare state in the United States, with an eye to better contextualizing the broader and more permanent programs of the New Deal. The pension system,

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<sup>23</sup> Elisha McGinnis, Solder's Certificate no. 366430, Pension Files.

<sup>24</sup> *Washington County Review*, July 1890.

<sup>25</sup> Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).



she argues, suggests that far from being a laggard in public subsidies for the poor and aged as compared to other parts of the world, in the late nineteenth century, the United States was actually in the lead. In her view, the veteran's pension expansion in 1890 created one of the largest old-age insurance systems in the world. Additionally, she argues the widows' and mothers' program was an early step toward a "maternalist welfare state" that would influence American policies up to the New Deal. Skocpol also argues two long-term effects of the veterans' pension program. First, it introduced the country to the first major old-age benefits system where the only requirement was to be old. Though the program was clearly understood to be for war veterans who by that time simply happened to be old, the idea that the aged had special and important needs was established. Second, the rampant corruption and abuse of the Pension Bureau soured Americans on the idea of such benefits and made it much harder for subsequent similar legislation to be passed once the original beneficiaries had died off. For northwest Arkansas veterans and their families, this latter effect may explain why so little attention has been given to the pension system in Arkansas. While large numbers of unionist families came to participate in the program—no matter its popularity, and no matter the performances of reconciliation and acceptance of war time differences that may have been occurring around them—the stigma that developed around the program in later years may have dampened enthusiasm for passing stories of participation on to later generations.

An examination of the pension files of northwest Arkansas veterans reveals patterns in both application habits and the response of the Pension Bureau. To receive a pension veterans needed to apply, prove their service in the Army or Navy, and, until 1890, satisfactorily demonstrate the onset of their disability occurred during their service. The limits of nineteenth century medicine are evident in the files, but one disease, tuberculosis, was almost never

awarded prior to 1890, as it was nearly impossible to prove onset. Investigators were suspicious when someone with TB applied at all, even if they were alleging a completely different illness was the cause of their disability. They were concerned the veteran was actually just seeking a way to fund his true disability—tuberculosis—on the government’s dime. Both before and after 1890, however, pension agents investigated every application, querying the War Department for records, interviewing comrades, friends, family, and neighbors, and gathering testimony from doctors. If everything was satisfactory, then the veteran was issued a certificate number and started receiving monthly payments through their local post office each month.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that northern Arkansas was home to so many former Confederates caused problems for pension applicants, especially when those injured in the war were seeking pensions prior to 1890. As only injuries obtained during service in the federal army were initially eligible for compensation, it was standard practice for the Bureau of Pensions to rely on the testimony of those acquainted with the soldier prior to the war to establish the timeline of his injury. A fairly simple prospect for Northern men, but more complicated in divided Arkansas. Further, a number of Arkansas men who eventually ended up in federal service had spent some time in Confederate service as well. Not only could this complicate the timeline of an injury, it involved obtaining testimony from men who may have had less than fond feelings for someone they viewed as a deserter or traitor.

Even decades after the conflict ended, wartime affiliation was a critical element in local political and social life. Though northwest Arkansans were no longer burning down each others’ barns, stealing livestock, or shooting at one another, they were still perfectly willing to disparage an individual to a federal official. Many such issues come together in Elisha McGinnis’ pension

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<sup>26</sup> Weber, *The Bureau of Pensions*, 12-15.

application. First, his discharge records from March of 1864 indicate he was probably dying of “lung disease” (likely tuberculosis) and, based on the surgeon’s notes, was not long for this world. But when McGinnis made his claim in 1877, he said it was for a disability of the eyes; “sore eyes.” Investigators discussed whether or not he was the same Elisha McGinnis, as the surgeon’s comments on this discharge records were so dire. In the end, it seems to have been dismissed as a records error. Proving the onset of the eye disease, however, was not simple either. Agents called on a variety of both Confederate-affiliated and Union-affiliated persons. As a result, McGinnis had witnesses who changed their stories or feigned ignorance, and all had different memories. Many of them clearly and directly contradict one another. One indicated debilitating childhood disease, another simply the usual childhood illnesses. Another claimed perfect eye-sight at enlistment, or red, sore eyes at enlistment. Those who seem to especially dislike McGinnis alleged his sore eyes were the result of drunkenness or perhaps venereal disease.

With hard feelings from the war so obvious, the discretion of Special Examiners played an important role in determining whether or not a pension was approved. McGinnis’s first investigating examiner appeared either oblivious to the tensions between the Confederates and unionists who came in front of him, or strangely willing to give equal weight to Confederate testimony. He may have had a problem with McGinnis’s year spent in Confederate service. In a letter requesting a second investigation into his pension claim in 1884, McGinnis alleged, as a key part of his (ultimately successful) second request, that the Special Examiner had spoken with former Confederates, including “Confederate Captain Samuel G. Phillips, Samuel Lane, and Martin Fritts, all of them notoriously opposed to the Pension law or Federal soldiers, and especially to me because I had deserted the Confederate service” and that testimony had biased

the proceedings.<sup>27</sup> McGinnis received a new Special Examiner for the second investigation into his claim. This investigator was much more thorough than the first; he deposed three times as many individuals and was especially savvy about the political landscape of the community. This second investigation included not only the county officials requested by McGinnis but more than ten brothers-in-arms from the First Arkansas Calvary. All of the Union veterans deposed, many of them childhood friends or relatives, supported McGinnis' claim. When the investigator spoke with Phillips, Lane and Fritts in December of 1884, only Phillips stuck by his assertion that McGinnis had had eye problems prior to his Union service.<sup>28</sup> Both Lane and Fritts, despite being extremely descriptive five years earlier stated either that they could not remember McGinnis' condition or said he had only "common sore eyes" that were not comparable to the condition he currently endured. Fritts especially seemed to have developed a severe inability to recall his previous testimony, even when it was presented to him by the Special Examiner.<sup>29</sup> Neither Phillips, Lane, nor Fritts repeated any mention of alcohol abuse on the part of McGinnis as a cause of his disability in the second investigation. When interviewed by the second Special Examiner, Phillips maintained his stance that McGinnis did not deserve a disability pension, stating when asked by McGinnis directly about his feelings towards veterans receiving pensions "I am willing for them to have it, if entitled."<sup>30</sup> Phillips' bar for who was entitled was very high. This second Special Examiner did not believe Phillips' testimony on that point and stated in his notes "Reputation of deponent [Phillips] good, but he is known as a man opposed to any soldiers drawing a pension, and there is no doubt in my mind but that he is prejudiced against claimant

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<sup>27</sup> Elisha McGinnis to William W. Dudley, January 15, 1884, Elisha McGinnis File.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel G. Phillips deposition, "Deposition C," December 10, 1884, *ibid*.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Lane deposition, "Deposition E," December 10, 1884; Martin Fritts deposition, "Deposition D," December 16, 1884, *ibid*.

<sup>30</sup> Phillips deposition, *ibid*.

[McGinnis], because he deserted his company.” Further, the examiner noted the prejudices of both Lane and Fritts stating, “this witness [Lane] has the reputation of being bitterly opposed to Union soldiers drawing a pension” and, “from his [Fritts] manner of testifying and talking, I think his evidence ought not to have any [emphasis his] weight either way in the case.<sup>31</sup> The first examiner gave no weight to testimony clearly influenced by war-time affiliation, either Union or Confederate, despite his disparagement of the Confederate army. The second examiner, on the other hand, recognized wartime loyalty was a critical element in local political and social affiliations even nearly twenty years after the end of the conflict.

It is tempting to view the pension system as mainly a benefit for men, but with provisions for women and children, the impact was incredibly broad. And given the fact that African-American veterans, widows, and children were equally eligible for benefits, one finds the Pension Office involved itself in many aspects of late nineteenth and early twentieth century American life, from marriage to race relations. Women claiming for a deceased veteran went through much the same application process as living veterans. Once the War Department verified the death of the soldier, the subsequent investigation focused on family connections, and, often, the honorable or dishonorable behavior of the widow. Proof of marriage was the first requirement. In an era where people were married by circuit riding preachers on the frontier, those in rural areas with few assets felt little urgency to file marriage certificates. Further, if the widow remarried, she lost her pension. But if *that* husband died, she could get her original pension back. Martha Lynch, neé Cunningham, who died in Winslow in Washington County in 1919 illustrates how complicated this situation could become. Lynch was married three times, the first in Tennessee to man named Fulton, the second to a man named Jefferson Quinton, and

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<sup>31</sup> A.M. Sproesen, Special Examiner to Honorable O.P.G. Clark, Commissioner of Pensions, December 21, 1884, *ibid*.

finally, to Abraham Lynch of Washington County. Quinton and Lynch were veterans of the First Arkansas Cavalry and Second Arkansas Cavalry, respectively.<sup>32</sup> Her pension applications based on her marriages to Quinton and Lynch were relatively straightforward; Quinton died in 1890 and Martha received a widow's pension until she married Lynch. Her pension was reinstated after Lynch's death in 1918. She was days from receiving her first pension payment, for all moneys owed back to the date of his death, when she died unexpectedly. The complicating factor in Lynch's file was her first marriage. Martha Cunningham married A. J. Fulton in 1869 and sought a divorce from him in 1872. In order to pay the widow's pension after Quinton's death, the Pension Bureau required documentation that the marriage to Fulton had been dissolved prior to any relationship with Quinton. Otherwise, the legality of the second marriage could be brought in to question; the Pension Bureau did not pay widow's pensions to bigamists. Martha Lynch's file, therefore, includes documentation of the marriage to Fulton, affidavits of witness who were present at the marriage, and the divorce decree. Fulton, it seems, "had committed frequent acts of adultery" with one S. A. Cunningham. No mention is made of the connection between Martha Cunningham and S. A. Cunningham, but the decree notes Fulton had deserted his wife and children and "on account of his bad and immoral character," was found to be "wholly unfit to raise and have the custody of their infant children."<sup>33</sup> The Pension Bureau also required affidavits related to the dates of birth of the children Martha had with Quinton and reexamined Quinton's file when she applied for a pension after Lynch's death. For thirty years, the Pension Bureau was involved in the most intimate details of Martha Lynch's life. Determining whether or

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<sup>32</sup> Abraham Lynch, Soldier Certificate no. 864016, Pension Files. Widows files were kept by the Pension Bureau under the certificate number of the veteran. For efficiency, the Bureau filed everything related to widow under the last husband's certificate, therefore, file for Abraham Lynch includes all of Jefferson Quinton's pension documents as well as those of the minor Jefferson children and Martha.

<sup>33</sup> Divorce Decree, *ibid.*

not a woman was an eligible widow was complicated. The Pension Bureau eventually physically collected the marriage laws of all states in the Union into a large binder for reference, gluing copies of various statutes and laws on pages arranged alphabetically by state.<sup>34</sup> This was helpful, as a further complication of the issue of marriages for the Bureau were marriages between persons of color.

Before 1867, African-American marriages had no legal status in Arkansas.<sup>35</sup> The Bureau tended to recognize slave marriages if they were clearly accepted as such within the community, but there were positives and negatives to this policy. It was generally helpful for widows who had been married only once, even if it had been before emancipation and legal recognition. But if those marriages were viewed as legal by the Bureau that meant recognizing all pre-emancipation marriages had legal status. This became problematic when a widow had had a marriage under slavery, but married a different man after the war. Despite legal recognition of the marriages of enslaved persons in Arkansas in 1867, the language of the legislation offered legal status only to marriages that existed at the time the law was passed. Those marriages would require a legal divorce to be dissolved, but what of marriages that had already ended before the legislation was passed? This question was left to the Bureau to determine. Often times, they looked for evidence to dodge the issue entirely. An example is the application of Fanny Crawford. Rev. William Crawford was a slave in Washington County prior to the war and had enlisted as an undercook in the First Battery, Arkansas Light Artillery. After the war, he moved in Van Buren, where he met his wife Fanny. They married and lived most of their lives in Little Rock. When Crawford died,

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<sup>34</sup> Records Relating to Legal Aspects of Marital Status (“Marriage by States and General”), 1890-1917, PI-55, Entry 72, Record Group 15, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D. C.

<sup>35</sup> Orville W. Taylor, “‘Jumping the Broomstick’: Slave Marriage and Morality in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17 (Autumn 1958): 218.

his wife applied for a pension. Both Crawford and his wife had had previous relationships under slavery, but Crawford's first wife was dead. Fanny's alleged first husband was not. After numerous interviews, the Bureau determined Fanny Crawford was eligible for a pension, mainly because they went with the more sordid stories of witnesses who said Fanny was not married, but likely a prostitute or at least quite promiscuous before the good Reverend redeemed her from such a life. Testimony about the first "husband" alleged he was, for lack of a better term, a pimp. Therefore, Fanny Crawford was not a bigamist and eligible to receive her widow's pension.<sup>36</sup>

African-American veterans and their families faced not only the challenge of nonexistent legal records or status due to slavery but also the racism of the day. It is clear in Fanny Crawford's claim that investigators believed many of the allegations against her because that was what was they expected of African-American women, no matter the fact she had been the wife of clergyman for most of her adult life. In the later years of the pension program, when rates were set to increase with age, African-American veterans often had trouble proving their birth date. Few black veterans knew for sure their date of birth; some were unclear even on their place of birth. With so many African-Americans carried to Arkansas in the 1840s and 1850s, even family members or fellow slaves who had been present at birth were difficult to track down. Where whites could rely on the testimony of friends and neighbors to corroborate slim documentation, few African Americans were granted the same courtesy. Black veterans were often forced to track down former slaveholders or other white authority figures before they were believed. The

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<sup>36</sup> William H. Crawford, Soldier's Certificate no. 987193, Pension Files.



Pension Bureau required the testimony of former Confederates to validate the word of Union veterans.<sup>37</sup>

Pension Bureau inquiries and investigations were even more personal when it came to minors. Children under the age of 16 were eligible for pensions, regardless of the marital status of their parents, although it certainly helped in determining legal paternity. Many a pension agent found himself querying midwives and sifting local gossip on a quest to determine the eligibility of minors. The first indication of trouble in the file of widow Mary Jane Dorsey of Madison County was when an investigator noted he could not collect testimony on her behalf because few people were willing to “disgrace themselves by furnishing testimony in such a case.”<sup>38</sup>

Alexander Dorsey had been married three times. While his brother cleared the issue of bigamy by testifying he was “satisfied the [the first two wives] are Dead as if I had seen thire Dead Bodies,” adultery was obvious as it seems Dorsey had more than one child with his third wife before the second had died.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Mary Jane Dorsey testified she had eight children with Dorsey, all born before they married in 1901, with the youngest, Lincoln Dorsey, born May 13, 1897.<sup>40</sup> In total, Alexander Dorsey had three wives and nearly twenty children. The Dorsey file includes an extensive and invasive investigation into the paternity of Mary Jane Dorsey’s children. Midwives, neighbors, enemies, and friends were called upon to speculate as to the sexual habits of Alexander and Mary Jane. Though Mary Jane Dorsey eventually secured pensions for the children still under the age of sixteen at Alexander Dorsey’s death, there were

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<sup>37</sup> Examples of these challenges can be found in William H. Crawford’s file, *ibid*; Lafayette Anderson, Soldier’s Certificate No. 598395, *ibid.*; Adam Buchanan, Soldier’s Certificate No. 982628, *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> J.J. Curry to Pension Office, November 16, 1908. Alexander Dorsey, Soldier’s Certificate No. 498785, Pension files.

<sup>39</sup> Bennett Dorsey, deposition, March 14, 1908, *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Mary Jane Dorsey testimony, September 25, 1918; G.M. Saltzgeber to Mary Dorsey, February 7, 1914, *ibid.*

repeated investigations of her virtue. “I have not married, since soldier died,” she stated to an Examiner Jones in 1918, “and I have not assumed marital relations with any man and have not taken up with any man in any way shape or form and have not had any man living with me except my son. No, I have not been keeping company with any man and have no man keeping company with me or calling on me.”<sup>41</sup> Fortunately for Mary Jane Dorsey, Pension Bureau examiners became quite familiar with the norms of small towns. “Hindsville is just a little community and what one knows all know,” Jones stated, “it is a great place to start talk over the least indiscretion on the part of a woman.”<sup>42</sup> He went further and rejected gossip about Dorsey and a man named Niles noting “I presume from experience in similar localities that some nosy persons happened to pass and see Niles on the porch and immediately started some rumor. The people in this locality are very fond of that.”<sup>43</sup> In Mary Jane Dorsey’s situation, the federal government dug deeply into her personal life and exposed intimate details for assessment and judgment. Like McGinnis, she benefited from a savvy examiner with a grasp of the local situation.

Fraud was a problem in the pension system from the start, especially in terms of widow’s pensions, which may also have affected the level of scrutiny Mary Ann Dorsey endured. Marriage records were not always available, and, in Arkansas, many courthouses were burned during the war—and often times after, though one hopes those were more accidental. An example of a blatant fraud attempt is Nancy Carlisle who filed a fraudulent widow’s pension claim in the wake of the Arrears Act in 1879. The claim was “rejected on the grounds soldier

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<sup>41</sup> Mary Jane Dorsey testimony, September 25, 1918.

<sup>42</sup> Special Examiner Jones to Commissioner of Pensions, September 26, 1918, *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

[none other than Elisha McGinnis] is living and an applicant for pension.”<sup>44</sup> Five years later, the same special examiner sent to gather testimony on McGinnis, spoke with Nancy, who by this time was Nancy Fox. She stated she married McGinnis “in the winter or fall of 1863” at Cassville, Missouri.<sup>45</sup> When McGinnis was discharged in 1864 and went to Kansas, McGinnis “left her for another woman” there in the winter of 1864-1865 and she “heard he obtained a divorce from her” sometime in 1865. She was never charged for filing a fraudulent claim, perhaps because of her story that the man she was living with at the time had threatened to whip her to death if she did not file it.<sup>46</sup> Fraudulent claims would eventually become such a large problem they damaged the public perception of the entire system.

Outside of the information they impart about the pension system itself, the files reveal the enduring bonds between northwest Arkansas’s Union veterans. Of the ten veterans who testified in Elisha McGinnis’ file, McGinnis himself eventually testified in all of their files as they applied for pensions.<sup>47</sup> Other veterans exhibited the same pattern of testimony across the files of their former comrades or in other claims with the government. Not only did veterans testify in one another’s pension applications, they testified in their Southern Claims Commission examinations as well. Take, for example, James M. Calico and William W. Tucker. The two men grew up

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<sup>44</sup> Nancy Kimball’s denied widow’s claim was eventually combined with McGinnis’ approved pension file. Nancy Kimball Widows Pension claim to Pension Office, June 16, 1880, Elisha McGinnis, Soldier’s Certificate No. 366430, Pension Files.

<sup>45</sup> Carlisle was probably there because her father, formerly Captain of Company A of the First Arkansas, had been discharged from service for illness a year earlier. Ill, former Union officers were wise not to return to Madison County in 1862-1863. Steward H. Carlisle, First Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> Nancy Fox, deposition, June 23, 1885, Elisha McGinnis, Soldier’s Certificate No. 366430, Pension Files.

<sup>47</sup> For examples, see files for James M. Calico, Soldier’s Certificate No. XC2-628-485; Jesse Vaughn, Soldier’s Certificate No. 312411; Allison Boyd, Soldier’s Certificate No. 829521; Reuben Clark, Soldier’s Certificate No. 361530; Elijah Drake, Soldier’s Certificate No. 1040603; and Benjamin Drake, Soldier’s Certificate No. 608927, *ibid.*

together in rural Madison County and served together in the Union Army.<sup>48</sup> William W. Tucker was the veteran of First Arkansas Calvary who had made the previously discussed claim with the Southern Claims Commission over a grey mare.<sup>49</sup> While the claim may have been disallowed, the file reveals connections between veterans; James Calico testified on Tucker's behalf. Calico filed for benefits as a veteran after legislation passed in 1890 offering pensions to anyone who served. His file was active for more than forty years, until the death of his second wife in 1933. The file includes numerous testimonies from friends, neighbors and relatives who describe his service during the war, youth, adult life, marriage, and general character, including a letter from his cousin William Tucker, who in 1894 testified to the health of Calico. Calico's file also includes letters and testimony from Elisha McGinnis.<sup>50</sup>

Veterans' wives often appear in multiple pension files, too, providing testimony for one another and aiding in providing background information for pension examiners. Polly Ann Clark, for example, provided testimony in a number of pension files in the 1870s and 1880s. She was married to a man who had served in the First Arkansas, and had spent most of the war inside Union lines with him at Fayetteville. Clark's presence with the army, as well as her willingness to care for the injured in her home, made her an ideal witness for later claims. She provided specific testimony about the health conditions of a number of men and more than one mentioned their preference for her care over that of the hospital, as one was more likely to survive the former.<sup>51</sup> Clark's own husband was injured during a skirmish with Benton County guerrillas but also had tuberculosis. She spent years trying to prove that his persistent ill health was related not

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<sup>48</sup> James M. Calico, First Arkansas Cavalry and Washington W. Tucker, First Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015)

<sup>49</sup> William W. Tucker (Madison Co., Arkansas) claim no. 15851, Barred and Disallowed Case Files, SCC, Fold3.com (accessed January 1-7, 2013)

<sup>50</sup> James M. Calico, Soldier's Certificate no. XC2-628-485, Pension Files.

<sup>51</sup> Elisha McGinnis, Soldier's Certificate no. 366430, Pension Files.

to his TB, but to the crushing injuries obtained when his horse fell on him in the confrontation with guerillas.<sup>52</sup>

Testimony by the same individuals in many files reveals a community and network that survived the upheaval of the Civil War and the particular brand of destruction and displacement that was visited upon the northwestern counties of Arkansas. When viewing Calico's or Clark's or McGinnis's pension files with other files from the region, the details of this community and network become clearer. Of course, former and current enemies also testify in these pension claims, a reminder of the complexity of relationships in the aftermath of war. Out of nearly 200 examined, nearly every one featured testimony from at least one former Confederate. In total, that testimony was just as likely to be supportive as not, with pre-war connections or postwar interests sometimes trumping the division of the war itself. Fascinating on their own, when put together census records, Southern Claims Commission records and pension files combine to reveal many facets of rural society and life in the postwar period for a group of people who left few traditional records such as diaries or personal letters. Though the majority of these men returned to northwest Arkansas and lived out their lives there, even those who moved out of state benefited from continued support. The Pension Bureau was a national force and connected veterans via testimony even if they had left Arkansas. Northwest Arkansas veterans were a part of a network of testimony that ensured soldiers and their dependents received the money due to them from pension legislation as it was passed.

Nearly all northwest Arkansas Union veterans who were still alive in 1890 applied for pensions and nearly all were granted, but not without scrutiny. Tucker, Calico, McGinnis and others faced inquiry as to their loyalty and service in the Confederate army prior to their Union

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<sup>52</sup> Reuben Clark, Soldier's Certificate no. 361530, Pension Files.

enlistment. Tucker had to answer questions about where he obtained his gray mare and was asked specifically if it was issued to him when he served in the Confederate Cavalry. Calico too, had to justify his initial conscription into the Confederate infantry when he applied for a Union pension. The Act of 1890 seemed to have removed this concern; unlike the previous two decades, where agents scoured records and interviewed neighbors as to loyalty and suspicious Confederate service, once the ninety days of federal service required under the law had been proved, it seemed to erase all sins. This was likely a function too, however, of the sheer volume of applications flooding the Pension Office and a certain patina of respectability obtained by the veterans as they entered old age.

The Southern Claims Commission and the pension system were not the only ways former unionists became ever more closely tied to the federal government and the Republican Party. Patronage—the appointing of party members to government positions as a reward for party loyalty—was also practiced in northwest Arkansas. Appointments as postmaster or postmistress or revenue agent were the most common. Nancy Lear, a unionist who also received a settlement from the SCC, was appointed Postmistress in Huntsville in Madison County in 1869. Anderson Sanders, a veteran of the First Arkansas Cavalry was appointed Postmaster in Little Spring in Madison County in 1875. Joshua Mason, late of the First Battery, Arkansas Light Artillery was Postmaster in Mason Valley in Benton County from the mid-1870s into the 1880s.<sup>53</sup> Thomas J. Hunt served appointments as either a postmaster or a federal revenue agent from the 1870s

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<sup>53</sup> Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971. NARA Microfilm Publication, M841, Rolls 6 and 8. *Records of the Post Office Department*, Record Group Number 28. Washington, D.C.: National Archives. Reproduced online at Ancestry.com. (Accessed December 5, 2015).

through the 1890s.<sup>54</sup> Patronage appointments were an accepted way to maintain and reward party loyalty, especially in a democratic state like Arkansas where Republican Party loyalty had few rewards locally.

The pool of party members from which to choose appointees varied from twenty-five to nearly forty percent of the population of northwest Arkansas during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Republican Party never carried a county in a presidential election. Voting patterns, however, show that party membership remained solid. After the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s and an influx of new Republican voters, the party made slightly stronger showings, dipping below thirty percent of the vote only in the volatile election of 1896.

Votes for the Republican Presidential Candidate								
Election Year	1872	1876	1880	1884	1888	1892	1896	1900
Republican Vote	35%	28%	24%	32%	35%	38%	28%	34%

Table 1. Percentage of the Total Vote Carried by the Republican Presidential Candidate. Compiled from *Voting America*, Digital Scholarship Lab, Boatwright Memorial Library, University of Richmond, [www.americanpast.org](http://www.americanpast.org).

Benton County was especially affected by the arrival of new Republican voters, especially in the railroad towns of Siloam Springs in the southwest corner of the county, and Rogers along the eastern edge. In the 1880 election, the Republican presidential candidate and Union veteran James Garfield carried only twelve percent of the vote in Benton County. By the 1888 election, however, Republican presidential candidate and Union veteran Benjamin Harrison carried twenty-four percent of the Benton County vote.<sup>55</sup> This may offer a partial explanation as to why, in the early twentieth century, the Bentonville chapter of the United Daughters of the

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Roll 9; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedules, Washington County, AR.

<sup>55</sup> *Voting America*, Digital Scholarship Lab, Boatwright Memorial Library, University of Richmond, [www.americanpast.org](http://www.americanpast.org).

Confederacy had enough support to erect a monument to Confederate veterans in the square of the county seat.

<b>Presidential Election of 1880</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Democrat</b>	<b>Republican</b>	<b>Republican Percentage of Total Vote</b>
<b>Benton</b>	1965	297	12%
<b>Carroll</b>	887	399	30%
<b>Madison</b>	735	414	35%
<b>Washington</b>	1936	787	26%
<b>Total</b>			<b>24%</b>

Table 2 Voting results from the Presidential Election of 1880. Compiled from *Voting America*, Digital Scholarship Lab, Boatwright Memorial Library, University of Richmond, [www.americanpast.org](http://www.americanpast.org).

<b>Presidential Election of 1888</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Democrat</b>	<b>Republican</b>	<b>Republican Percentage of Total Vote</b>
<b>Benton</b>	3057	1110	25%
<b>Carroll</b>	1500	1043	37%
<b>Madison</b>	1338	1164	45%
<b>Washington</b>	3198	1969	37%
<b>Total</b>			<b>35%</b>

Table 3. Voting results from the Presidential Election of 1888. Compiled from *Voting America*, Digital Scholarship Lab, Boatwright Memorial Library, University of Richmond, [www.americanpast.org](http://www.americanpast.org).

Successful SCC claims, pension payments, and patronage combined to build a solid commitment to the Republican Party in northwest Arkansas. Funded with a pension, when McGinnis paid for his Goodspeed’s entry in 1889, he proudly listed himself as a Republican.<sup>56</sup> The same network of men and women who supported one another privately in SCC claims and pension applications also acted collectively in public. McGinnis and his comrades became ever more passionate supporters of the Republican Party and the political system that provided for

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<sup>56</sup> “Elisha McGinnis” *Goodspeed’s History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas* (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889), 1106.



them and their families, especially when the pension system became more inclusive after 1890. Through their political action, they lobbied for the creation of universal pensions and they remained vigilant in the protection of them. Key to their success the Grand Army of the Republic.

Founded in 1866 in Illinois, the G. A. R. was organized by and for Union veterans of the Civil War. It first attempted to organize a Department of Arkansas in 1867, but that quickly failed. A second attempt in 1883 was more successful. The G. A. R. became one of the largest and most powerful fraternal organizations in the late nineteenth century, but its impact has faded in popular memory in the United States, and certainly in Arkansas. For a group that strongly influenced the political process for nearly fifty years after the Civil War, boasted all but one President between the end of the war and 1900, led to the first \$1 billion peacetime Congress, and championed a program that at its peak consumed nearly forty percent of the federal budget, there are relatively few scholarly treatments by historians of Civil War veterans or the Grand Army of the Republic. Mary Dearing's 1952 contribution *Veterans in Politics*, while detailed, is more a chronicle of political involvement than an analysis of the political role.<sup>57</sup> The slim scholarship is dominated by treatments from economists and sociologists such as Richard Bense's *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877-1900*, and Theda Skocpol's previously discussed *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* which seek to place the G.A.R. and veterans' pension movement in the broader contexts of government welfare programs and the growth of the welfare state.<sup>58</sup> Traditional historical approaches that speak more directly to the local experience of the G. A. R. and are

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<sup>57</sup> Mary Rulkotter Dearing, *Veterans in Politics; the Story of the G.A.R* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952).

<sup>58</sup> Richard Franklin Bense, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877-1900* (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

more relevant to Arkansas include Stuart McConnell's *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* and Patrick Kelly's *Creating a National Home* which examine the goals and impact of the organization. James Marten's, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* focuses on veterans directly.<sup>59</sup>

McConnell notes the Gilded Age was the height of fraternal order membership for American men, but shows the G. A. R. differed from other fraternal orders in a number of ways. Admission, while obviously limited to men who had served in the war, was generally open to all honorably discharged veterans willing to pay dues, unlike many organizations that required sponsored memberships. The mythology of the organization was also unique. Though other groups harkened back to idealized versions of brotherhood in the same way the G. A. R. nostalgically remembered the army camp, an even stronger mythology grew up around the organization. By the 1890s, members of the G. A. R. viewed themselves as saviors of the Union, with rhetoric ranging from comparisons to soldiers of republican Rome to pious Christian martyrs.<sup>60</sup> This led to the idea that the country owed veterans a sacred debt, and fit neatly into the pension movement. Even in northwest Arkansas, these ideas can be seen from the various activities of the Posts. In McConnell's view, the pension movement, while an important part of the G. A. R. for a time during its existence, was not central to its mission or identity. Other political motivations, such as the establishment of Memorial Day, protecting and projecting the proper image of the war in schoolbooks and the patriotic promotion of the flag held sway as well.

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<sup>59</sup> Stuart Charles McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).; Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1997).; James Alan Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

<sup>60</sup> Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 182.

With the national cemetery at Fayetteville, northwest Arkansas's G. A. R. posts had an opportunity perform their patriotism just like their more northern counterparts.

The G. A. R. first attempted to organize Posts (the G. A. R. equivalent of a local chapter) in Arkansas in 1867, but the Order failed to flourish. According to an 1871 report, the organization may have fallen victim to the Reconstruction-era infighting of the Republican Party in the state. "Five posts were organized in the state. A difficulty with the Department Commander resulted in the disbandment of these Posts late in the year 1868. Efforts have since been made to reorganize the Department but without much success, owing, I believe, to the disturbed condition of political affairs in that State."<sup>61</sup> By 1873, the organization had all but given up on Arkansas and the southern states in general. After declaring recruiting in Arkansas hopeless, Adjutant-General of the G. A. R. submitted in a report "I am inclined to the opinion that in nearly all the Southern States the Order cannot become strong for two reasons." The first was due to the low population of veterans, the second "Because public prejudice against the Order is very bitter. In many localities membership in the Grand Army is deemed a sufficient reason even for withholding patronage from a businessman . . . Those who do join are compelled to keep their membership as secret as if it were a capital crime." He went on to lament the damage done by campaigning during the election of 1872, implying that the perception the Grand Army was involved in politics was detrimental. "It was thought best to allow matters to remain *in statu quo*, rather than risk any repetition of the story of politics and the Grand Army, which as heretofore affected the Order so disastrously," the report argues, "Liability to political complications would be particularly great in the Departments where the work . . . of re-

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<sup>61</sup> *Proceedings of the First to Tenth Meetings 1866-1876 (Inclusive) of the National Encampment Grand Army of the Republic with Digest of Decisions, Rules of Order and Index* (Philadelphia: Samuel P. Town, 1877), reproduced online at [catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008882600](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008882600) (accessed October 1, 2015), 116.

organizing Departments killed by politics.”<sup>62</sup> While it is unlikely that northwest Arkansas veterans would have faced an extreme level of prejudice in business for their affiliation, due to their higher numbers in comparison to other parts of the state, the same political environment that drove northwest Arkansas Republicans like Isaac Murphy and James Johnson to return home to the Ozarks likely inhibited growth of the G. A. R. as a state organization. Any indication that the Grand Army was a political tool of the Republicans could have been damaging for public perceptions of the organization.

The Department of Arkansas was finally organized on July 11, 1883.<sup>63</sup> By the time the last Union veteran passed away, Arkansas had had over one hundred Posts (although not all were in operation at the same time) in places as large as the capital Little Rock and as small as largely unknown Ellsworth, and they were located all over the state, from Bentonville in the northwest corner of the state to Piggott in the north east, to Texarkana in the southwest and Pine Bluff in the southeast. There were sixteen Posts in northwest Arkansas, but the individual driving the formation of the Department of Arkansas resided in Little Rock and Fort Smith, both hubs of postwar Union veteran settlement of the carpetbagger variety, as well as Republican appointmentees to the federal court system monitoring lawlessness along the border between Arkansas and Indian Territory. The Department leadership was dominated by these men, but representatives from Posts across the state do show up in leadership positions and many were from northwest Arkansas Posts.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>63</sup> *Unofficial Proceedings in Connection with the Twenty-fourth National Encampment, Grand Army of the Republic, Held in Boston, Week August 11-16, 1890* (Boston, E. B. Stillings and Co., 1890), reproduced online at [catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009581102](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009581102) (accessed October 1, 2015), 273.

The names of most Posts are known, as well as their locations. The locations of the posts often reflect the wartime location of unionists; there are more posts located north of the Arkansas River than south of it.<sup>64</sup> But they also indicate where Union veterans settled after the war, which provides a clue as to how the Order made a resurgence in Arkansas in the 1880s. The railroads that arrived in northwest Arkansas the early 1880s brought carpetbaggers—many of whom were Union veterans.<sup>65</sup> Of the sixteen posts in northwest Arkansas, about half were in towns that formed or grew substantially only after the Civil War.<sup>66</sup> Membership rolls of the Posts in both Springdale and Siloam Springs have few members from Arkansas's Union units; most served out of state.<sup>67</sup> The G. A. R. was able to return to Arkansas in 1883 not only due to a settling of the political situation, but because reinforcements had arrived.

Though records for the individual posts are slim, the names veterans chosen for their local Posts illustrate both heroes the veterans wished to honor, or local men they wished to remember. Posts could be named after a veteran, but only if he was deceased.<sup>68</sup> Many were likely organized and then renamed for the deceased veteran after he passed, so the names are not useful in creating a rough time line for post origins, but they are interesting in whom they chose to honor, and in some cases give a rough idea of when the post was active. The J. M. Clayton Post at Pine Bluff (Jefferson County) and Phillip Sheridan Post at Aurora (Madison County), for

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<sup>64</sup> One of the most complete and reliable listings of Posts in Arkansas has been gathered from various historical sources over the last ten years by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) organization. Unfortunately, there are very few known sources for the Arkansas Posts so the records are largely incomplete. What has been collected can be viewed at [www.garrecords.org](http://www.garrecords.org) [here after "GAR Records project, SUVCW"] (accessed October 1, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Blevins, *Hillfolks*, 71-73.

<sup>66</sup> GAR Records project, SUVCW (accessed October 1, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> "U. S. Grant Post Minute Book," Paul Dolle Collection, Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, Arkansas; "Handwritten roster members of the Curtis Post, No. 9, Siloam Springs" GAR Collection, Siloam Springs Museum Society, Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

<sup>68</sup> *Ritual of the Grand Army of the Republic* (Philadelphia: Headquarters of the Grand Army of the Republic, 1903).

example, had to have been active at least as late as 1889 when those men died. And likewise the Sherman Post at Judsonia must have been named after 1891. All three posts, but especially the post named for Clayton, would have been provocative to the veterans' Democratic neighbors, as Sheridan and Sherman were notorious Union generals, and Clayton had been assassinated in Conway County in central Arkansas during an investigation of fraud during the election of 1888 that had been particularly damaging for Republicans. The Noel G. Rutherford Post at West Fork was named for a man raised in Arkansas. He was captured and executed by guerrillas near Ozark in 1863. His Arkansas-native brothers, cousins, and childhood friends filled the ranks of that post, which was active for decades.<sup>69</sup> The names of posts, however, can also lead to some frustration and throw into question what records we do have. On most lists of posts in Arkansas, the Siloam Springs Post was listed as the S. R. Curtis post, or the Samuel R. Curtis Post, which would be a reasonable name for a post in Arkansas. But pension file for Arkansas veteran by the name of Lafayette Mason includes a letter of support for Mason from the Siloam Springs Post on letterhead that stated it was the Simon R. Curtis Post. Subsequent research has yielded a few Union veterans by the name of Simon Curtis, but no indications as to which one was being honored in Siloam Springs.<sup>70</sup>

At least five of the Posts in Arkansas were organized by African-American veterans, which we only know through the work of Dr. Barbara A. Gannon in her book *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship of the Grand Army of the Republic*.<sup>71</sup> The G. A. R. viewed all

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<sup>69</sup> Noel G. Rutherford, First Arkansas Cavalry, Union Service Records, Fold3.com (accessed September 20-27, 2015); G.A.R. Records project, SUVCW (accessed October 1, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> GAR Records project, SUVCW (accessed October 1, 2015); Letterhead of the Simon R. Curtis Post, Lafayette Mason, Soldier's Certificate No. 669888, Pension Files.

<sup>71</sup> Barbara A. Gannon, *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

who served as equal, no matter their skin color, and as such, did not explicitly identify in their records when a Post was African American. The known African American Posts were located in Little Rock, Fort Smith, Hot Springs, Brinkley, and Marianna, and are particularly interesting as they shed light on experiences of Arkansas' African American veterans, a field woefully lacking in study. We do know that state-wide gatherings of Arkansas G. A. R. posts were integrated affairs, at least until laws were passed requiring segregated accommodations. A photograph from the 1890 Department of Arkansas encampment held at Eureka Springs, for example, at former Republican governor Powell Clayton's recently opened Crescent Hotel includes at least two African-American veterans.<sup>72</sup> They are mixed in with the group, with one of the men standing in the front row, and the other a few rows back. There may also have been African-American veterans welcome at some of the northwest Arkansas Posts.

Northwest Arkansas's G. A. R. Posts show that despite growing waves of Confederate nostalgia and perceptions of reconciliation, northwest Arkansas Union veterans were, in fact, actively addressing the same national issues as their counterparts outside of the South. The Posts honored the loyal dead through Memorial Day celebrations and supported the Fayetteville National Cemetery. They held personal commemorations and attended funerals as a group. They supported widows, children, and veterans upon whom bad times had fallen, not just through their support of the pension system and testimony when asked, but often directly, by voting Post funds to individual veterans or widows. In one case, the Springdale Post insured that "Comrade Baker, deceased's, daughter Nora 12 years old" was properly prepared for attending school with

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<sup>72</sup> Photograph, Department of Arkansas Encampment 1890, Eureka Springs, AR, Paul Dolle Civil War Collection, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Arkansas Studies Institute, Little Rock.

“suitable clothing and school books.”<sup>73</sup> Even through pressure to reconcile with Confederates in the 1890s, this local activism lasted for decades.

Post records and newspaper accounts reveal especially passionate support for the Fayetteville National Cemetery and Memorial Day that directly challenge any idea that northwest Arkansas unionists were compromising their Republican integrity and G. A. R. values to make nice with “the Grays.” Like clockwork, the U. S. Grant Post in Springdale organized processions and church services every year for Memorial Day in the 1890s. On the Sunday before the holiday, the entire Post gathered at a selected church, patriotically decorated, and likely in full regalia, to hear a sermon. They then gathered at 6am on Memorial Day, with family and flowers, and formed a procession for the ten-mile journey from their G. A. R. Hall in downtown Springdale to the National Cemetery in Fayetteville. In 1891, they concurred with Fayetteville’s Travis Post on extending an invitation to no less than William Clayton to speak at Memorial Day.<sup>74</sup> Clayton was a United States’ Attorney, brother to Powell Clayton and twin of John Clayton, the Republican martyr to violent Redeemer politics. Inviting Clayton hardly effected a conciliatory note. The Posts were unsuccessful in securing Clayton as their speaker, however, and according to the *Washington County Review*, Judge John M. McClure instead delivered “a masterful address.”<sup>75</sup> McClure was a vocal Republican leader who had served as Lieutenant Col. of an African American regiment during the war. His invitation may have been even more provocative than Clayton’s. Characterized by one scholar as “the only [carpetbagger judge] Southern conservatives truly reviled,” even among a group largely disliked, McClure’s

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<sup>73</sup> U.S. Grant Post Minute Book, 21-22.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “McClure Speech,” *Washington County Review* (Fayetteville), June 11, 1891.



speech was uncompromising, and published in its entirety by the *Review*.<sup>76</sup> It provides a snapshot of early 1890s sentiment among northwest Arkansas's veterans that challenges some scholars of the era.

Judge McClure's speech indicated he was not a fan of the growing movement toward reconciliation, as "unyielding partisanship" fairly blasted from the Fayetteville National Cemetery that day. Far from an emphasis on heroism divorced from impact, he intoned "We come not here to extol, or eulogize their personal valor and bravery, although it is recorded on many a bloody field but to tell our children, so they may teach their children's children, that these dead died for the right, for God, and their native land."<sup>77</sup> David Blight, in his study of Civil War veterans and memory, *Race and Reconciliation: The Civil War in American Memory* states, "in the 1880s and 1890s, the practice of reconciliation and fraternalism emerged as dominant in veterans' culture."<sup>78</sup> Speeches, he argues, made glowing generalizations of glory, and "fit the narrative of blameless, fated reconciliation among former foes," even when they were speaking directly of the results of the war. While "unyielding partisanship still wafted from an occasional Northern or Southern reunion speech or campfire war paper," he states, "the prevailing theme was the equality of soldiers' sacrifice on both sides."<sup>79</sup> McClure's speech does not support Blight's argument, as over and over he emphasized the not only the glory of the Union dead, but the rightness of their cause. At one point, he even managed to directly address the end of slavery whilst gloating over the lowered status of the former Southern aristocracy: "Slavery, in its old form, has passed away. The cavalier, who fed and fattened on it and who imagined because of

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<sup>76</sup> Joseph A. Ranney, *In the Wake of Slavery: Civil War, Civil Rights, and the Reconstruction of Southern Law* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2006), 24.

<sup>77</sup> "McClure Speech."

<sup>78</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

the food on which he lived, he was greater than another, now treads the same ground as you and I do.”<sup>80</sup> This is hardly the common sense of “manliness, valor, sacrifice, and a mutual sense of honor” Blight finds.<sup>81</sup> McClure’s speech falls much closer to what Blight’s challenger, Caroline E. Janney finds, that “former foes” did not come together “because of shared ideas about white supremacy or a tacit willingness to forget slavery on the part of Union veterans.”<sup>82</sup> That is not to say McClure was unaware of the changing tide around the country, he stated, “We bear no animosity toward any many who did his duty as a confederate soldier. We are willing to concede he thought he was fighting for the right, and that he was conscientious in thinking so. They who forced Christ to crucifixion were conscientious. They who crushed liberty, in Poland, did not lack bravery.” He was just unwilling to go along with the spirit of reconciliation: “It will be time enough to talk of letting bygones be bygones, when our adversaries cease relighting the fires on the altars of the lost cause.”<sup>83</sup>

It is the visual impact of the Grand Army of the Republic, marching again across conquered Arkansas to honor their valiant dead, which drives home the point that this was a group with little concern for the feelings of the losers. McClure’s speech was hardly conciliatory in tone, but it was, after all, preaching to the choir. It is doubtful there were former Confederates in the crowd, though the U. S. Grant Post did propose the next fall the idea of hosting a bean supper and inviting “the Grays.” The G. A. R. Posts of northwest Arkansas continued to publicly perform patriotic rituals in support of the federal government for decades. References to G. A. R. commemorations of Memorial Day appear in area newspapers well into the twentieth century. A

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 207.

<sup>82</sup> Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>83</sup> “McClure Speech.”

notice of “Federal Memorial Day Services Tomorrow” ran in the *Fayetteville Democrat* on May 29, 1916. Hosted by Fayetteville’s Travis Post the traditions of the 1890s were still going strong as “in addition to locals, many people from nearby cities and towns and rural sections are expected to attend the exercises.” Opening remarks were given by none other than Thomas J. Hunt, followed by speeches, song, prayer, and a reading of Lincoln’s Gettysburg address.<sup>84</sup> The only thing that silenced northwest Arkansas’s Union veterans was their eventual passing.

The northwest Arkansas G. A. R. Posts also joined the national push for government support of veterans beyond the pension system, especially in relation to soldier’s homes. This concept receives brief mention in Skocpol’s book and benefits from a longer treatment in Patrick J. Kelly’s *Creating a National Home*.<sup>85</sup> Kelly supports Skocpol’s idea that the G.A.R. and the veterans’ pension movement introduced the American electorate to the idea of more direct federal involvement in citizen’s lives. The system of National Homes he describes was extensive, and eventually became show places tourists would visit. Kelly goes so far as to state the homes served as “potent, if benign symbols of the emergent state” displaying it in “its most compassionate and nurturing form.”<sup>86</sup> In December of 1891, the Department of Arkansas issued a circular urging the appropriation of the recently decommissioned Little Rock Arsenal for a Soldier’s Home for Union veterans. By January of 1892, the Springdale Post, and presumably others, had collected signatures supporting the idea and returned it to the Department

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<sup>84</sup> *Fayetteville Democrat*, May 29, 1916

<sup>85</sup> Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1997).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Headquarters.<sup>87</sup> Once again, northwest Arkansas's veterans were well connected with national issues, as well as publicly embracing a new role for the state in the lives of citizens.

The G. A. R. made a conscious decision to become a terminal organization, destined to die with its last member, unwelcoming of even veterans of later wars. If Civil War veterans felt the Union owed them a debt, it was one that could be eventually met and settled. While Skocpol makes the argument that corruption and abuse made continuation of such social programs unpalatable, it may also have been compounded by the fact that their continuation was never considered from the start. While the corruption of the system was certainly harmful to the political parties at the time, in the view of most, it was an eventual self-solving problem as pension beneficiaries died off. Historian James Marten would argue that part of the challenge in continuing social programs of any kind is that the perceived dependence they created was frowned upon by most in American society during the period; if the dying out of veterans meant the end of social programs, most would not see that as problematic.<sup>88</sup>

It is difficult to quantify the final, full impact of the pension system and the Grand Army of the Republic on northwest Arkansas. Certainly the money that came into the region as a result was helpful. Union veterans tended to group themselves together after the war, and communities from Sulphur Springs in Benton County, to Aurora and Drake's Creek in Madison County, and Billingsley in Washington County were greatly affected by the high number of families in the community receiving checks each month. Carroll County to this day has "Pension Mountain,"

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<sup>87</sup> U.S. Grant Post Minute Book, p. 34-36; The Arsenal was not turned into a soldier's home but was given to the city of Little Rock in 1892 and subsequently turned into a park. It is now known as MacArthur Park, named for Douglas MacArthur who was born at the Arsenal in 1880 and is the site of the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History. Austin Hsu, "Little Rock Arsenal," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed October 8, 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Marten, *Sing Not War*, 11-16.

named such for the Union veterans who lived there for decades after the war. It is difficult to separate the demise of these communities from the larger twentieth century economic pressures on small Arkansas towns, but it could not have helped when these veterans died out. The social and cultural impact is ambiguous. An image of the entire membership of the Phillip Sheridan Post at Aurora in the 1880s shows thirty-nine men.<sup>89</sup> Another photograph from roughly the same time shows twenty men of the Rowan Mack Post at Sulphur Springs in Benton County dressed up for Decoration Day.<sup>90</sup> Neither town ever had a large population and so many Union veterans had to have had some kind of effect on the community, yet popular memory of unionists appears to have been lost in the wave of Confederate nostalgia Judge McClure raged against. There are some signs Union veterans wished to leave a lasting legacy. Alexander Dorsey named sons Sherman, Sheridan and Lincoln, born in 1888, 1890 and 1897, respectively.<sup>91</sup> Even at the height of what is considered by most to be a period of reconciliation between the North and the South, these boys were not only named after Union generals, but some of the most notorious. Yet a contemporary of the Dorsey boys was Sherman McGinnis, grandson of Elisha, was born in 1897. His middle name was Lee.<sup>92</sup>

Issues of popular memory and legacy aside, northwest Arkansas's Civil War unionists were unique in Arkansas history. No other generation experienced such change in their lifetime. They came to Arkansas as children and over their lifetimes experienced the growth of the antebellum years, the devastation of the war, and the struggle to rebuild. They experimented with a variety of cash crops in an effort to make a living in the region, some more successfully than

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<sup>89</sup> S-2002-1-127, Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, Arkansas.

<sup>90</sup> S-85-60-7, *ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Population Schedule, Madison County, AR.

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

others. They witnessed the arrival of the railroads, the clear-cutting of the Ozarks, and the growth of true towns in the area. All of that, however, was experienced by everyone of their generation. Where unionists were special was in how they interacted with the federal government. They were the first members of a political party that would dominate the nation for the rest of their lives. They fought for and were granted compensation for hardship affiliation with the Union brought. They were the only Arkansans to benefit from the first modern form of government aid through the Pension program. They were members of one of the first civilian organizations that was truly national in membership and scope. Whether recognized or not, the experience of northwest Arkansas's unionists shaped the region for generations to come.

## Afterword

### The Victory of the Lost Cause

In 1914, Erasmus Stirman died. A well-known and well-liked Fayetteville politician and merchant, late of Colorado for health reasons, Stirman fought the entire war on the side of the Confederacy. The *Fayetteville Democrat* noted, “At the close of the war Colonel Stirman returned to his home in Fayetteville, but never surrendered nor signed the oath of allegiance.”<sup>1</sup> This claim is repeated admiringly in various references to Stirman since his death. It is not, however, true. Stirman did swear an oath. The logbook from the provost marshal at Fayetteville recorded on August 7, 1865, that Erasmus Stirman took the oath issued in May by President Andrew Johnson. The provost marshal in 1865 was Thomas J. Hunt, formerly of the federal First Arkansas Cavalry. Hunt was still living in Fayetteville when the *Democrat* ran Stirman’s obituary. One can only imagine what he thought of Stirman’s family’s revision of history, but as an active member of the Travis Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, we can assume he was unimpressed.

The history of unionists in northwest Arkansas has been chronicled here, from the nuanced decision-making about affiliation that created them in the early 1860s, to the development of a small but dedicated presence of Republicans in the area by the twentieth century. But most current northwest Arkansas residents, even the descendents of those very unionists, would find the fact that they existed unbelievable, especially in such large numbers. Civil War memory has been a much considered topic among historians for the last few years. From the excellent *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* by Nina

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<sup>1</sup> *Fayetteville Democrat*, January 15, 1914.

Silber to David Blight's towering *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* and Caroline Janney's challenge *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, the subject has been thoroughly examined, at least as a national phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Silber argues that northerners romanticized the whiteness, homogeneity, and character of the South during the Gilded Age as a means of dealing with the incredible upheaval, change, and conflict of the era. The result was reconciliation between the two regions as they bonded over a common identity as white men, and the Civil War became just a fight between brothers. Blight too finds that African Americans suffered from the reconciliation between whites in 1890s, as veterans from both sides eventually found "a smoother path to bonds of fraternalism and mutual glory."<sup>3</sup> The rebuilding of bonds between northern and southern whites were fraught, but sincere, in Blight's view, and allowed the country to move into the twentieth century as one nation. Janney, on the other hand, challenges the sincerity of reconciliation and argues it was often merely performance. She finds a great deal of resistance to the idea, especially among Union veterans who, much like McClure in the previous chapter, took deep offense to Confederates' claims that their cause had been honorable and just. The resistance of southern women's organizations to reconciliation are also a part of Janney's argument. "Without the fraternal bonds of soldiering or political and financial incentives," she argues of the women's groups, they "found little reason to commiserate with their counterparts across the Mason-Dixon line."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).; Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 7.



Janney's view is more accurate for northwest Arkansas, especially because the most powerful keepers of memory were women's organizations. Though the G. A. R. attempted to create Women's Auxiliaries, they were always in the shadow of the G. A. R., and when those men died, so did the Auxiliaries.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the Southern Memorial Society and the United Daughters of the Confederacy were started by women and for women, and only grew in power and influence. Washington County had one of the earliest Confederate women's memorial associations in the country and they did not seem very interested in the pageantry of reconciliation either. They focused much more clearly and enthusiastically on protecting and preserving the memory of the honorable Confederate dead. Their members joined the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the 1890s, and both groups gained members from out of state in much the same way as the G. A. R. groups, through the immigration of the Civil War generation from other states. Most members of the Fayetteville chapter of the U. D. C. claimed fathers and grandfathers who had fought in Confederate units from somewhere other than Arkansas.<sup>6</sup> What northwest Arkansas's women's groups did not preserve is the memory of the guerrilla war. Sibley, Blight, and even Janney fail to consider the guerrilla war as a factor in reconciliation, and, therefore, none of them can fully explain why the Civil War is remembered in northwest Arkansas the way that it is, namely, a near complete embrace of the Lost Cause, despite the fact the region was incredibly divided.

It is not the disappearance of African Americans from the narrative of the war that allows the memory of Erasmus Stirman to triumph over T. J. Hunt in the Arkansas Ozarks, it is the disappearance of Tuck Smith, the northwest Arkansas guerrilla who kidnapped old unionist men

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<sup>5</sup> The U. S. Grant Post notes multiple attempts to start a Women's Auxiliary, but the efforts were always led by men. U.S. Grant Post Minute Book.

<sup>6</sup> United Daughters of the Confederacy, Mildred Lee Chapter No. 98 Collection, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

and harassed Hunt throughout the war, and all the men like him. The Lost Cause is a story of tragic honor and nobility in the face of defeat by an outside invader. There is no place in it for the dirty, brutal, and often cruel fighters of the guerrilla war, even if they were on the “right” side. So they were white-washed out of the story.

The presence of Arkansas unionists was also problematic. The mythology of the Lost Cause could not tolerate the dissonance of a divided South. Unionists had to disappear too. Aside from the battlefield parks at Prairie Grove and Pea Ridge which at least attempt to present a balanced commemoration of the war, the two most visible Civil War monuments in northwest Arkansas are the Confederate statue on the square in Bentonville and a plaque to Capt. T. J. Kelley on the square in Fayetteville. Bentonville’s statue is dedicated to James H. Berry, who, prior to his service as governor and senator, served honorably in formal Confederate service. He even lost part of his right leg at Corinth.<sup>7</sup> Capt. Kelley was a veteran of the Mexican War, and, as the plaque notes, organized one of the first companies of the Thirty-fourth Arkansas Infantry.<sup>8</sup> During the era of reconciliation and memorializing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not a single monument was erected to the Confederate-affiliated guerrilla fighters of northwest Arkansas, nor to its Union soldiers. The United Daughters of the Confederacy in northwest Arkansas fought valiantly to protect the battlefields at Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove, where men met in formal, honorable conflict, but not the ground where nine suspected Confederate guerrillas were executed without trial in Madison County by federal troops.<sup>9</sup> There is no Confederate marker on Tuck Smith’s grave. No memorials to civilian victims of guerrilla

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<sup>7</sup> George W. Balogh, “James Henderson Berry,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net) (accessed October 8, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> The plaque is located on the northwest corner of the building that current houses the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History.

<sup>9</sup> Josephine Crump Papers.

warfare, not even Confederate victims, were erected either. Not even in 2014 was Smith included when a local Washington County group scoured 150 years of area newspapers to note every reference to a Confederate veteran and collected them into a 1,513-page document, even though the *Fayetteville Democrat* printed letter to the editor upon his passing in 1909 the searchers could not have missed.<sup>10</sup>

Though the mythology of the Lost Cause has obscured the impact of northwest Arkansas's unionists, their legacy is undeniable and ripe for redemption. They played a critical role in rebuilding the region in the lean postwar years. The flagship institution of the University of Arkansas system is the direct result of unionism, and it is located in Fayetteville because of northwest Arkansas's unionists. The Fayetteville National Cemetery where more Union dead sleep than from any other war, is another legacy of unionism. The greatest landmark in Eureka Springs—the Crescent Hotel—was built by Republican Governor Powell Clayton. Indeed many northwest Arkansas towns can trace their roots to Republican transplants in the postwar period. The work of scholars like Brian Robertson at the Butler Center and his study of the Second Arkansas Cavalry and Georgena Duncan's attention to Arkansans with divided loyalties are rediscovering Arkansas's unionist past. Even local historical societies are starting to see the merit of recognizing the contributions of unionists in their programs on the Civil War. This dissertation tracing the origins of Unionism and the critical role of Republicans in shaping northwest Arkansas even into the present is an even stronger bid to balance the narrative.

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<sup>10</sup> *Confederate Veterans and Families*, Luigenbuel Funeral Home, 2014; *Fayetteville Democrat*.

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