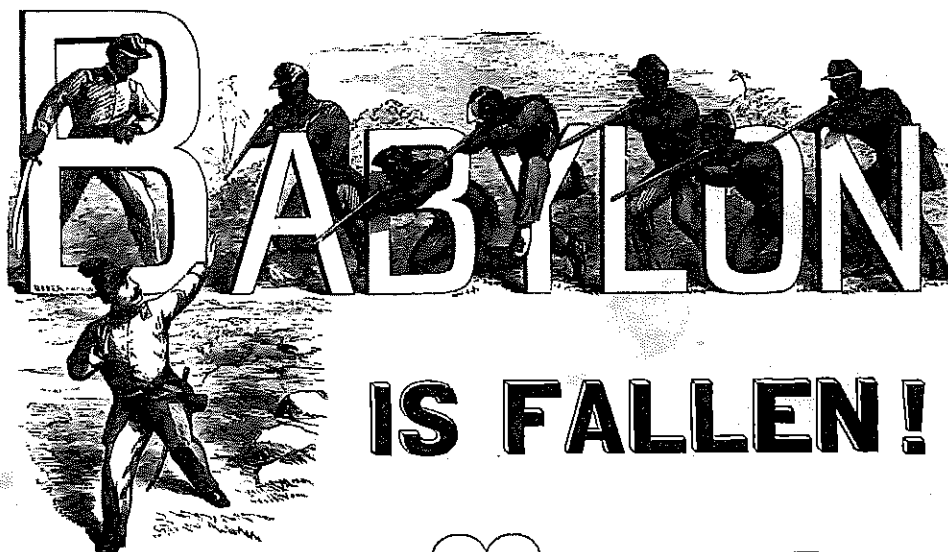


11

The Civil War: America's Second Revolution 1861-1865

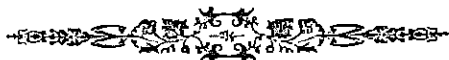
SEQUEL TO
"KINGDOM COMING."



IS FALLEN!

SONG AND CHORUS.

WORDS AND MUSIC BY
HENRY C. WORK.



CHICAGO:
PUBLISHED BY ROOT & CADY, 95 CLARK STREET.

The Nation Disintegrates

The Forces Driving Secession
Southerners Consider Secession
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Comparing Military Resources
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Union Officials Consider Emancipation

The Cold Realities of War

Soldiers’ Lives
Ailing in Body and Soul

War Transforms the North

The Northern Economic Boom
Women Expand the Wartime Workforce
Dissent and Protest in the Union States
Building Consensus Through Military Victory
African Americans Battle Confederates and Prejudice

War Transforms the South

Urbanization and Industrialization
Dissent and Protest in the Confederate States

Military Victory Assured

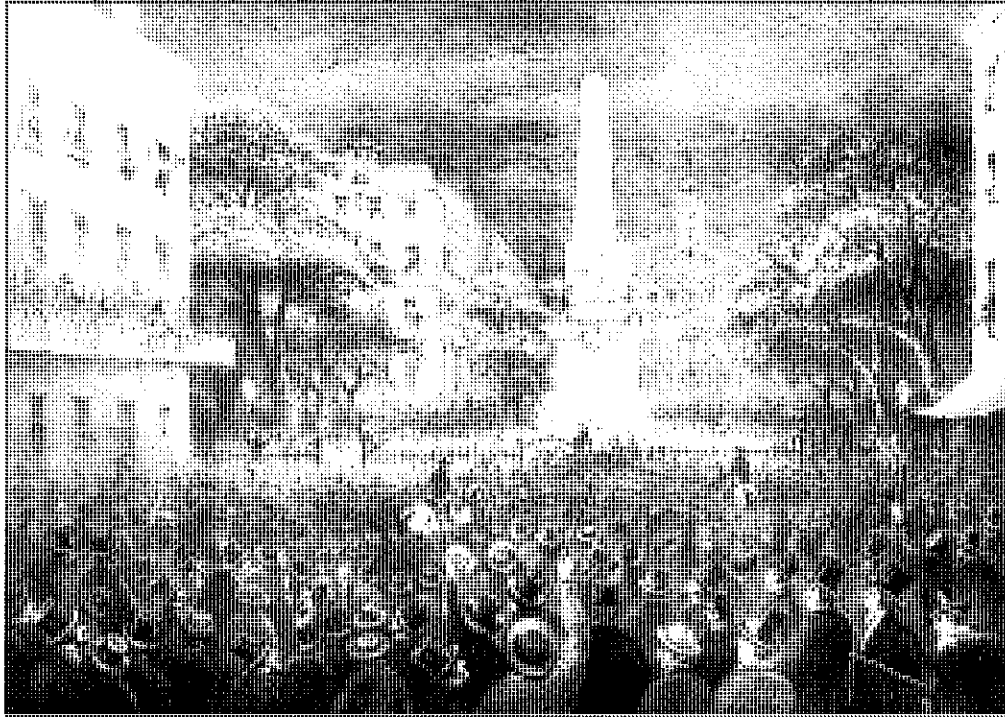
**Conclusion: Revolutionary Consequences
and Daunting Questions**

ON APRIL 12, 1861, southern guns opened fire as a U.S. ship tried to deliver supplies to Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and the American Civil War began. Responding to the outbreak of war, antislavery agitator Amy Post proclaimed, “The abolitionists surely have a work to do now in influencing and directing the bloody struggle, that it may end in Emancipation, as the only basis of a true and permanent peace.” Her Rochester, New York, neighbor and abolitionist coworker Frederick Douglass agreed. Speaking in June 1861, he declared, “not a slave should be left a slave in the returning footprints of the American army gone to put down this slaveholding rebellion. Sound policy, not less than humanity, demands the instant liberation of every slave in the rebel states.”

Throughout the North, African Americans such as Douglass and white allies such as Post quickly came to believe that the war opened a door to emancipation. As one free black newspaper editor argued, “out of strife will come freedom, though the methods are not yet clearly apparent.” Yet the path that was so clear to abolitionists was filled with obstacles. When northerners went to war to keep the South in the Union, only a minority of them embraced the radical views held by Amy Post and Frederick Douglass. Most believed that they were fighting to preserve rights that had been won in the American Revolution, but they focused on opportunities for freeborn workers and farmers to attain economic independence. Willing to allow slavery to remain where it already existed, they feared that the institution’s spread into western territories would profoundly threaten the free-labor ideal. Not until 1863 would President Abraham Lincoln declare the emancipation of slaves a goal of the war effort; and even then, many northern whites continued

“Babylon Is Fallen!”

An illustrated sheet-music cover published in 1863. An ardent abolitionist whose home was a stop on the Underground Railroad, Henry Clay Work wrote a number of popular Civil War songs. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.



The First Flag of Independence Raised in the South, by the Citizens of Savannah, Ga. November 8, 1860

According to this lithograph, the earliest symbol of secession was the “Don’t Tread on Me” snake — an image that was familiar to many Americans, having appeared on numerous flags and banners during the American Revolution. R. H. Howell (after Henry Cleenewercke), 1861, lithograph with tint-stone, 13 × 14 inches — Boston Athenaeum.

to believe that African Americans were inferior to whites and unprepared for the rights of full citizens. The Civil War, then, involved not only military battles between North and South, but also social and political struggles within the North to determine the aims and outcomes of the long and bloody conflict that followed the firing on Fort Sumter.

The South, too, faced disagreements within its borders, most notably between slaves and owners, but also among whites in different regions and with different stakes in perpetuating slavery. The distinct interests that dominated particular sections of the South were apparent from the moment of Lincoln’s election in November 1860, which forced the hand of the slaveholders. Within three months, slaveholders convinced seven states of the Lower South to secede from the United States. These southern states formed an independent nation, the Confederate States of America. Their secession set off a crisis that rocked America, prompting debates among whites in other slaveholding states over whether to join the Confederacy or remain in the United States. Those who favored secession drew on the symbols and rhetoric of the American Revolution to declare their independence, as an oppressed minority, from the tyranny of Republican rule.

Most white Americans, then, South and North, went to war to defend their version of revolutionary ideals and to maintain, rather than change, the world they knew. Post and Douglass recognized early in the war that this was an epic battle between slavery and freedom, but the vast majority of Americans were unprepared for the brutal ordeal that the Civil War became. Yet as the battles that were fought, soldiers who were killed, and years that

were spent embroiled in conflict multiplied, the war did inspire a revolution. White women, North and South, entered the labor force in numbers that had never before been imagined. Working people developed concerns and connections that reached well beyond their local communities. Government extended its reach as well, regulating more and more areas of daily life. Most significant of all, the Civil War emancipated the four million African Americans who were in bondage—enslaved women and men who now claimed the legacy of the Revolution as their own.

The Nation Disintegrates

Neither southern nor northern whites were united in the months leading to war. Despite these uncertainties, South Carolina led the secession movement, declaring its independence from the United States on December 20, 1860, just over a month after Lincoln's election. In the early weeks of 1861, the other Deep South states of Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, which were most dependent on slavery and farthest from the seat of federal power, followed suit. On February 9, a month before Lincoln took office, representatives from these seven states met in Montgomery, Alabama, to establish the Confederate States of America. They adopted a provisional constitution and elected a Mississippi slave owner and former U.S. senator, Jefferson Davis, as their president.

In response to the establishment of the Confederacy, inhabitants of other southern states had to decide whether to join the secession movement. Their northern counterparts faced an equally critical choice: whether to allow slaveholding states to form an independent nation or go to war to bring them back into the United States.

The Forces Driving Secession Large slaveholders in the Deep South believed that Lincoln's electoral victory blocked the further growth of slavery and thus placed its future in doubt. As one planter at Alabama's secession convention argued, "Expansion seems to be the law and destiny and necessity of our institutions. To remain healthful and prosperous within . . . it seems essential that we should grow without." Shortly after his election, Lincoln assured a southern acquaintance, Congressman Alexander H. Stephens, that he would not directly or indirectly interfere with slavery where it already existed, but he did plan to keep slavery out of new territories. Lincoln summed up the issue to Stephens: "You think slavery is right and ought to be extended; while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. That I suppose is the rub." Not long thereafter, Stephens became vice president of the Confederacy.

There were also grave concerns that the Republican Party would ignore the laws of the land as long as it suited their political interests. From the

perspective of southern slaveholders, the federal government had already failed to implement fully both the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857. These concerns intensified once southern states began to secede. To keep border states such as Maryland in the United States, President Lincoln put secessionists in jail, arrested state legislators, limited freedom of the press, and suspended the right of habeas corpus, which protects citizens against arbitrary arrest and detention. This last move was necessary, Lincoln believed, so that those who were disloyal to the nation could be easily detained and their cases tried in military rather than civilian courts. Secessionists responded that the formation of an independent nation was the only way to ensure that southern states were not subject to such abuses of federal authority.

Slaveholders had an even more immediate reason for supporting secession: the fear that a Republican government in Washington would lead to a massive uprising of slaves. They remembered John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. One southern newspaper had warned at the time that the region was "slumbering over a volcano, whose smoldering fires may, at any quiet starry midnight, blacken the social sky with the smoke of desolation and death." Some white southerners believed that abolitionists were infiltrating the region and "tampering with our slaves, and furnishing them with arms and poisons to accomplish their hellish designs." The Republican victory in 1860 sparked new fears that "subversive" ideas would "infect" the slave quarters, inciting slaves to revolt. "Now that the black radical Republicans have the power I suppose they will [John] Brown us all," punned one South Carolinian.

Slaveholders' fears and frustrations were compounded by their ongoing concern about the sentiments of white southerners who did not own slaves, a full three-quarters of the southern white population. "I mistrust our own people more than I fear all of the efforts of the Abolitionists," a politician in South Carolina had admitted in 1859. The Republicans, they thought, would highlight the social and economic inequalities among southern whites to recruit nonslaveholders to their party. A southern newspaper warned, "The contest for slavery will no longer be one between the North and the South. It will be in the South between people of the South." Only southern independence, many planters believed, could effectively isolate southern yeomen from their potential Republican allies and thus protect the institution of slavery.

Southerners Consider Secession The views of southern yeomen, who had long lived on the margins of plantation society, reinforced planters' concern. Most nonslaveholding whites disparaged slaves for what they considered their abject dependency and apparent powerlessness, but they also disliked the haughty pretensions and prerogatives of planters. In the South,

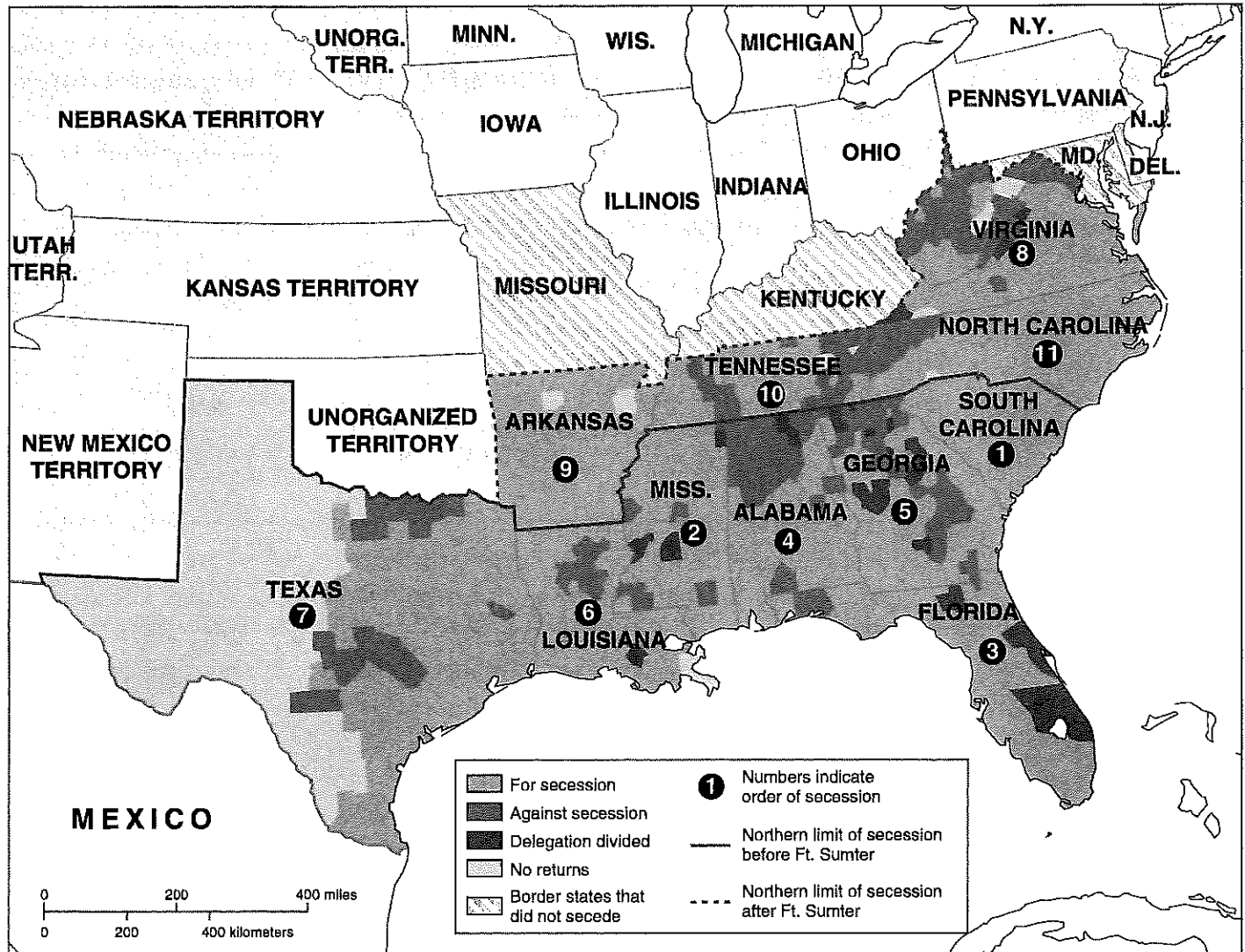
as in the North, small farmers and landless whites were drawn to the ideas of free labor and free soil. They resented having the more restrictive policies of planters imposed on them. One farmer from Floyd County, Georgia, expressed this resentment in a letter to the *Rome Weekly Courier*. He and other militiamen had been called to muster one Saturday on the town square as a way of forcing them to listen to a prosecessionist speech by Walter T. Colquitt, a Georgia planter and political leader.

This [sham muster sort of angered] me that I should be compelled to have the same politics as my general, and I and some of my neighbors are determined more than ever, that we will be for the [Unionists]. . . . I should like to know whether this is a free country, or whether we are to be dragged out from our business to gratify the military men and the political demagogues.

Other southerners also questioned the wisdom of separating from the federal union. In the Upper South, both poor and prosperous whites were less avid for secession than their brethren in the Deep South. The states of Virginia, Arkansas, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Delaware, and Maryland had a smaller percentage of slaves and slaveholders than did their counterparts who initially formed the Confederate States of America (Map 11.1). Most whites in the Upper South favored a compromise that would maintain both slavery and the nation. The presence of a large number of former Whigs and moderate Democrats made these areas more critical of secessionist principles. The recognition that geography placed them in the path of war and suspicions about the ultimate goals of planters in the Deep South also contributed to unrest in the region. In three Upper South states, no formal discussion of secession occurred before the outbreak of war; in three others, conventions met and rejected secession; and in two, voters rejected the idea of even holding a convention.

Anticipating resistance in the Upper South and among nonslaveholding whites throughout the region, secessionists did not propose a popular vote on the issue. Of the seven states that seceded in early 1861, only Texas allowed voters to speak directly on the question. A delegate to South Carolina's secession convention observed that "the common people" did not understand the issues. "But who ever waited for the common people when a great movement was to be made?" he asked. "We must make the move and force them to follow." Here, the master class's habit of command was wielded over poorer whites as well as blacks to uphold the existing social, economic, and political hierarchy.

Still, most southern yeomen followed their leaders and supported the Confederacy. They did so voluntarily, mainly because of their ties to large planters. Many small farmers had started farming cotton and tobacco in the 1850s and, in the process, grew dependent on large planters for help with



marketing and labor. These close economic ties, reinforced by bonds of kinship and the belief in states' rights and white superiority, led most yeoman farmers to support secession.

Moreover, the vast majority of southern whites, whatever their economic fortunes, defined their own liberty in opposition to black bondage. Fears of racial amalgamation also inspired support for secession among the masses of white Southerners. One Georgia secessionist offered this typical warning to his nonslaveholding neighbors: "Do you love your mother, your wife, your sister, your daughter? If you remain in a nation ruled by Republicans, TEN years or less our CHILDREN will be the slaves of Negroes." With such images in mind, most nonslaveholding whites agreed with the slaveholder who said, "These are desperate means, but then we must recollect that we live in desperate times."

The North Assesses the Price of Peace Times were desperate in the North as well. Southern secession threatened to throw the nation into a

MAP 11.1 The Process of Secession

The first states to secede from the Union (as noted by the numbers on the map) were those that had the highest concentration of slaves, all of which were located in the Deep South. The states of the Upper South, such as Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, did not secede until after the firing on Fort Sumter. Several border states, that is, states in which slavery was legal but that were geographically closest to the North, remained in the Union throughout the war, although many whites in these areas supported the Confederacy.

financial panic. The cities of the Northeast and the towns along the Ohio River were hardest hit. Stock market prices plummeted, banks shut their doors, factories laid off workers, and unsold goods piled up on docks. Merchants and textile manufacturers worried about the permanent loss of the southern cotton crop, and bankers worried about whether southerners would repay their loans. Many northern businessmen, fearing for their future, called for peace at almost any price.

Some northern working people joined in the call for compromise, concerned that the continuing conflict would lead to mass unemployment. Meeting in Philadelphia on February 22, a group of trade unionists from eight northern and border states denounced the secessionist “traitors” but also called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. “Our Government never can be sustained by bloodshed,” they proclaimed, and opposed “any measures that will evoke civil war.”

Yet other working-class citizens feared that compromise would undermine the Republican Party’s commitment to free soil. An elaborate compromise, offered by Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden, suggested they might be right. He proposed that the North accept a return to the principles of the 1820 Missouri Compromise (see Chapter 6). In all western territory then held by the United States, slavery would be prohibited north of 36°30’ and permanently protected south of it, including land “hereafter acquired”—an open invitation to the acquisition of more southern territory for slavery. Crittenden also proposed constitutional amendments that would prohibit Congress from abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, forbid federal interference with the internal slave trade, and provide compensation for any slaveholder who was prevented from recovering escaped slaves in the North.

Northern free blacks and abolitionists as well as working men who were committed to free-soil principles opposed such measures. Frederick Douglass spoke for the opposition when he said, “If the Union can only be maintained by new concessions to the slaveholders, if it can only be stuck together and held together by a new drain on the negro’s blood, then . . . let the Union perish.” And Lincoln secretly advised Republican congressmen to “entertain no proposition for a compromise in regard to the extension of slavery.” In the end, Congress defeated the Crittenden measures and, in doing so, expressed the political commitments of the Republican rank and file: the workers, farmers, and small businessmen who had elected Lincoln president.

The Civil War Begins Still, when Lincoln took control of the national government, he was not yet prepared to force the South back into the nation by military means. The new president nevertheless needed to demonstrate strength and therefore focused his attention on Fort Sumter in South Carolina’s Charleston Harbor. A small federal garrison there was running low on food and medical supplies. Lincoln dispatched reinforcements to Fort

Sumter in April 1861, but he promised to use force only if the Confederates blocked a peaceful effort to send in supplies.

When a U.S. ship set sail for Charleston on April 8, the new Confederate government faced a major dilemma: it could either attack the vessel and bear the responsibility for firing the first shot of the war or allow the supplies to be delivered, thus permitting what it had labeled a foreign power to maintain a fort in one of its key harbors. Jefferson Davis and his advisers chose the more aggressive course, demanding the unconditional surrender of the Fort Sumter garrison. The commanding officer refused, and on April 12, Confederate guns opened fire on the fort. Two days later, Fort Sumter surrendered. The Civil War had begun.

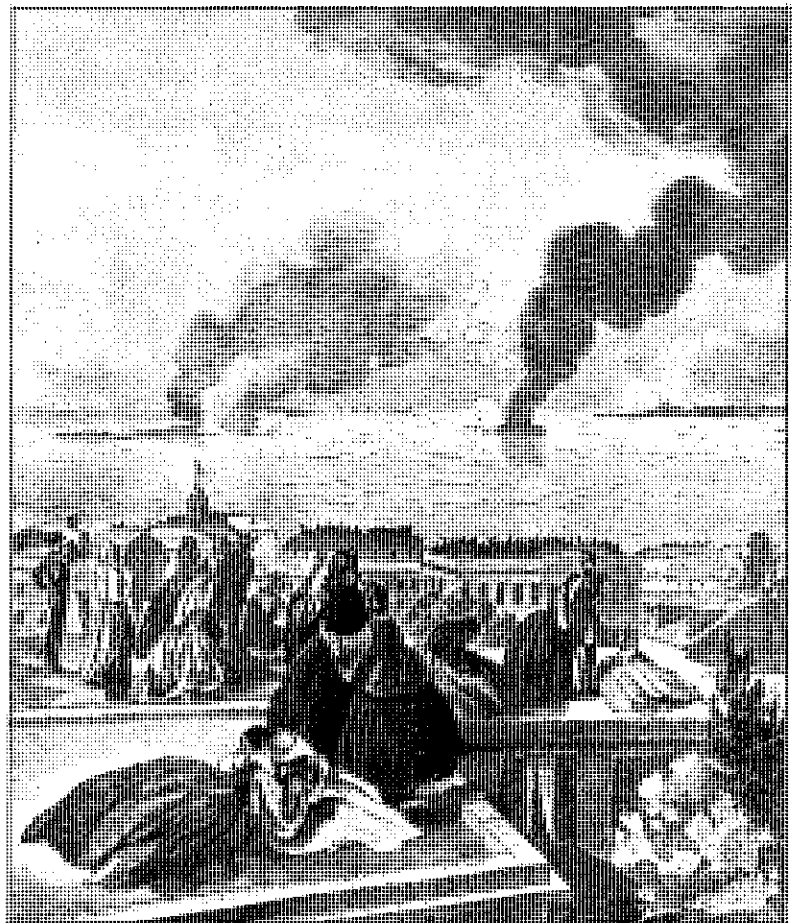
The North and the South faced very different tasks in this war. The South had to defend its own territory and force the North to halt military action. The North had to bring the South to its knees, which in military terms meant invading the South and isolating it from potential allies abroad. Most northern policymakers believed that these ends could be accomplished without challenging the institution of slavery within the South.

But from the first shot, enslaved southerners knew that their future depended on the outcome of the Civil War, and they looked for chances to join the conflict. Their actions, both individually and collectively, had a profound impact not only on the course of the war, but also on the aims for which it would be fought. The North went to war in April 1861 to preserve the United States and to stop the expansion of slavery, but the actions of African Americans and their abolitionist allies, along with the progress of the war, eventually forced the North to redirect its efforts and abolish the institution of slavery entirely.

The war also transformed the idea of the Union. Initially, a synonym for “the United States,” the term *Union* evolved as hostilities erupted. Increasingly, *Union* was used to refer to the free states that opposed the Confederacy. The Confederacy, too, was in transition as several states in the Upper South joined their southern brethren following the outbreak of war. Ultimately, *Union* came to mean a nation free of slavery, which could be achieved only by the

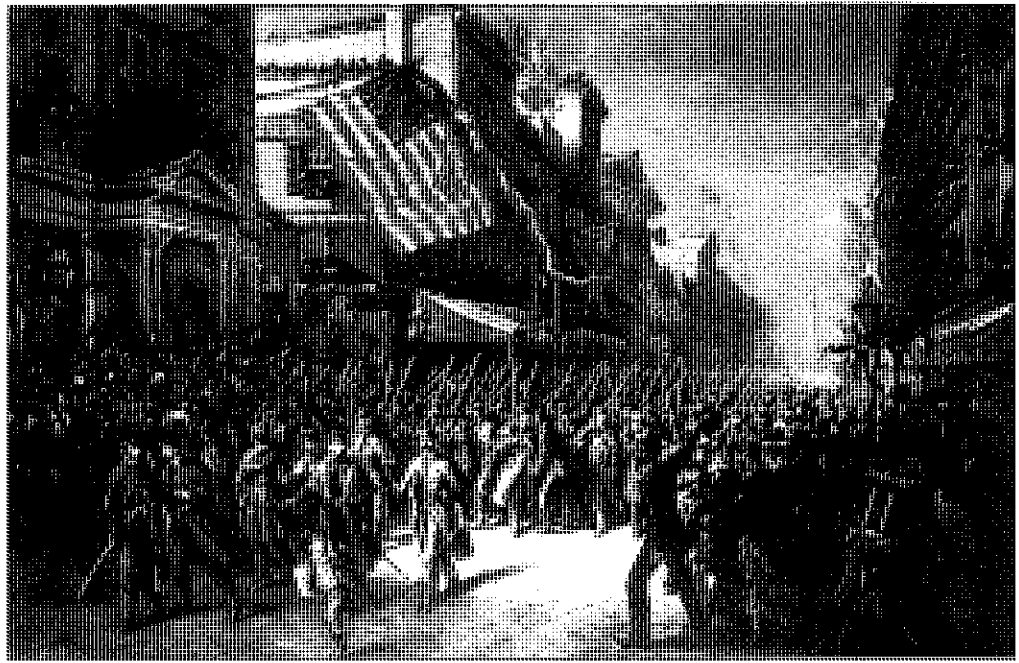
Secessionist Spectators

Residents of Charleston watched the bombardment of Fort Sumter from the city's rooftops on April 12, 1861. *Harper's Weekly*, May 4, 1861 — American Social History Project.



The March of the Seventh Regiment down Broadway

Newspaper artist Thomas Nast sketched the tumultuous send-off of New York's national guard regiment on April 19, 1861. Eight years later, Nast completed this oil painting of the scene. Thomas Nast, 1869, oil on canvas, 5 feet 6 inches × 8 feet — The Seventh Regiment Fund, Inc.



defeat of the Confederacy, the emancipation of enslaved African Americans, and the reunion of the United States.

The War for the Union and Against Slavery

In the wake of Fort Sumter, northerners lined up behind Lincoln's war policy. The loudest advocates of compromise—manufacturers and merchants, intent on maintaining economic links with the cotton South—now rushed to support Lincoln, hoping that force would succeed where compromise had failed. The outbreak of fighting also galvanized northern workers. William Sylvis—who had earlier advocated that Philadelphia workers endorse the Crittenden compromise—raised an army company among his fellow iron molders. Foreign-born workers joined the patriotic muster. Germans organized ten regiments in New York State alone. New York City's Irish formed a number of regiments, including the Sixty-Ninth, which headed south on April 23, 1861, and played a significant role in the First Battle of Bull Run. Midwestern farmers and farm laborers, the backbone of the free-soil movement, also enlisted in large numbers, making up nearly half the Union Army. The wives and daughters of these volunteers also waxed enthusiastic for the war, believing—as did their menfolk—that the fighting would be short-lived.

Still, despite all the fervor for the Union cause, the goals of the war were not yet clear. It would take efforts by African Americans, diplomatic concerns among Union leaders, prodding by abolitionists, and a year and a half of military engagement to convince a majority of northerners that fighting

to unify the nation and stop the expansion of slavery was not enough. Only then would the war to save the Union become also a war to end, rather than merely contain, slavery.

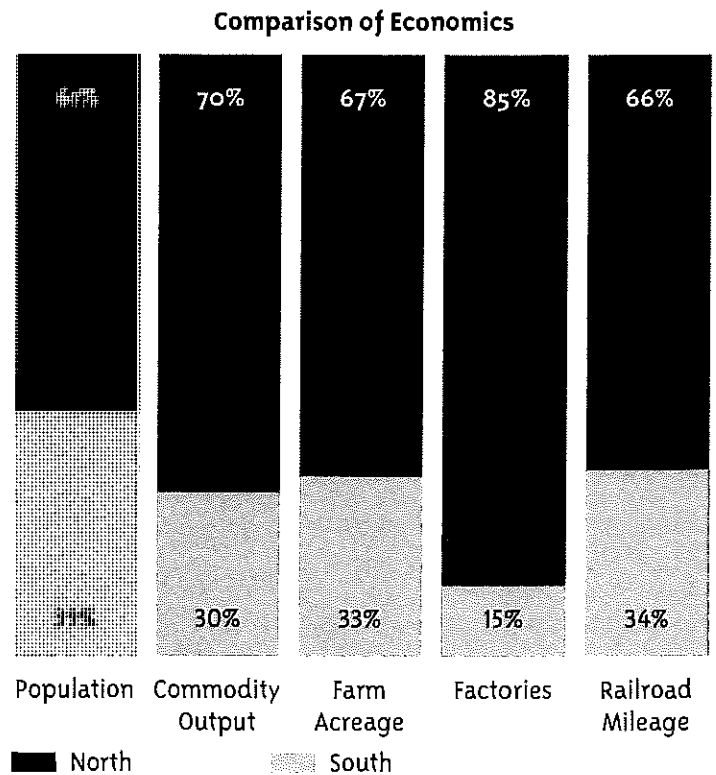
Comparing Military Resources From a statistical perspective, the Union controlled most of the material resources that were essential to war. The Union states had a considerably larger population than that of the Confederate states, and the Confederacy included several million slaves who were not likely to be armed for combat. The Union also far outstripped the Confederacy in the production of commodities. Although the gap between the two sections was greatest in manufacturing, the North also led the South in the amount of land under cultivation and the quantity and value of agricultural products. The North had far more miles of railroad track, too, ensuring greater facility in moving troops and supplies. And the Union could launch far more ships, a critical advantage in sustaining naval blockades of southern harbors (Figure 11.1).

Yet despite the North's material superiority, the South had many advantages that proved critical early in the war. Three were particularly significant. First, Southerners were fighting on their own ground. This gave them both knowledge of the terrain and a distinct psychological edge, which was often expressed as arrogance about their military superiority. Second, although the Confederate states held only 39 percent of the total population of the United States, black and white, slave labor initially freed a much larger proportion of white working-age men for military service. Third, the military tradition of the slaveholding class took on crucial significance. The Confederacy had the support not only of more than 280 officers who had been trained at West Point, but also of nearly all those trained at Virginia Military Institute, the Citadel, and other southern military academies. Among the officers who had gained their experience on the battlefields of the Mexican War, the best and the brightest (or at least the most daring) joined the Confederate ranks: Pierre G. T. Beauregard, James Longstreet, George Pickett, Albert Sidney Johnston, Joseph E. Johnston, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, and Robert E. Lee.

All of the South's advantages were apparent in the first major battle of the Civil War. On July 21, 1861, at Bull Run in northern Virginia, 22,000 Southerners pushed back an attack by 30,000

FIGURE 11.1 Economies of the North and South, 1860

The North entered the war with significant advantages in population, commodity output, farm acreage, factories, and railroad mileage. The advantages were even greater than this chart suggests, since southern commodity production was dominated by farm products, which were less useful in military terms than were manufactured goods. In addition, more southern farm acreage was unimproved, and southern factories were smaller than their northern counterparts.



Source: Stanley Engerman, "Economic Impact of the Civil War," in Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *The Reinterpretation of American Economic History* (1971).



The Stampede from Bull Run — From a Sketch by Our Special Artist

Northern illustrated newspapers dispatched “special artists” to cover the war. These artists’ sketches, engraved on wood blocks and published in *Harper’s Weekly*, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, and other periodicals, were the North’s major source of war imagery. A few short-lived southern illustrated papers appeared, but it was the *Illustrated London News* that most actively portrayed the Confederate point of view. Its “special artist” Frank Vizetelly sketched this rout of Union forces on July 21, 1861. Frank Vizetelly, *Illustrated London News*, August 17, 1861 — American Social History Project.

Union troops. Although only 600 men lost their lives, the battle of Bull Run gave Americans their first taste of the carnage that lay ahead. Northern civilians, who had traveled to the battle site to picnic and witness an afternoon of martial jousting, ended up fleeing for their lives to escape Confederate artillery.

But the Battle of Bull Run was only one of many engagements in the early months of the war. In the others, which included confrontations in the western theater of war and the Union blockade of the South’s deep-water ports, north-

ern troops were considerably more successful. This mixture of failure and success on both sides suggested that the war might be a prolonged struggle after all.

African Americans Open the Door to Freedom The 225,000 African Americans living in the free states initiated another prolonged struggle. One recalled that at the sound of the alarm bell, “Negro waiter, cook, barber, bootblack, groom, porter, and laborer stood ready at the enlisting office.” A speaker at an African American recruitment meeting in Cleveland proclaimed, “Today, as in the times of ’76, we are ready to go forth and do battle in the common cause of our country.” Their country, however, was not yet ready for them. Secretary of War Simon Cameron quickly announced that he had no intention of calling up black soldiers. Local authorities drove his point home by prohibiting African American recruitment meetings as “disorderly gatherings.”

Northern optimism contributed in part to this hasty rejection. Although four slave states that had previously opposed secession—Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee—joined the Confederacy after Fort Sumter, northern leaders remained confident that the South would be subdued easily. “Jeff Davis and Co. will be swingin’ from the battlements at Washington at least by the 4th of July,” predicted newspaperman Horace Greeley. “This much-ado-about nothing will end in a month,” echoed a Philadelphia newspaper. The rejections were also motivated by a fear that whites would not enlist if blacks were allowed to serve in the Union Army.

But there was a deeper reason. Lincoln and his advisers were wary lest the war for the Union become a war for emancipation. Lincoln, like most Americans, believed that restricting slavery to the states where it already

existed would “put slavery on the road to eventual extinction.” But it was a significant step from this position to a policy that demanded the immediate emancipation of slaves throughout the nation. Moreover, despite the quick secession of the Upper South once war was declared, four crucial border slave states (Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware) remained in the Union. Any threat to end slavery, rather than merely to confine it, might well drive these states into the Confederacy’s waiting arms. Allowing black soldiers to enlist would show that slavery’s future in the Union was not secure.

These concerns accounted for Lincoln’s reaction to the exceedingly tense situation in Missouri. In August 1861, General John C. Frémont, the famous explorer and former Republican presidential candidate who commanded Union military forces in the West, proclaimed martial law in Missouri and issued an order that freed the slaves of all Confederate sympathizers in the state. Abolitionists hailed Frémont’s action as a brilliant military move and a bold step for freedom. Furious Unionist slaveholders, however, called on Lincoln to reverse Frémont’s order. Noting that Frémont’s move would “alarm our Southern Union friends” and “perhaps ruin our rather fair prospects for Kentucky,” the president quickly followed their advice. He insisted to Frémont and the Republican leadership that such a major policy issue must be determined in Washington rather than in the field.

Whatever the intentions of northern politicians, most slaves realized that if Union troops came to the South, they would undermine the authority of slaveholders and make freedom a distinct possibility. African Americans therefore carefully followed the course of the war, using the “grapevine telegraph” to learn about battles and follow Union troop movements. Even in the Deep South, far from the Union Army, slaves were heartened by events. At the outset of the fighting, a white Alabama farmer wrote to Jefferson Davis that slaves in his region “very hiley hope that they will soon be free.” Though trying to conceal their hopes from slaveholders, blacks in bondage awaited their chance.

The first of these chances appeared in tidewater Virginia, where the Confederate commander impressed (that is, seized) nearly all the male slaves in the area to build fortifications. Impressment, which became an official and widely used Confederate policy by 1863, allowed the army to take men, food, animals, and other property from farmers. The Confederacy paid farmers for these goods, but the prices were fixed far below market value. Impressment angered slaveholders, who objected to any infringement on what they regarded as their property rights. In response, the slaveholders began “refugeeing” male slaves, sending them out of the area. Knowing that either impressments or removal would mean separation from loved ones, some slaves chose another course: escape.

On the night of May 23, 1861, three escaped slaves paddled up the river to the Union outpost at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, requesting sanctuary

“Contrabands” in Cumberland Landing, Virginia

Union photographer James F. Gibson took this picture of a group of runaway slaves in May 1862. James F. Gibson, May 14, 1862 — United States Army Military History Institute.



from its commanding general, Benjamin Butler. Butler, a Democratic politician from Massachusetts, was no abolitionist, but he realized that the Confederacy would use slaves against the Union. He therefore offered the runaways military protection, refusing the owner's pleas for their return. The slaves, Butler proclaimed, were “contraband” of war, property that rebel slave owners had forfeited by the act of rebellion.

News of Butler's decision spread like wildfire. Two days later, eight runaway slaves arrived at what they called “Freedom Fort.” Another 59 African American men and women joined them the next day. Lincoln endorsed Butler's contraband policy as a legitimate tactic of war. The North now possessed a formula that allowed it to strike at the institution of slavery, the linchpin of the southern economy, without proclaiming general abolition and thus alienating the loyal border states. Even African Americans, though offended by the use of *contraband*, a term that related to property, to describe escaped slaves, recognized the significance of Butler's policy. Now they had a new way to demonstrate their importance to the Union cause.

The “Peculiar Institution” Begins to Unravel In the wake of the Union's shocking defeat at Bull Run, Congress also began to move against slavery. On August 6, 1861, Congress passed its first confiscation act, proclaiming that any slave owner whose bondsmen were used by the Confederate Army would thereafter lose all claim to those slaves. Although it was far from a clear-cut declaration of freedom, this act, in conjunction with Butler's policy, gave slaves and abolitionists a foundation for further action.

In every region that was touched by the war, African American men, women, and children moved quickly to reach the freedom offered by Union

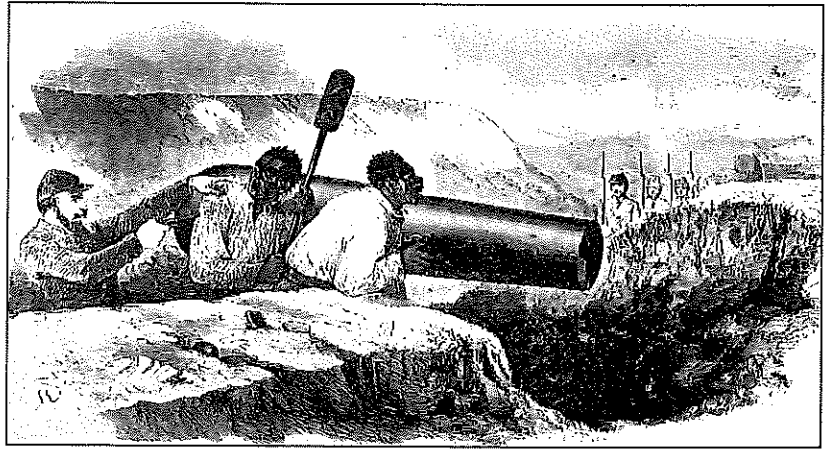
camps. In return for protection, they provided labor and knowledge of local terrain and Confederate troop movements. Slave owners also moved quickly, following runaways into the camps and demanding their return. Although no such demands were honored at Fortress Monroe, some Union commanders either returned slaves or simply denied them entrance.

The persistence of the slaves' attempts to gain freedom gradually led many Union officers and ordinary soldiers to help shield escapees from slave catchers. In November 1861, Secretary of War Cameron, who had earlier opposed black enlistment, now publicly supported the radical idea of arming slaves to fight for the Union, labeling as "madness" the policy of leaving the enemy "in peaceful and secure possession of slave property." Lincoln, again acting to calm loyal slaveholders, forced Cameron to back down. Three months later, recognizing that the secretary of war was inept and corrupt, the president removed him from office. Still, with the war dragging on and Union casualties rising, antislavery sentiment was growing in Congress, inside the Union army, and in the North as a whole.

The advocates of abolition, so long scorned by the majority of northern whites, now gained a hearing. In January 1862, Philadelphia abolitionist Mary Grew reflected, "It is hard to believe the wondrous change that has befallen us." Grew had seen an antiabolitionist mob burn Pennsylvania Hall in 1838. Now she responded with glee to the respect accorded her coworkers in the cause. One of them, Wendell Phillips, who had been among the abolitionists attacked in 1861 for supposedly provoking southern secession, was a year later accorded a formal introduction in the U.S. Senate.

At the forefront of those in Congress who applauded Phillips's presence were a handful of abolitionists—the so-called Radical Republicans—who sought to use the war to strike down the "peculiar institution." Although they never represented more than a minority in Congress, the Radical Republicans were able to shape legislation by drawing on the North's growing support for abolition and by emphasizing the military benefits to be gained by striking at the institution of slavery. The Radical Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner explained his strategy for success in November 1861: "You will observe that I propose no crusade for abolition. [Emancipation] is to be presented strictly as a measure of military necessity."

The military argument for emancipation intensified as the war dragged on through 1861 and 1862. The Union Navy began a blockade of southern ports that grew ever more effective, leading to the capture of the major port



Caught in the Middle

An illustration in a May 1862 issue of *Harper's Weekly* depicted one way in which the institution of slavery contributed to the Confederacy's war effort. According to the caption, the northern newspaper artist observed this "struggle between two Negroes and a rebel captain" through a telescope. The captain "insisted upon their loading a cannon within range of [Union] Sharpshooters. . . . [He] succeeded in forcing the Negroes to expose themselves, and they were shot, one after the other." Mead, *Harper's Weekly*, May 10, 1862 — American Social History Project.

of New Orleans in April 1862. Even more significant, in the same month, Union troops commanded by Ulysses S. Grant won a battle at Shiloh in western Tennessee. Shiloh provided a critical victory in the Union's plan to control the Mississippi Valley, but it was a grisly bloodbath, a new kind of battle in which soldiers pushed forward yard by yard under heavy fire. When it was over, nearly 4,000 men lay dead, and more than 16,000 were wounded. Grant's troops were too exhausted to follow up on their victory, but the Confederacy had lost a major battle.

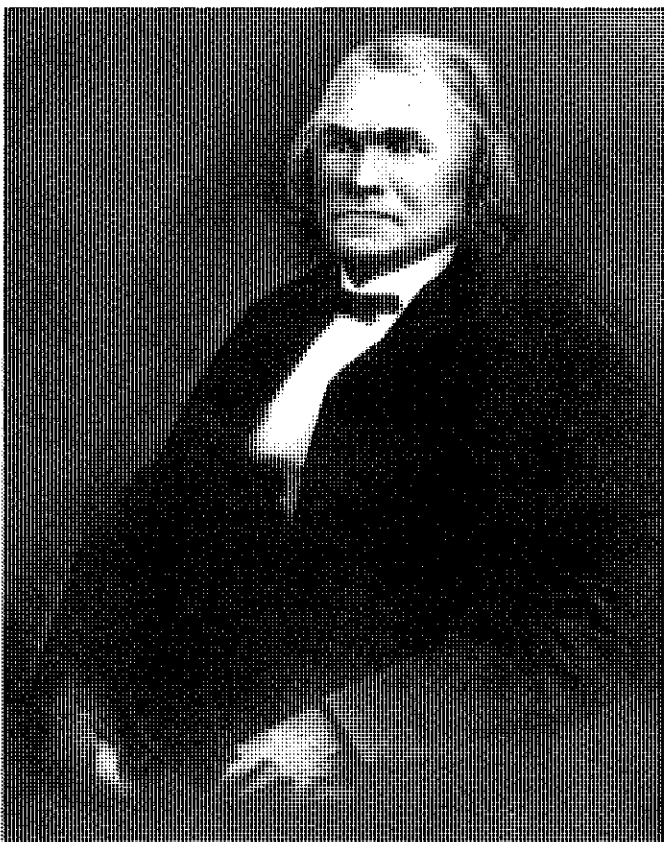
It was in these western campaigns that the diversity of army ranks became visible. At the battles of Pea Ridge on the Arkansas-Missouri border, in the prolonged campaign for Vicksburg, Mississippi, and in the Union capture of Little Rock, Arkansas, the forces that faced each other were not composed simply of native-born whites whose only difference lay in whether they were raised north or south of the Mason-Dixon Line. At Pea Ridge, General Earl van Dorn brought together a force of southern whites, three regiments of Choctaws and Chickasaws, two of Cherokees, and one of Seminoles and Creeks under the leadership of Cherokee General Stand Watie, who hoped that a Confederate victory would provide American Indians with greater autonomy. The Confederate forces were defeated, however, by Union troops that included both native-born white Midwesterners and Franz Sigel's German American regiments. Similarly diverse forces would converge on Vicksburg in July 1863. And in the fighting around Little

Rock, also in 1863, African Americans would join native-born whites, immigrant, and Indian soldiers on the Union side against regiments of white and Native American Confederates.

Union advances deep into the cotton belt during and after 1862 gave these diverse companies of Union soldiers a chance to observe slavery firsthand. Few white soldiers were abolitionists, and some believed strongly in the necessity of enslaving African Americans, but many were nonetheless repulsed by what they saw. After visiting several captured plantations near New Orleans and discovering a number of instruments that were used to torture slaves, a Union soldier concluded that he had seen "enough of the horror of slavery to make one an Abolitionist forever." A Union officer wrote from Louisiana, "Since I am here, I have learned what the horrors of slavery was. . . . Never hereafter will I either speak or vote in favor of slavery." Even though the majority of Union troops still questioned the wisdom of complete emancipation, some soldiers

General Stand Watie

Leader of the Southern Cherokee Nation, a splinter group of Cherokees, Degataga ("He Stands Firm") gained fame as one of the most daring and successful Confederate commanders in the western theater of the war. Oklahoma Historical Society.



Harriet Tubman Helps Slaves Flee to Freedom

The following account of South Carolina slaves flocking to meet a regiment of black Union troops is drawn from the testimony of Harriet Tubman, famous for her success in helping hundreds of escaped slaves before the war. Tubman had joined forces with the First South Carolina Volunteers, made up largely of escaped slaves, in raiding plantations and leading slaves to freedom.

“I never saw such a sight,” said Harriet; “we laughed, and laughed, and laughed. Here you’d see a women with a pail on her head, rice smoking in it just as if she’d taken it from the fire, young one hanging on behind, one hand hanging around her forehead to hold on, another hand digging into the rice pot, eating with all its might; holding on to her dress two or three more; down her back a bag with a pig in it. One woman brought two pigs, a white one and a black one; we took them all aboard; named the white pig Beauregard, and the black pig Jeff Davis [two prominent Confederate officials]. Sometimes the women would come with twins hanging around their necks; appears like I never seen so many twins in my life; bags on their shoulders, baskets on their heads, and young ones tagging behind, all loaded; pigs squealing, chickens screaming, young ones squalling.” And so they came pouring down to the gunboats. When they stood on the shore, and the small boats put out to take them off, they all wanted to get in at once. After the boats were crowded, they would hold onto them so that they could not leave the shore. The oarsmen would beat them on their hands, but they would not let go; they were afraid the gunboats would go off and leave them, and all wanted to make sure [that they were on] one of these arks of refuge. At length Col. Montgomery shouted from the upper deck, above the clamor of appealing tones, “Harriet you’ll have to give them a song.” Then Harriet lifted up her voice and sang:

Of all the whole creation in the east or the west,
The glorious Yankee nation is the greatest and the best.
Come along! Come along! don’t be alarmed,
Uncle Sam is rich enough to give you all a farm.

John F. Bayliss, Compiler, *Black Slave Narratives* (1970), 125–126.

grew more sympathetic to the plight of runaways and recognized that the Union could gain an advantage by employing African Americans. “The Negroes are our only friends,” wrote a Union officer in northern Alabama. “I shall very soon have watchful guards among the slaves on the plantations bordering the river from Bridgeport to Florence, and all who communicate to me valuable information I have promised the protection of my Government.”

As fighting continued in 1862, military reversals for the Union set off a panic in the North, which further contributed to antislavery sentiment. In the summer of 1862, Confederate troops led by Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson

won a series of stunning victories in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. The panic in the North increased when Union General George B. McClellan, known for his proslavery views and his vacillating approach to military strategy, ordered a retreat following the crucial Seven Days' campaign at Richmond, Virginia, in June and July. The Confederate Army in Virginia, commanded by Robert E. Lee, now prepared to invade the North itself.

As the war turned against the North, the North turned against slavery. In the spring of 1862, Congress approved a measure to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, though they tried to mollify more conservative colleagues by appropriating, at the same time, \$600,000 to assist in sending former slaves to "colonize" Haiti, Liberia, and Central America. The colonization efforts would collapse over the next year and a half, but the eradication of slavery in the nation's capital stood as a symbol of a new era. That July, Congress passed a second confiscation act, this one declaring that the slaves of anyone who supported the Confederacy should be "forever free of their servitude, and not again held as slaves." Acceding to pleas from free blacks, slaves, and some Union officers, Congress also passed a militia act that allowed "persons of African descent" to be employed in "any military or naval service for which they may be found competent." The first black Union regiment was organized before the end of 1862. And by 1863, African Americans would overcome the objections of whites to their use as front-line soldiers, serving with distinction and contributing directly to key northern victories. Moreover, as Union armies moved south, slaves in ever greater numbers deserted their owners to join the advancing forces. Slave labor was crucial to the South's economy and military effort, and this massive transfer of labor from the Confederacy to the Union had a tremendous impact on the course of the war.

The Bright Side

Harper's Weekly "special artist" Winslow Homer's 1865 painting, based on his wartime sketches, depicted black teamsters relaxing in a Union campsite. While the teamsters were shown resting, the supply wagons and mules in the background reminded the viewer of the crucial role that African Americans played in supplying ammunition and food to northern forces and suggested that their relaxation was well earned. Winslow Homer, 1865, oil on canvas, 13 1/4 x 17 1/2 inches — The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd (1979.7.56).



By the end of the summer of 1862, the numbers of African Americans who were employed by the Union Army increased dramatically. Black men built fortifications and roads, chopped wood, carried supplies, and guarded ever-lengthening supply lines. They also worked in more skilled jobs, piloting boats and driving teams. Black women, employed in far smaller numbers, performed essential services as cooks, laundresses, seamstresses, and nurses. The work was often hard and heavy, and although pay was promised, black women and men often received their wages late or not at all. They strongly protested this

unfair treatment, since unpaid labor symbolized slavery. But they also believed that their labor played a central role in the struggle for freedom.

Union Officials Consider Emancipation By the fall of 1862, African Americans and abolitionists were no longer alone in advocating emancipation as a necessary outcome of the war. Congress, the larger public, and even President Lincoln began to consider the possibility. Lincoln had to balance several factors, however. He wanted to prevent international recognition of southern independence, keep slaveholding border states in the Union, and unite northern whites behind the war effort.

The question of international recognition was paramount to the Confederacy. Support from European nations could undermine the Union cause and help to persuade the North to accept southern independence. Of more immediate concern, the agricultural South was looking abroad for the manufactured products that were needed in a modern war. Southern attention focused mainly on Britain, the leading market for cotton and a potentially important supplier of goods. Many British political leaders sympathized with the Confederacy, particularly as the Union blockade of southern ports grew more effective, since the blockade had a disastrous effect on the British economy.

Nonetheless, working people throughout England had long maintained a hatred of both slavery and the southern slaveholding aristocracy. During the war, lecture tours in England by American abolitionists such as Sarah Parker Remond, a free black activist from Philadelphia, intensified anti-slavery sentiments among Britons of all classes. But this powerful group of British abolitionists could not be fully mobilized until the North officially took a strong antislavery position. A firm Union commitment to emancipation might give the North an edge in the battle for British public opinion and prevent Britain's diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy.

In response to these diplomatic considerations, the deteriorating military situation, and the unrelenting pressure from "contrabands," Lincoln decided in the summer of 1862 to issue a proclamation emancipating all slaves in the Confederacy. He withheld its announcement, however, until a Union victory made the proclamation a sign of strength rather than weakness. Confederate troops in the eastern states had won numerous victories in the preceding months. In the Shenandoah Valley, Stonewall Jackson led Confederate troops to five victories against three Union armies. During



Diplomacy

An 1862 cartoon from the northern satirical weekly *Vanity Fair* presented the Confederacy's president trying to gain diplomatic recognition from a skeptical Great Britain. "I hardly think it will wash, Mr. Davis," Britannia commented in the cartoon's caption, "We hear so much about your colors running." Howard, *Vanity Fair*, July 12, 1862 — American Social History Project.

June and July of 1862, General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, fought McClellan to a standstill in the Seven Days' battles. Lee and Jackson joined forces that August to defeat Union troops at the Second Battle of Bull Run. The chance to claim a victory finally came in the fall of 1862, when Lee led his army north into Maryland. On September 17, in the bloodiest battle yet, Union troops brought Lee's advance to a standstill at Antietam. Nearly 5,000 men lost their lives on that day; another 3,000 would die later of wounds. Although Antietam was the site of the bloodiest single day in American warfare, Lincoln viewed the battle as a victory. Five days later, he announced his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation to the assembled cabinet. Republicans who had come to see the advantages of emancipation spoke on its behalf over the next three months, and white and black abolitionists eagerly awaited the official pronouncement.

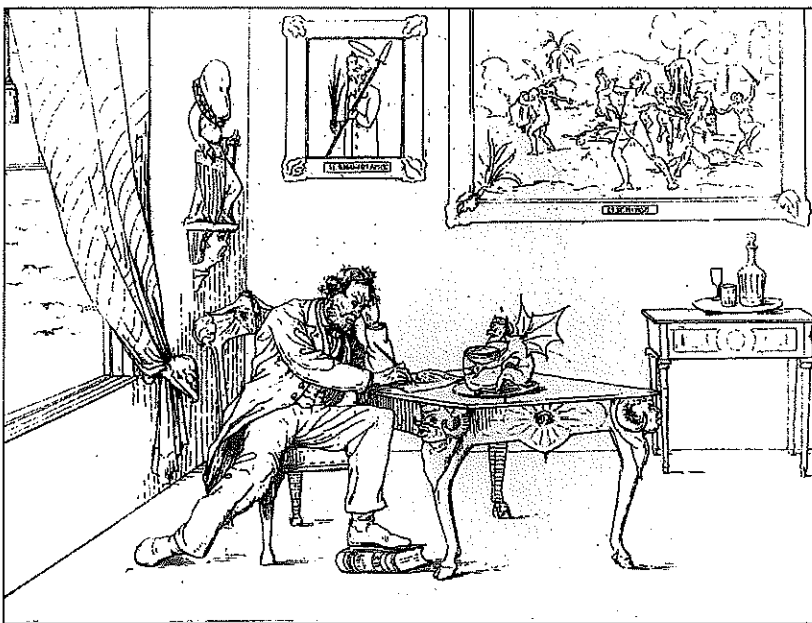
Writing the Emancipation Proclamation

Surrounded by symbols of Satanism and paintings honoring John Brown and slave rebellions, an inebriated Lincoln is shown treading on the Constitution as he drafted the Emancipation Proclamation. This caricature was part of a collection of etchings, *Sketches from the Civil War in North America*, by Baltimore pro-South Democrat Adalbert Johann Volck. V. Blada (A. J. Volck), *Sketches from the Civil War in North America*, 1861, '62, '63 (1863) — American Social History Project.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln signed the final edict, proclaiming that slaves in areas that were still in rebellion were “forever free” and inviting them to enlist in the Union Army. In many ways, the proclamation was a conservative document, applying only to slaves who were far beyond the reach of federal power. Its provisions exempted 450,000 slaves in the loyal border states, 275,000 slaves in Union-occupied Tennessee, and tens of thousands more in areas controlled by the Union Army in Louisiana and Virginia. It also justified the abolition of southern slavery on military, not moral, grounds. Despite its limitations, the Emancipation Proclamation prompted joyous “Watch Meetings” on December 31, 1862, as white and black abolitionists met to cheer and give thanks as the edict took effect. Fugitive slaves in Washington, D.C., gathered in celebration and prayer. There was even jubilation among the slaves in loyal border states, who were

exempted from the proclamation's provisions. The deepest hopes of antislavery advocates such as Amy Post and Frederick Douglass had finally become part and parcel of the Union cause.

African Americans, slave and free alike, understood, in ways that white Americans only partially did, that the aims of the war had now dramatically changed. The Emancipation Proclamation augured a total transformation of southern society rather than the mere reintegration of the slave states into the nation if the Union proved victorious. Although Lincoln had admonished Congress in 1861 that the war should not



become “a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle,” that is precisely what it had become by 1863.

The Cold Realities of War

For soldiers who were caught in the midst of battle, political pronouncements did little to alleviate the dangers they faced. The Civil War was one of the deadliest wars in history and the deadliest in the United States. Technological innovations in weaponry far outweighed advances in medicine. New forms of ammunition created wounds that could not be healed by existing surgical techniques; amputation saved some lives but ensured the death of others; and diseases ran rampant through army ranks on both the Confederate and Union sides.

Soldiers' Lives The fighting at Antietam in the summer of 1862 had given Lincoln the victory he needed to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, but it did not mark an overall change in the North's fortunes on the battlefield. The war continued to go poorly for the Union on the eastern front. Against a superior force, Confederate troops won an important victory in December 1862 at Fredericksburg, Virginia, inflicting nearly 13,000 Union casualties while suffering only 5,000 of their own. In the same month, Confederate cavalry cut Union supply lines in the West, preventing a much larger Union force from seizing the strategic river town of Vicksburg, Mississippi. By early 1863, the war had reached a stalemate. Then in May, Lee's army defeated a Union force twice its size at Chancellorsville, Virginia, setting the stage for a Confederate thrust north into Pennsylvania.

The South's victories reflected the Confederacy's advantages of fighting on its own terrain and its officers' greater talents. They also made clear the generally disorganized nature of the Union war effort. Despite having more than twice as many soldiers under their command, northern officers seemed unable to press their advantages in the war's first two years. Early battles, while intense, were separated by long periods of inactivity. Tradition—influenced by impassable roads and the difficulty of providing food, clothing, and shelter—dictated that both armies refrain from fighting during the winter months. Instead, the armies built semipermanent camps to reside in while awaiting the spring thaw. One estimate suggests that in its first two years of operation, the Union's Army of the Potomac spent a total of only one month in actual battle.

The war's casual pace fulfilled the expectations of both northern and southern soldiers. With the exception of the officers who had gained their experience in the Mexican War in the mid-1840s, most soldiers were too young to remember, much less to have experienced, any organized war. Most young men expected war to be conducted in an orderly, even chivalrous

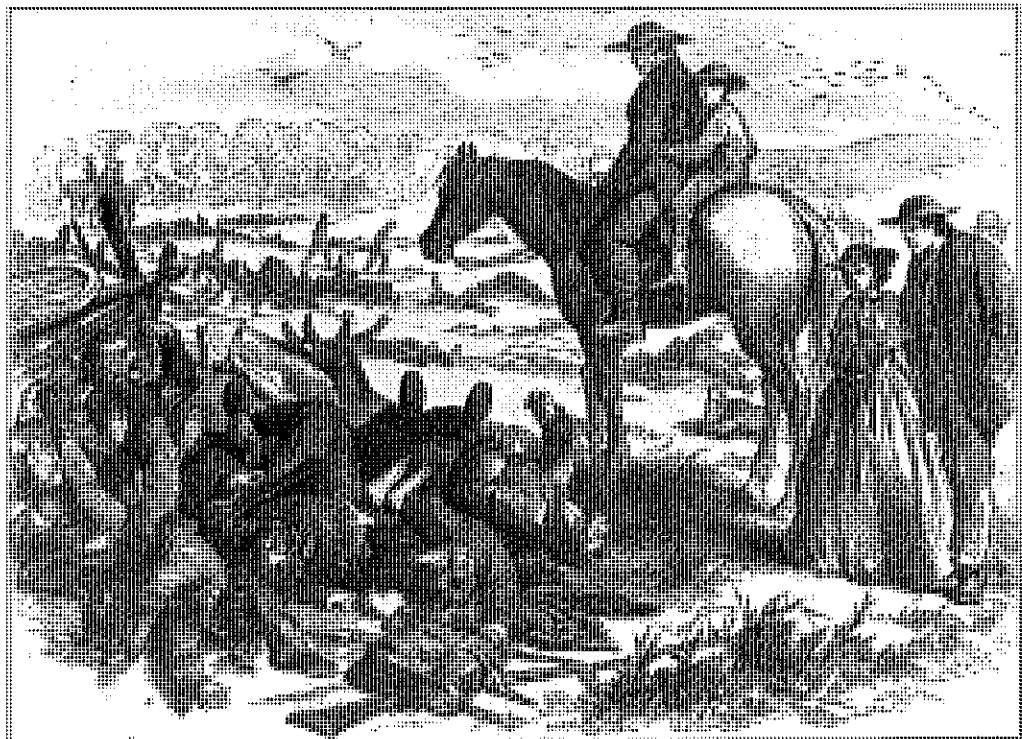


Cavalry Charge at Fairfax Court House, May 31, 1861

Early in the war, artists often drew highly romantic and very inaccurate pictures. Such feats as firing from the saddle were viewed with great amusement by soldiers in the field, who enjoyed seeing illustrations of their exploits almost as much as they enjoyed criticizing their inaccuracies. *Harper's Weekly*, June 15, 1861 — American Social History Project.

Maryland and Pennsylvania Farmers Visiting the Battlefield of Antietam

As the war progressed and artist-reporters experienced battle firsthand, their illustrations often became more realistic. F. H. Schell sketched the carnage after the battle of Antietam and the morbid curiosity of local inhabitants. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, October 18, 1862 — American Social History Project.



fashion. They were in for a rude shock. A young private wrote home that his idea of combat had been that the soldiers “would all be in line, all standing in a nice level field fighting, a number of ladies taking care of the wounded, etc., etc., but it isn’t so.”

One reason that this soldier’s idea of battle proved wrong had to do with the development of the *minié* ball, a conical bullet with a hollow end that expanded when fired. This bullet made possible the use of the muzzle-loading rifle, which had extraordinary range and accuracy. These rifles turned early battlefields into scenes of chaos and carnage. Although an individual soldier could fire only a few times a minute, their Enfield and Springfield rifles were murderously effective at great distances.

In early Civil War battles, soldiers marched in tight formation toward an enemy that began killing and wounding them from a quarter of a mile away. These battles thus put a premium on the courage of ordinary soldiers, valuing their willingness to move forward relentlessly under withering fire. In the face of such efficient killing, fixed infantry formations soon gave way to the realities of self-defense and self-protection. By 1863, the nature of battle had changed considerably, relying on heavy fortifications, elaborate trenches, and distant heavy mortar and artillery fire—tactics that resembled those of World War I more than those of the American Revolution or even the Mexican War.

In general, the Civil War proved to be an exhausting, trying experience for the ordinary infantrymen who bore the brunt of the fighting. After a major battle, one Vermont soldier described himself as “so completely worn out that I can’t tell how many days . . . in the last two weeks . . . I went without sleeping or eating.” The hardships and discomforts that were experienced on both sides extended far beyond the actual fighting. Many soldiers went into battle in ragged uniforms, some without shoes. A Georgia major reported after the battle of Manassas, also known as Bull Run (northerners named battles after local rivers, while southerners named battles after nearby towns), that he “carried into the fight over one hundred men who were barefoot, many of whom left bloody foot-prints among the thorns and briars through which they rushed.”

Rations on both sides were sporadic at best; food was often adulterated, and even that was in short supply. Staples of the Union Army diet were bread—actually, an unleavened biscuit called *hardtack*—meat, beans, and coffee, the latter drunk in enormous quantities. Confederate troops got even less, subsisting on cornmeal and fatty meat. Vegetables and fruit were scarce on both sides, making scurvy common. Confederate rations were so short that after some battles, officers sent details of men to gather food from the haversacks of the Union dead. As the war progressed, the Confederate government reduced rations to its soldiers. “I came nearer to starving than I

"I Have Never Conceived of Such Trials": Soldiers' Letters Home

Severe shortages of food, clothing, and medical care plagued soldiers in both the Union and Confederate armies throughout the war. Following are two letters from soldiers to their families, lamenting the travails of army life.

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER AFTER THE LONG MARCH FROM YORKTOWN TO RICHMOND, SEPTEMBER 1862

I have never conceived of such trials as we have passed through. We were for days together without a morsel of food, excepting occasionally a meal of parched corn. . . . The army was kept on the march day and night, and the roads were in some places waist deep in mud. . . . Many of the men became exhausted and some were actually stuck in the mud and had to be pulled out. . . . The men on the march ran through the gardens . . . devouring every particle of vegetables like the army worm, leaving nothing at all standing. Whenever a cow or hog were found it was shot down and soon despatched.

Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (1943), 92.

WOUNDED UNION SOLDIER, BATON ROUGE, JUNE 1863

I never wish to see another such time as the [day I was wounded]. The surgeons used a large Cotton Press for the butchering room and when I was carried into the building and looked about I could not help comparing the surgeons to fiends. It was dark and the building lighted partially with candles; all around on the ground lay the wounded men; some of them were shrieking, some cursing and swearing, and some praying; in the middle of the room was some ten or twelve tables just large enough to lay a man on; these were used as dissecting tables and they were covered with blood. Near and around the tables stood the surgeons with blood all over them and by the sides of the tables was a heap of feet, legs, and arms. On one of these tables I was laid, and being known as a colonel, the Chief Surgeon of the Department was called and he felt of my mouth and then wanted to give me chloroform: this I refused to take and he took a pair of scissors and cut out the pieces of bone in my mouth; then gave me a drink of whiskey and had me laid away.

Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (1952), 148.

ever did before,” noted one soldier in Virginia. The Union soldiers’ diet, in contrast, generally improved because of the greater scope and efficiency of the North’s supply system.

Ailing in Body and Soul Disease proved a greater adversary than enemy soldiers did. “There is more dies by sickness than gets killed,” a recruit from New York had complained in 1861. His assessment would prove chillingly accurate. For every soldier who died as a result of battle, three died of disease. Measles, dysentery, typhoid, and malaria became major killers, caused or made worse by contaminated water, bad food, and exposure to the elements. One soldier stationed in Louisiana described an outbreak of malaria:

Two-thirds of the regiment are buried or in hospital. It is woeful to see how nearly destitute of comforts and of attendance the sick are. They cannot be kept in their wretched bunks, but stagger about, jabbering and muttering insanities, till they lie down and die in their ragged, dirty uniforms.

African American troops fared worst of all. The death rate for black Union soldiers from disease was nearly three times greater than that for white Union soldiers, reflecting the generally poorer health of black soldiers at enlistment, their meager food, the hard labor they performed, and the minimal medical care they received while in the field.

Even for white soldiers, medical assistance was primitive. One commentator described military hospitals in the war’s early years as “dirty dens of butchery and horror.” After the battle of Shiloh in 1862, General Grant’s medical director told of “thousands of human beings . . . wounded and lacerated in every conceivable manner, on the ground, under a pelting rain, without shelter, without bedding, without straw to lie upon, and with but little food. . . . The agonies of the wounded were beyond all description.” Army doctors on both sides provided little relief. “I believe the Doctors kills more than they cure,” wrote an Alabama private. “Doctors haint Got half Sence.”

Sick and wounded soldiers were cared for by doctors who had not yet heard of antibiotics or antiseptics, who had no cure for peritonitis or gangrene, and who were perennially short of anesthetics. Union soldiers, however, at least had access to supplies and medical care provided by the U.S. Sanitary Commission. This commission, established by the federal government in 1861, had grown out of the efforts of the Women’s Central Association for Relief, a volunteer organization that initially focused on training nurses. By 1862, tens of thousands of women had volunteered through hundreds of local chapters across the North and Midwest, hosting “Sanitary Fairs” to raise money; rolling bandages; shipping food, medicine, clothing, and bedding; and sending nurses to army camps along the battlefield. In

The Effect of a Minié Ball

The catastrophic damage caused by the commonly used cone-shaped bullet is graphically chronicled in this pair of surgical photographs showing the entrance and exit of a Minié ball. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.



the South, much of the medical care was also voluntary and performed by women. The difference was that without a government-sanctioned body to coordinate efforts and lobby for resources, a Confederate soldier's chances of dying from wounds or disease was even greater than that of his Union counterpart.

The difficulties of camp life and the horrors of battle affected ordinary soldiers' morale. As food, sanitation, and medical care deteriorated and casualties mounted, a large number of soldiers deserted. At Antietam, in the fall of 1862, Confederate general Robert E. Lee estimated that one-third to one-half of his soldiers were "straggling" — that is, absent without leave. Early the next year, Union general Joseph Hooker reported that one in four soldiers under his command was similarly absent. Morale problems in the Union Army during this period were compounded by the fact that the North kept losing battles to seemingly inferior Confederate forces. By 1863, many Union soldiers were openly critical of their leaders. A Massachusetts private concluded that "there is very little zeal or patriotism in the army now; the men have seen so much more of defeat than of victory and so much bloody slaughter that all patriotism is played out."

War Transforms the North

What turned the tide for the Union was not simply improved army leadership and better military tactics, but an improved supply of armaments, food, and clothing to Union troops and of the necessities of life to their families and friends back home as well. The North's economic advantage grew

as the war dragged on, but to maintain it required far more Union women than ever before to enter the paid labor force. The sacrifices that were required on the home front were deemed worthy, however, only if Union armies were winning victories on the battlefield. Dissent and protest therefore blossomed in the North until the tide of war turned decisively toward the Union in 1864. By then, African Americans had distinguished themselves in battle, though they continued to struggle against prejudice in the North and for the final eradication of slavery in the South.

The Northern Economic Boom As the Civil War unfolded, economic change in the North occurred at a quickening pace. Despite military and economic setbacks in 1861 and 1862, the Union grew stronger as the war progressed. Northern factories turned out weapons, ammunition, blankets, clothing, shoes, and other products; and northern shipyards built the fleets that blockaded southern ports. Leading in the production of war materials, the North continued to serve as the center of American industrial development. By 1860, manufacturing establishments in the North outnumbered those in the South six to one, and there were 1.3 million industrial workers in the North, compared with 110,000 in the South.

Initially, however, the effects of the war on northern industry had been little short of disastrous. New England textile production declined precipitously as the flow of raw southern cotton dried up. Shoe factories, which had relied heavily on the orders of southern slaveholders, fell silent. The large seaboard cities of the Northeast, whose very lifeblood was trade, also suffered greatly. By 1863, however, the economic picture had changed dramatically. Coal mining and iron production boomed in Pennsylvania. In New England, woolen manufacturing took up the slack left by the decline of cotton. Merchants dealing in war orders made handsome profits, and industrialists ran their factories at a frenzied pace. The lower wages paid to desperate women and children, recently arrived immigrants, and free blacks seeking entry into new occupations contributed to increases in both profits and the pace of work.

The economic boom of 1863 to 1864 was also linked to a vast expansion in the federal government's activities. Direct orders from the War Office for blankets, firearms, and other goods did much to spark the manufacturing upturn. The government also stimulated the economy by granting large contracts to northern railroads to carry troops and supplies and by making loans and land grants that would finance the railroads' dramatic postwar expansion. Congress instituted a steep tariff on imported manufactured goods, giving American manufacturers protection from competition and encouraging industrial development, policies that northern industrialists had long demanded. With southern Democrats removed from the halls of Congress, Republicans now rushed to meet these demands.

Perhaps the federal government's most significant long-term contribution to the economy was the creation of a national currency and a national banking system. Before the Civil War, private banks (chartered by the states) issued their own banknotes, which were used in most economic transactions; the federal government paid all of its expenses in gold or silver. Various wartime acts of Congress revolutionized this system, giving the federal government the power to create currency, to issue federal charters to banks, and to create a national debt (which totaled \$2 billion by the war's end). These developments helped to shape the full flowering of industrial capitalism after the war.

They also had profound short-term effects. To finance the war, the government used its new power to flood the nation with \$400 million in treasury bills, commonly called "greenbacks." The federal budget mushroomed—from \$63 million in 1860 to nearly \$1.3 billion in 1865. By the war's end, the federal bureaucracy had grown to be the nation's largest single employer. These federal actions provided a tremendous stimulus to industry, and northern manufacturers greeted them, on the whole, with enthusiasm.

But industrialists continued to face one daunting problem that government expansion only exacerbated: a shortage of labor. Over half a million workers left their jobs to serve in the Union Army, and others were drawn into jobs with the expanding federal bureaucracy, just as the need for increased production intensified the competition for workers. Employers dealt with the shortage in a variety of ways. Then, as now, mechanization could lessen the need for workers. Reapers and mowers had been developed in the 1850s, but the shortage of labor greatly hastened their adoption by midwestern farmers. "The severe manual toil of mowing, raking, pitching, and cradling is now performed by machinery," noted *Scientific American* in 1863. The war similarly quickened the trend toward mechanization in the manufacture of clothing and shoes.

Northern industrialists also led the way in hiring immigrants to remedy the labor shortage. The industrialists formed organizations such as the Boston Foreign Emigrant Aid Society and were extremely successful in encouraging migration from the European countryside to U.S. factories, mines, and mills. Immigration had fallen off sharply in the first two years of the war, with only about 90,000 immigrants arriving in 1861 and again in 1862—less than half the level of each of the preceding five years. By 1863, the number of immigrants—mostly Irish, German, and British—had again reached the pre-1860 level. The figure climbed to nearly 200,000 in 1864 and exceeded 300,000 in 1865.

Women Expand the Wartime Workforce The entry of women—immigrant and native-born—into both the agricultural and industrial workforce was a critical factor in easing the wartime labor shortage. On northern

farms, women took over much of the work. A popular verse called “The Volunteer’s Wife” described the situation:

Take your gun and go, John,
Take your gun and go,
For Ruth can drive the oxen,
And I can use the hoe.

A missionary traveling through Iowa in 1863 reported that he “met more women driving teams on the road and saw more at work in the fields than men.” Factories and armories hired women in ever-larger numbers to churn out northern war orders. Most important to the war effort were the thousands of “sewing women,” who were mainly poor and working-class women, many of them single or widowed and immigrants. They worked under government contract in their own homes (often in crowded tenements) to make the uniforms that Union soldiers wore. Opportunities for more well-educated native-born white women also opened up in the fields of teaching, government clerical work, and retail sales.

Women’s employment in some of the newer industrial jobs was temporary; when the war ended, so did women’s employment. But in other areas, such as the nursing profession, women made permanent inroads. Despite strong initial opposition, women eventually obtained work in northern hospitals and Union Army camps. This movement was led by such memorable figures as Clara Barton, Mary Ann “Mother” Bickerdyke, and Dr. Mary Walker, the first woman to be awarded the Medal of Honor. The work these women accomplished created popular support for their entrance into the medical profession. By the end of the war, women had almost entirely replaced men in nursing the sick and wounded.



Industrial Work

Women filled cartridges at the U.S. Arsenal at Watertown, Massachusetts. Winslow Homer, *Harper's Weekly*, July 20, 1861 — American Social History Project.

“And Then I Must Work for Myself”: A Northern Workingwoman’s Story

The following letter, written by a sewing woman in November 1863 to the New York Sun, reveals the kinds of jobs and the low wages that were available to northern workingwomen during the Civil War.

When this rebellion broke out, my brothers joined the Army, and then I must work for myself and help support my mother and my little sister. I would read the advertisements in the paper and go answer them. . . .

A well-known hat manufactory on Broadway wanted five hundred hands. I applied for work. The proprietor . . . promised me 62 cents per dozen. I knew I could not make a dozen per day; but what was I to do? I wanted work, and must get it, or starve. My mother and myself worked from early morning until late a night, but could not make more than \$2.50 each per week. . . . Are we nothing but living machines, to be driven at will for the accommodation of a set of heartless, yes, I may say soulless people . . . ? They ought to read the commandment, “Thou shall not kill.” But they are murderers that die on feather beds. . . .

Men join the army and leave us with out employers to battle with. I trust that we will have kind friends to aid us; it is a good work. If we were paid better it would save many young girls from worse than poverty. Let us act as one, and I feel sure that with the blessings of God, and assistance of our fellow beings, we will succeed.

E.S.P., A Working Girl

New York Sun, November 17, 1863.

Northern women played an astonishing array of roles over the course of the war. The Woman’s National Loyal League gathered some four hundred thousand signatures on petitions calling for a constitutional amendment to end slavery. Women served as spies, couriers, recruiting agents, and even soldiers. Some 400 women, on both sides of the conflict, are known to have disguised themselves as men to join infantry companies; the identities of several were discovered only after they were wounded in battle. Although the financial rewards for such services were small, the efforts of women in wartime helped to transform popular notions of appropriate gender roles and set the stage for new debates in the postwar era over women’s rights and responsibilities.

Dissent and Protest in the Union States Despite an expanding economy, northern working people suffered tremendously during the war years. For those who were not facing enemy fire, the main problem was inflation. As greenbacks flooded the economy and consumer goods fell into short supply, prices climbed rapidly—about 20 percent faster than wages. Skilled

“Nearly Every Article of Consumption Has Doubled”: Wartime Inflation

This account, taken from a July 1863 issue of Fincher’s Trades Review, an important labor newspaper of the period, describes the problems of wartime inflation and tainted food that workers faced.

Two years ago, the man who received \$1.50 per day, could satisfy his wants with that sum just as well, if not better, than he can now with \$3.00 per day. Nearly every article of consumption has doubled, and if wages are not permitted to keep pace with the cost of necessities, the producer is daily robbed of one-half his earnings. . . . Rents will soon range from 15 to 20 percent higher; and many articles heretofore used by the families of workingmen are now wholly beyond their means.

It will be found, also, that workingmen are subjected to other ills by the fictitious value placed upon the necessities of life. Flour has become classified into several brands, which plainly indicate impurity in one or more of them, and means something more than the mere color of the wheat; hence, the purchaser of second or third quality is apt to eat his share of worms and other insects, or nauseate his stomach with musty, sour bread. . . . The vegetable and chemical trash mixed up with a small portion of [coffee] is enough to weaken the digestive organs of an ostrich. Tea undergoes the same fraudulent process, and our lady readers cannot be too careful in the selection of the article. These adulterations, in many cases, must result in shattered health, if not premature death.

Fincher’s Trades Review, July 1863.

workers, whose labor was in high demand, might be able to keep up. But unskilled workers, especially women, were hit hard by inflation. “We are barely able to sustain life for the prices offered by contractors, who fatten on their contracts by grinding immense profits out of the labor of their operatives,” wrote a group of Cincinnati seamstresses to President Lincoln in 1864.

Industrialists garnered huge profits as production boomed. Profits in the woolen industry nearly tripled. Railroad stocks climbed to unheard-of prices. Government contractors made huge gains—sometimes by supplying inferior goods at vastly inflated prices. To working people suffering the ravages of inflation, such extraordinary profits seemed grossly unfair.

Northern workers tried to improve their plight in a variety of ways. From 1863 through 1865, there were dozens of strikes as workers began to form unions to demand higher wages. But wartime strikes could also exacerbate divisions among workers. In a number of cases, such as the longshoremen’s walkout in New York City in June 1863, employers broke strikes staged by largely immigrant workers by hiring African Americans for jobs from which they had traditionally been excluded.



The Irrepressible Conflict

In this cartoon from *Vanity Fair*, an Irish longshoreman told a black worker seeking employment on New York's waterfront: "Well, ye may be a man and a brother, sure enough; but it's little hospitality ye'll get out of yer relations on this dock, me ould buck!" The sharp competition for unskilled jobs contributed to the New York draft riot of 1863. *Vanity Fair*, August 2, 1862 — American Social History Project.

Both black and white workers looked to Lincoln and the federal government for help. The Republicans, after all, had pledged themselves to protect the rights of free labor. But government proved to be a better friend of business. Employers successfully lobbied a number of state legislatures to pass laws prohibiting strikes. They also persuaded the increasingly powerful federal government to help block workers' efforts to organize. When workers at the Parrott arms factory in Cold Spring, New York, struck for higher wages in 1864, the government sent in two companies of troops, declared martial law, and arrested the strike leaders. The army similarly intervened in labor disputes in St. Louis and in the Pennsylvania coalfields. All three strikes were crushed.

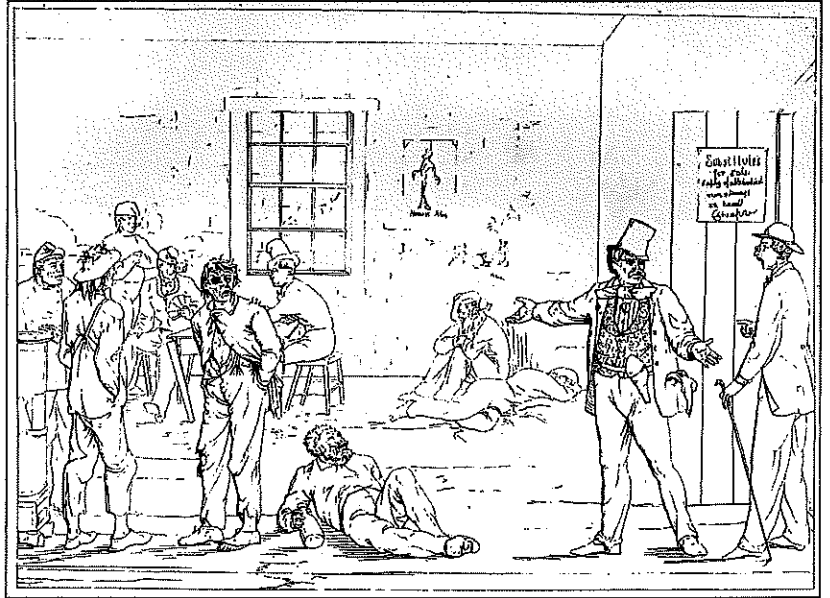
Workers who protested federal intervention in strikes raised the hopes of Democrats who

were seeking greater political power. The Civil War had deeply divided the Democratic Party in the North. Although some party leaders supported Lincoln and the war effort, many others—whom opponents called Copperheads, after the poisonous snake—rallied behind Ohio politician Clement L. Vallandigham in opposing the war. These antiwar Democrats sought desperately to build support for their position among midwestern farmers and eastern industrial workers. In areas of the Midwest where sympathy for the southern cause and antipathy to African Americans ran deep, both women and men enthusiastically joined the Copperhead campaign.

Democrats enjoyed considerable success in eastern cities as well. There, inflation was running rampant and immigrant workers had long supported Democratic political machines. Racism was the strongest weapon in the party's arsenal. As the Civil War increasingly became a war against slavery, many white workers found an outlet for their racism in supporting the peace wing of the Democratic Party.

The Republican draft law further fueled northern opposition to the war. The Conscription Act of March 1863 provided that draftees would be selected by an impartial lottery. But the act contained a loophole that exempted men who had \$300 to spare. A man could pay that \$300 to the government in place of serving or to another man who served as the draftee's substitute. This option was unavailable to most workers, who were lucky to earn \$300 in an entire year, and they deeply resented the draft law's profound inequality. Others opposed the recent expansion of the North's war aims to include emancipation, as they assumed that freed slaves would join free blacks as competitors for scarce jobs after the war ended.

The simmering resentment of the urban poor reached the boiling point in July 1863, when the new draft law went into effect. Riots broke out in cities across the North. In New York, where war-induced inflation had caused tremendous suffering and where a large immigrant population solidly supported a powerful Democratic machine, implementation of the draft triggered four days of the worst rioting Americans had ever seen. Violence quickly spread through the entire city. Both women and men, many of them poor Irish immigrants, attacked Protestant missionaries, Republican draft officials, and wealthy businessmen. New York City's small free black population became the rioters' main target, however. Enraged immigrants turned on black New Yorkers. One observer reported that he saw "a black man hanged . . . for no offense but his Negritude." Rioters lynched at least a dozen African Americans and looted and burned the city's Colored Orphan Asylum. Leading trade unionists joined middle-class leaders in condemning the riots but to no avail. The violence ended only when Union troops were rushed back from the front to put down the riot by force. At the end, over 100 New Yorkers lay dead.



Buying a Substitute in the North During the War

In his collection of etchings, *Sketches from the Civil War in North America*, A. J. Volck depicted the Union Army as composed of immigrant and native-born deviants and criminals. He was moved less by the inequities of the northern draft law than by his sympathy for the South. V. Blada (A. J. Volck), *Sketches from the Civil War in North America*, 1861, '62, '63 (1863) — Print Collection, Miriam and Ira Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



The New York Draft Riots

The lynching of a black man on Clarkson Street. *Illustrated London News*, August 8, 1863 — American Social History Project.

“A Poor Man, But A Man For All That”: New Yorkers Debate the Draft Riots

This exchange between a self-identified participant in the New York City draft riots and the editors of the New York Times appeared in that newspaper on July 15, 1863, the third day of violent unrest in the streets of New York City.

You will, no doubt, be hard on us rioters tomorrow morning, but that 300-dollar law has made us nobodies, vagabonds and cast-outs of society, for whom nobody cares when we must go to war and be shot down. We are the poor rabble, and the rich rabble is our enemy by this law. Therefore we will give our enemy battle right here, and ask no quarter. Although we got hard fists, and are dirty without, we have soft hearts, and have clean consciences within, and that's the reason we love our wives and children more than the rich, because we got not much besides them, and we will not go and leave them at home for to starve. Until that draft law is repealed, I for one am willing to knock down more such rum-hole politicians as [Police Superintendent] Kennedy. Why don't they let the nigger kill the slave-driving race and take possession of the South, as it belongs to them.

A Poor Man, But A Man For All That.

[Editors' response]

. . . It may be very hard that a poor man should be compelled to serve his country as a soldier, but he is not asked to do it gratuitously, and every possible precaution is taken to provide for his wife and children. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of such men have volunteered to defend their country now that its existence is in danger, and have never dreamed that they became either “vagabonds” or a “rabble” on that account. It is true that men who have \$300 can purchase exemption from this honorable duty—but their \$300 goes into the pockets of the poor men who may volunteer to take their places. Money will purchase exemption from a great many of the labors of life, and there always will be a great many men willing to use it for that purpose; and neither laws nor anything else can change this state of things.

But if our correspondent thinks that this justifies him in committing murder and arson, or that he shows his love for his wife and children by plunging the society in which they live into the midst of anarchy and crime, he will live to find out his mistake.

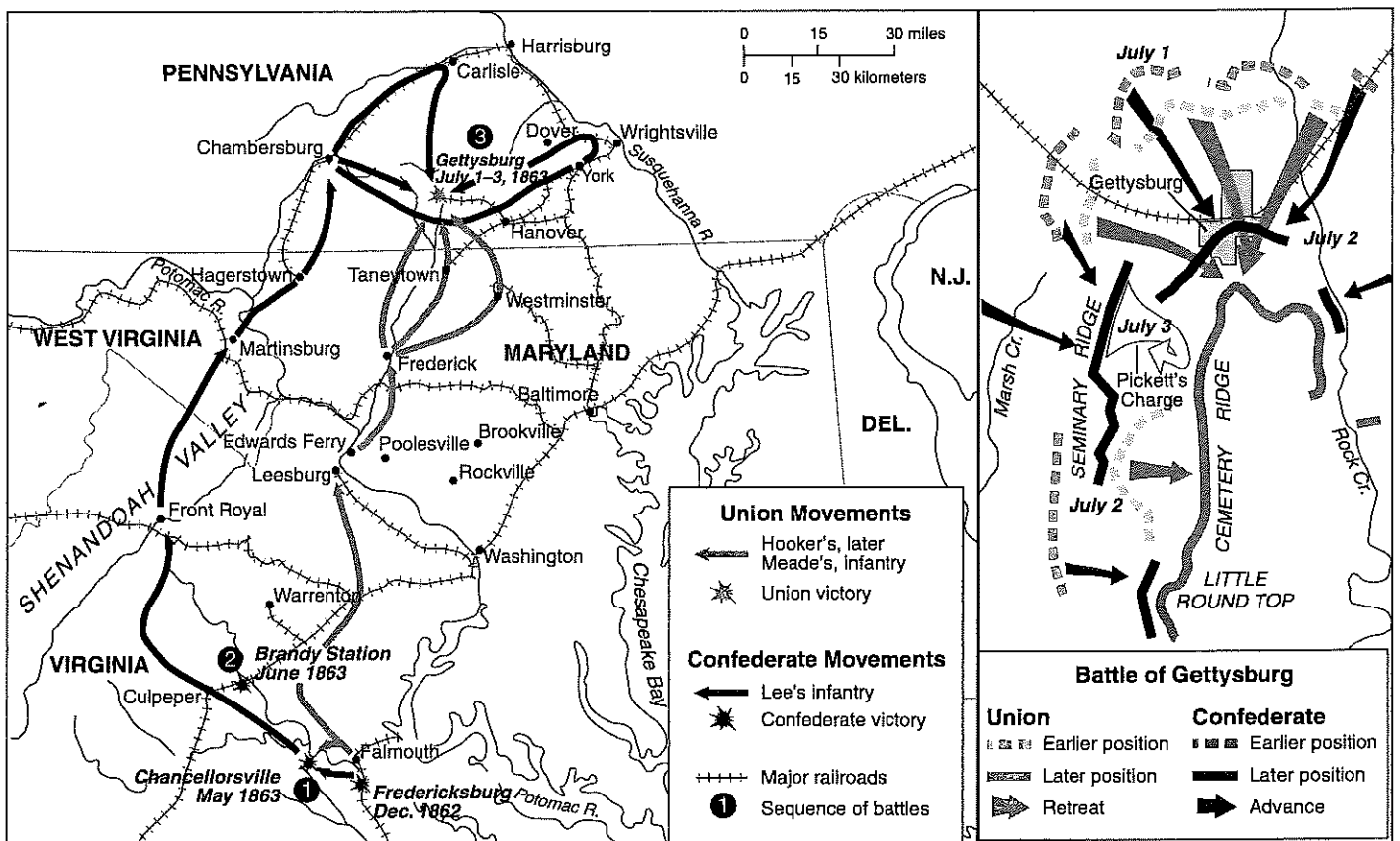
New York Times, July 15, 1863, 4.

Building Consensus Through Military Victory In the weeks preceding the draft riots, the military situation did not bode well for the Union. Following victories at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, Virginia, the Confederate army's premiere general, Robert E. Lee, had led his troops in the first direct invasion of northern territory. By late June 1863, the Confederate army had crossed into Pennsylvania. If Lee won a substantial victory there, European nations might be convinced to recognize the Confederacy, and Peace Democrats might gain substantial support among war-weary Northerners.

But then, as New Yorkers rioted against the draft, the Union won two decisive victories, marking the beginning of its military success. In the eastern theater, Union forces turned back a major Confederate drive at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (Map 11.2). Neither Lee nor his Union counterpart, General George A. Meade, had set out to wage a major battle in Gettysburg. But Lee was concerned about losing his supply lines if he moved farther north, and Meade was anxious to ensure that the Confederates not gain control of the major roads that crossed in the town. So on July 1, the battle commenced, and three grueling days of fighting followed. Although it appeared at several points that the Confederate Army had the advantage, it failed to gain the victory. The battle of Gettysburg was the bloodiest of the war. Twenty-three thousand Union soldiers were killed, wounded, or listed

MAP 11.2 The Battle of Gettysburg

At the Battle of Gettysburg, Confederate forces threatened for the first time to gain a major victory in the North. Just before moving into Pennsylvania, the Confederate Army had won battles at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, Virginia. A victory at Gettysburg could have turned the tide of the war in the South's favor, persuaded Europeans to support the Confederacy, and allowed the Peace Democrats to make a stronger case for ending the war without ending slavery.



as missing, as were 28,000 Confederate soldiers, more than one-third of Lee's army.

It was probably good that on July 4, as the weary and wounded Confederate troops retreated south, they had no idea of the events that were unfolding in Vicksburg, Mississippi. There, Union troops under Ulysses S. Grant had been pounding entrenched Confederate forces for weeks. In June, Grant had sent his men in a wide arc around the city and attacked from the east, setting the stage for a six-week siege of the city. Exhausted and starving Confederate soldiers finally wrote a letter to their commander, General John C. Pemberton, stating: "If you can't feed us, you had better surrender, horrible as this idea is." On July 4, 30,000 Confederate troops surrendered, giving the Union Army control of the richest plantation region in the South.

The changing Union fortunes helped to turn the tide of northern public opinion, increasing support for Lincoln. At the same time, the heroics of African American soldiers, who in 1863 engaged in direct and often brutal combat against Confederate troops, encouraged wider support for emancipation. In addition, the Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg convinced Great Britain not to recognize the Confederate States of America as an independent government.

The 1864 fall elections tested Northerners' support for Lincoln's wartime policies against the peace platform of the Democrats. The Democrats nominated George B. McClellan, the one-time Union commander, as their candidate for president. McClellan managed to attract many working people who had traditionally supported the Democrats and who now bore

A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg, July 1863

Photographers covered the war, following the Union Army in wagons that served as traveling darkrooms. Their equipment was bulky, and the exposures had to be long, so they could not take photographs during battle. But photography was graphic; this picture taken on the morning of July 4 showed the northern public that dying in battle lacked the gallantry that was often represented in paintings and prints. (Timothy H. O'Sullivan) Alexander Gardner, *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War*, Vol. 1 (1866) — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.



the heaviest burden of the war. But whatever hopes for victory these northern Democrats had were crushed when Union General William Tecumseh Sherman captured Atlanta just two months before the presidential election. Lincoln's substantial electoral victory over McClellan gave the president a clear mandate to carry the war to its conclusion. Combined with the military victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Lincoln's reelection raised the curtain on the most important act of the Civil War: the destruction, root and branch, of slavery.

African Americans Battle Confederates and Prejudice African Americans intervened decisively in the Civil War in two interrelated ways. From January 1863 on, African American soldiers were allowed to serve in the Union Army, and they helped to ensure that nothing short of universal emancipation would be the outcome of the war. In addition, rapid Union advances after 1864 enhanced slaves' opportunities for seizing freedom, further disrupting Confederate war efforts.

When the Union finally began to recruit African Americans into the military, the response was overwhelming. By spring 1865, nearly 200,000 African Americans were serving in the Union Army or Navy, constituting about one-tenth of the total number of men in uniform. Nearly 80 percent of black soldiers had been recruited in the slave states, and these men struck a blow for their own and their people's freedom. As George W. Hatton, a black sergeant with Company C, First Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops, observed in 1864, "though the Government declared that it did not want Negroes in this conflict, I look around me and see hundreds of colored men armed and ready to defend the Government at any moment, and such are my feelings, that I can only say, the fetters have fallen — our bondage is over."

Of course, for many northern whites, recruitment of African Americans into the Union army was not so much a matter of giving blacks a chance to end slavery as it was a practical necessity. As Union manpower needs grew, even outright racists could support black recruitment. "When this war is over and we have summed up the entire loss of life it has imposed on the country," wrote Iowa's governor, Samuel Kirkwood, "I shall not have any regrets if it is found that a part of the dead are niggers and that all are not white men."

Recruitment policies sometimes reflected this racism. In Louisiana and Mississippi, for example, squads from the invading Union Army swept through plantation slave quarters, impressing all able-bodied men into the military. "The Soldiers have taken my husband away . . . and it is against his will,"

To Arms!

This recruiting poster was directed to free African Americans in Pennsylvania, 1863. The Library Company of Philadelphia.

MEN OF COLOR
To Arms! To Arms!
NOW OR NEVER
THREE YEARS' SERVICE!
AND THAT OF FREEDOM'S VOICE
BATTLES OF LIBERTY AND THE UNION
Let us be warned: The government will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Union. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Constitution. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the people. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the cause of freedom.
FAIL NOW, & OUR RACE IS DOOMED
Remember that the government will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Union. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Constitution. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the people. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the cause of freedom.
SILENCE THE TONGUE OF CALUMNY
Remember that the government will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Union. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Constitution. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the people. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the cause of freedom.
VALOR AND HEROISM
Remember that the government will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Union. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Constitution. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the people. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the cause of freedom.
—PORT HUDSON AND MILLIKEN'S BEND,
ARE FREEMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES
OUR LAST OPPORTUNITY HAS COME
MEN OF COLOR, BROTHERS AND FATHERS!
WE APPEAL TO YOU!
STRIKE NOW!
Remember that the government will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Union. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the Constitution. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the people. It will not tolerate the service of those who are not loyal to the cause of freedom.

“I Hope to Fall with My Face to the Foe”: Lewis Douglass Shows Courage Under Fire

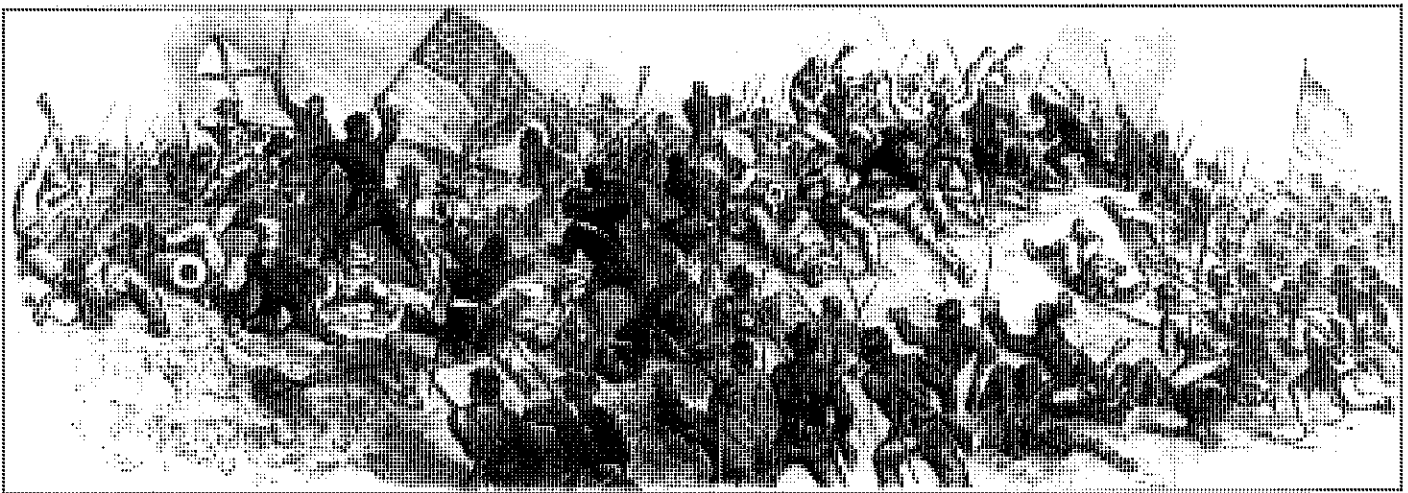
Frederick Douglass's son Lewis was a sergeant in the Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth, a regiment that was made up of free northern blacks and escaped slaves. On July 18, 1863, they unsuccessfully attacked Fort Wagner, the Confederate stronghold that guarded the entrance to South Carolina's strategically vital Charleston Harbor. After the battle, Lewis wrote the following letter to his future wife.

My Dear Amelia:

I have been in two fights, and am unhurt. I am about to go in another, I believe to-night. Our men fought well on both occasions. The last was desperate—we charged that terrible battery on Morris Island known as Fort Wagoner, and were repulsed with a loss of [many] killed and wounded. I escaped unhurt from amidst that perfect hail of shot and shell. It was terrible. . . . Should I fall in the next fight killed or wounded I hope to fall with my face to the foe. . . .

My regiment has established its reputation as a fighting regiment—not a man flinched, though it was a trying time. Men fell all around me. A shell would explode and clear a space of twenty feet, our men would close up again, but it was no use we had to retreat, which was a very hazardous undertaking. How I got out of that fight alive I cannot tell, but I am here. My dear girl, I hope again to see you. I must bid you farewell should I be killed. Remember, if I die, I die in a good cause. I wish we had a hundred thousand colored troops—we would put an end to this war.

Carter G. Woodson, ed., *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800–1860* (1926).



Assault of the Second Louisiana (Colored) Regiment on the Confederate Works at Port Hudson, May 27, 1863

The bravery of black soldiers was extolled in the pages of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. F. H. Schell, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 27, 1863 — American Social History Project.

protested one black woman in a letter to the government. African Americans throughout the South condemned these policies, which undermined any real exercise of freedom and tore families apart. In the border states, however, slaves had less mixed feelings about recruitment into the Union Army. Because they had remained in the Union, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri had been exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation. But slaves in these states who enlisted in the Union Army were granted their freedom. Slaveholders in these loyal states did everything in their power to prevent their slaves from joining the army, including assault, harsh treatment of family members left behind, and even murder. Despite these actions, the proportion of military-age enslaved men in these four states joining the Union Army was staggering, ranging from 25 to 60 percent. By their enlistments, these men delivered slavery in the border states a blow from which it could never recover.

African American soldiers, wherever they were recruited, quickly distinguished themselves in battle. In May 1863, Louisiana black regiments fought with great gallantry and almost reckless disregard for their own lives in the assault on Port Hudson, downriver from Vicksburg. Two weeks later, ex-slaves helped to fight off a Confederate attack at Milliken's Bend in the same region. The valor of African American troops at Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend helped to ensure Grant's victory at Vicksburg the following month.

African American soldiers had to be courageous, for they faced not only death on the battlefield, but also torture and death if they were captured. The Confederate government threatened that any blacks who were taken prisoner would be treated as slaves in rebellion and be subject to execution. This policy was generally not enforced because Lincoln intervened and threatened northern retaliation. In some instances, however, as at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, in April 1864, Confederate troops cold-bloodedly murdered black Union soldiers who had surrendered. By the end of the war, 37,000 black soldiers had given their lives for freedom and the Union.

Northern whites began to acknowledge the courage of the African American soldiers who served with them, helping to undermine the whites' ingrained racism. "The bravery of the blacks in the battle of Milliken's Bend completely revolutionized the sentiment of the army with regard to the employment of negro troops," wrote the assistant secretary of war. Rank-and-file white soldiers, too, were often impressed by the valor of black troops. They gave three cheers to a Tennessee black regiment after one hard-fought battle. "One year ago the regiment was unknown, and it was considered . . . very doubtful whether Negroes would make good soldiers," a white commander noted. "Today the regiment is known throughout the army and is honored."

Nevertheless, African Americans in the army felt the effects of continuing racism. They were segregated in camps, given all the most menial jobs,

and treated as inferiors by white recruits and officers. Particularly galling was the early Union policy of paying black soldiers less than whites: \$10 versus \$13 per month. This inequality outraged African American troops. Black soldiers who openly struggled against this discrimination, like Third South Carolina Volunteers' sergeant William Walker, paid dearly for their courage. Walker, who refused to take orders until given equal pay, was charged with mutiny and executed by firing squad in February 1864.

Despite the execution of William Walker, the protests continued, and in June 1864, the War Department finally equalized wages among black and white recruits. Moreover, the struggle had begun to transform African American soldiers. They now understood that the battle for equality would go on after the war was over and that it would be fought in the North as well as the South. The war had thus not only transformed the North, but also transformed the lives and expectations of African Americans, North and South.

War Transforms the South

The destruction of slavery was the most dramatic, but by no means the only, effect the Civil War had on the South. In the South, as in the North, the war intensified conflict between social classes, altered the role of women, increased the size of cities, and—at least temporarily—launched a small industrial revolution. It also fostered dissent and protest, which were not diminished, as they were in the North, by military victory.

Urbanization and Industrialization Although Southerners had gone to war to protect an essentially rural society, the war fostered the growth of cities and industry. Before the war, New Orleans had been the only really large southern city. Now Atlanta mushroomed, and Richmond's population more than doubled. Smaller cities also grew tremendously. The population of Mobile, Alabama, for example, climbed from 29,000 people in 1860 to 41,000 five years later.

Several factors encouraged the rapid growth of southern cities. One was the creation of a large governmental and military bureaucracy in Richmond, Virginia. Hundreds of women were recruited to work in government offices in the Confederate capital, such as the Treasury Department, a job that was considered sufficiently genteel to be respectable. Women, along with children and the elderly, also moved to cities during the war in hopes of finding protection from Union troops. These refugees trickled in during the early years of the war, but by 1863 and 1864, they were flooding cities such as Richmond, Atlanta, and Savannah. Perhaps the most important contribution to urban growth was industrialization. By 1863, for example, more than 10,000 people in Selma, Alabama, worked in war industries—industries that had not existed three years earlier.

Military necessity was the spur to industrialization. At the beginning of the war, the South contained only 15 percent of the factories in the United States and produced only 30 percent of the nation's commodities. No longer able to buy industrial goods from the North and handicapped in its trade with Europe by the Union blockade, the South had either to industrialize or die. The 30,000 troops that defended Vicksburg in 1863 depended almost exclusively on clothing and equipment manufactured in Mississippi, some of it by war widows and orphans. Factories in Natchez, Columbus, Jackson, and other southern towns turned out ten thousand garments and eight thousand pairs of shoes a week. At the base of the South's new industries was the huge Tredegar ironworks in Richmond, which, by January 1863, employed over 2,500 men, black and white.

In the end, the South's industrial revolution would be aborted. The victorious Union Army destroyed factories and machinery all across the region as the war drew to a close. Confederates sometimes destroyed their own factories to keep resources from falling into Union hands. More important, even at its height, southern industrialization was a creation of government rather than of an independent class of industrial capitalists. The South remained only a pale reflection of industrial New England. Still, while it lasted, industrialization did trigger wider social change in the South.

One such change was an undermining of traditional gender roles when large numbers of southern women took jobs in the new factories. Women flocked to the mills to make clothing, powder, cartridges, and other armaments. When a roomful of explosives blew up in a Richmond factory in March 1863, most of the 69 workers who were killed were women. Many women became the sole support of their families as fathers, husbands, and brothers in the Confederate Army received inadequate pay, died of injuries or disease, or returned home as invalids.

Industrialization also led to a vast expansion of the region's small urban working class and to a new activism on its part. Led by skilled craftsmen in the war industries, workers formed unions, went on strike, and tried to put political pressure on the Confederate gov-

Richmond in Ruins

In April 1865, facing defeat, retreating Confederate forces set fire to more than nine hundred buildings in the Confederate capital. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.



ernment. When Virginia legislators introduced a bill in the fall of 1863 to control food prices, a large crowd of Richmond workers expressed their support for price controls and their resentment toward the rich. "From the fact that he consumes all and produces nothing," they proclaimed, "we know that without [our] labor and production the man with money could not exist." Lavish balls hosted by the wives of wealthy industrialists, planters, and politicians only reinforced southern workers' disparaging views of Confederate leaders. Although women such as Mary Chesnut, a planter's wife and prolific diarist, insisted that such events were necessary to maintain morale and demonstrate that the South was far from defeated, the *Richmond Enquirer* argued that they were "shameful displays of indifference to national calamity . . . a mockery of the misery and desolation that covers the land."

Dissent and Protest in the Confederate States Even more pronounced than the growing class antagonisms in the South was the growing dissatisfaction with the war. Popular protests initially emerged when the Confederate Congress introduced a draft in April 1862, a full year before the Union passed its own draft law. Concerned with the weariness of troops in the field and with Grant's successes in the West, Confederate President Jefferson Davis concluded that the war effort required conscription. Other southerners disagreed, maintaining that the very idea of a national (that is, a Confederate) draft undermined the southern tradition of states' rights. Georgia's governor, Joseph E. Brown, for example, attempted to block implementation of the act, arguing that it conflicted with the very principles that had been used to justify secession in the first place. Many ordinary southerners agreed. "I volunteered for six months and I am perfectly willing to serve my time out, and come home and stay awhile and go again," wrote a Georgia soldier to his family. "But I don't want to be forced to go."

As in the North, inequalities in the execution of the draft also incited opposition. A draftee who had money could hire a substitute to serve in his place. Moreover, an October 1862 law exempted any white man who owned 20 or more slaves from service in the army. This special exemption arose in part as a response to the growing unruliness of plantation slaves in the absence of overseers or owners. In practice, however, it meant that large slaveholders, the very ones who had led the South into war, had exempted themselves from dying in it. The point was not lost on the nonslaveholding whites who fought and died for the Confederacy. "All they want is to get you pumped up and go to fight for their infernal negroes," said one farmer from Alabama, "and after you do their fighting you may kiss their hine parts for all they care."

Impressment, which allowed the Confederate army to take whatever supplies it needed from farmers, planters, and other residents, also caused

“Go Fight for the Negroes of Your Neighbor”: A Georgia Soldier Condemns Draft Exemptions for Slaveholders

When the Confederacy passed a draft law in 1862, it contained a provision known as the “twenty Negro law,” which required plantations that had 20 or more slaves to retain “one white person” to secure order. In practice, this meant that the male owners of twenty or more slaves were exempt from military service. The law also exempted an additional white person in areas where large plantations existed within five miles of each other. In this letter to an Atlanta newspaper, a Confederate soldier protests the exemption.

But as to the justice of the clause of the Exemption Bill to which you refer, I must say that your ideas of justice and equity are quite different from mine. I cannot for my life see how it is, that because the institution of slavery elevates the social position of the poor man, that therefore the poor should fight the battles of our country, while the rich are allowed to remain at home and to enjoy ease and pleasure. . . . is it just that each conscript, who happens to own ten negroes of certain age should be exempt from military duty? — Why, sir, what say you to the poor white man who has *ten children* all dependent on him for succor and support? Shall he be exempt? No, you answer, “go fight for the negroes of your neighbor, because it elevates you in society.” . . .

. . . The poor men who are now in the army are patriots. They deem no sacrifice too great to be made; no privation too severe to be borne for liberty. They leave home and friends for *country’s* sake. Let the appeal be made to their patriotism, to the justice of our cause, but for God’s sake don’t tell the poor soldier who now shivers in a Northern wind while you snooze in a feather bed, that it is *just* and *right* that the men, whom Congress has exempted, should enjoy ease at home, amassing untold riches while *he* must fight, bleed, and even die, for their ten negroes. If we are ever whipped, it will be by violations of our own constitution, infringements of justice and right. When burdens are borne equally, *dangers* must be also.

Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 30 October 1862; reprinted in William E. Gienapp, ed., *The Civil War and Reconstruction: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 133–134.

discontent. By 1863, the Confederate Congress had set prices well below market value for the goods that were taken. A group of farmers from Floyd County, Georgia, complained, “These seizures are not impressment, [they] are robbery.” Along with a more stringent tax bill that was introduced the same year, impressment placed a heavy burden on the small, food-producing farm families that had the least to gain from a Confederate victory. It brought to crisis proportions a food shortage that had been building for some time in southern cities.

Although overwhelmingly agricultural, the South had built its economy primarily on cotton, tobacco, and other nonedible crops. The absence of a good railroad or canal system in the South, coupled with the Union block-

"Women and Children Are Still Standing in the Streets, Demanding Food": A Woman Witnesses the Richmond Bread Riot

A friend of Sara Rice Pryor, wife of Confederate Army officer Roger A. Pryor, wrote this letter describing the Richmond "bread riot." On April 2, 1863, a large and largely female crowd protested severe wartime food shortages by taking the food they needed from stores in Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy.

The crowd now rapidly increased, and numbered, I am sure, more than a thousand women and children. It grew and grew until it reached the dignity of a mob—a bread riot. They impressed all the light carts they met, and marched along silently and in order. They marched through Cary Street and Main, visiting the stores of the speculators and emptying them of their contents. Governor Letcher sent the mayor to read the Riot Act, and as this had no effect he threatened to fire on the crowd. The city battalion then came up. The women fell back with frightened eyes, but did not obey the order to disperse. The President then appeared, ascended a dray, and addressed them. It is said he was received at first with hisses from the boys, but after he had spoken for some time with great kindness and sympathy, the women quietly moved on, taking their food with them. General Elzey and General Winder wished to call troops from the camps to "suppress the women," but [Secretary of War] Seddon, wise man, declined to issue the order. While I write women and children are still standing in the streets, demanding food, and the government is issuing to them rations of rice.

This is a frightful state of things. I am telling you of it because *not one word* has been said in the newspapers about it. All will be changed, Judge Campbell tells me, if we can win a battle or two (but, oh, at what a price!), and regain the control of our railroads. Your General has been magnificent. He has fed Lee's army all winter—I wish he could feed our starving women and children.

Sara Rice Pryor, *Reminiscences of Peace and War* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1904), pp. 237–239; reprinted in William E. Gienapp, ed., *The Civil War and Reconstruction: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 199–200.

ade of coastal shipping and Union occupation of grain-producing areas in the Confederacy, further hindered distribution of food. As the specter of starvation came to haunt the cities of the South, even people in Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, went hungry. In March 1863, when government agents began using impressment to take scarce food from city markets to feed the Confederate Army, Richmond's poor channeled their anger into protest.

On April 2, a group of women, including the wives of Richmond ironworkers and Confederate soldiers, marched to the governor's mansion, demanding food. A young woman in the growing throng declared, "We

celebrate our right to live. We are starving. As soon as enough of us get together we are going to the bakeries, and each of us will take a loaf of bread. This is little enough for the government to give us after it has taken all our men.” The protest soon turned into a major riot, which ended only when Jefferson Davis personally threatened to have troops open fire on the women. Food riots also broke out in cities in Georgia, North Carolina, and Alabama.

Food shortages were closely tied to another problem: inflation. Food shortages forced food prices up, while the blockade and the military focus of southern industry increased the prices of manufactured goods. As the Confederate government issued more and more treasury notes to finance the war, inflation soared. By January 1864, it took twenty-seven Confederate dollars to buy what one dollar had bought in April 1861—an inflation rate of 2,600 percent in less than three years. Urban workers were overwhelmed. In the aftermath of the Richmond bread riots, a woman diarist declared, “I am for a tidal wave of peace—and I am not alone. . . . if we can afford to give \$11 for a pound of bacon, \$10 for a small dish of green corn, and \$10 for a watermelon, we can have a dinner of three courses for four persons. . . . Somebody, somewhere, is mightily to blame for all this business.” The culprits, to her mind, were the political leaders who had started the war in the first place.

Small farmers and their families also bore heavy burdens. Despite their loyalty to the Confederacy early in the war, taxation, impressment, inflation, and the inequities of the draft eventually took their toll. To these grievances was added the devastation of war. Since most of the war was fought in the Upper South, small nonslaveholding farmers saw their crops, their animals, and sometimes their very farms destroyed. During the last year of the war, increasing desertion rates and protests by white farmers against the deprecation of their property, crops, and homes by Confederate soldiers marked their growing disaffection from a war that would benefit largely the slaveholding elite.

The phrase that had seemed so cynical in 1862—“a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight”—had become the rallying cry of the southern peace movement by 1864. The Washington Constitutional Union, a secret peace society with a large following among farmers in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee, elected several of its members to the Confederate Congress. The Heroes of America, another secret organization with strength in North Carolina, pro-

Sowing and Reaping

The northern *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* presented an unflattering portrait of southern white womanhood in a May 1863 illustration. The depiction contrasted sharply with the view that was promoted by plantation elites of virtuous southern white mothers and wives who obeyed and deferred to men. The panel on the left showed southern women “hounding their men on to Rebellion.” The panel on the right depicted them “feeling the effects of Rebellion and creating Bread Riots.” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, May 23, 1863—American Social History Project.

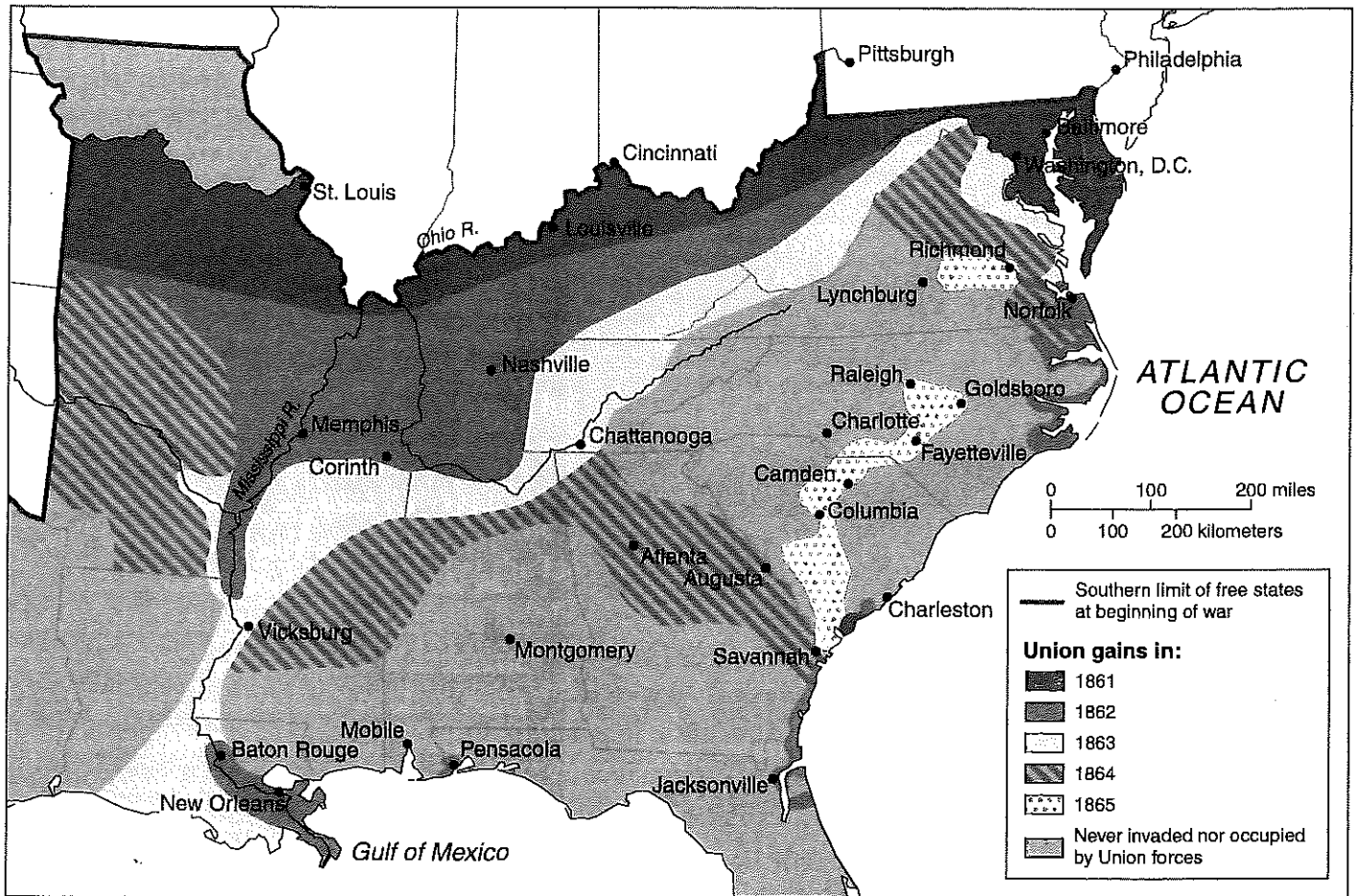


vided Union forces with information on southern troop movements and encouraged desertion from the Confederate Army. By war's end, more Confederate soldiers had deserted than remained in uniform. In some isolated mountainous regions of the South, such as western North Carolina, draft evaders and deserters formed guerrilla groups that not only killed draft officials but also actively impeded the war effort.

In the eastern part of North Carolina, Indians fueled opposition to the Confederate cause. Native Americans from Robeson County were, like slaves, forced to labor for the Confederate Army. They used the knowledge they gained to mount guerrilla operations and pass information to Union officers. By 1864, Henry Berry Lowry, an Indian and, according to his supporters, the Robin Hood of Robeson County, had organized a band that consisted of his own people plus aggrieved whites and poor blacks to wage a guerrilla war against Confederate troops and the North Carolina Home Guard. Indians also helped to guide Union General William Tecumseh Sherman and his troops—including a number of Oneidas serving with Company F—through the North Carolina swamps, helping to increase the devastation that was wreaked on the area but also to hasten the Union victory.

As the Confederate cause unraveled, many southern white women grew weary of the conflict. Across the South, women had organized aid societies, which provided bandages, blankets, clothing, ammunition, and food to the army. The women also supplied hospitals, raised funds, and supported an increasing number of widows and orphans. Individual women volunteered as nurses, served as couriers and spies, picked up guns in defense of homes and farms, and raised regiments. Among the slaveholding class, many mistresses became “masters,” taking over the management of fieldwork and field hands. As one soldier wrote to his wife on a Georgia farm, “You must be a man and woman both while the war lasts.” Given the restrictions on women's activities before the war, the changes that the protracted conflict demanded became too much to ask of more and more women. In addition to anxieties about the safety of their men on the front lines of battle, slaveholding southern white women feared the wrath of Yankee soldiers, the antipathy of slaves and free blacks, and the desperation of poor whites. They found obtaining the necessities of life a heavier and heavier burden; and there was no relief, no victory, in sight.

With the military defeats of 1863 and 1864 (Map 11.3), many women who had once supported the Confederate cause began to pray for peace, whatever the price. Some even urged their sons and husbands to abandon the battlefield and return home. Although some women remained ardent supporters of secession, berating generals who ordered retreat or suffered defeat, a growing number agreed with Georgia plantation mistress Gertrude Thomas. In October 1864, she wrote in her diary, “It would be a brilliant



thing to recapture Atlanta. And I wish it could be done.” But she continued, “Am I willing to give my husband to gain Atlanta for the Confederacy? No, No, No, a thousand times No!”

Military Victory Assured

The war had now entered its final months. In March 1864, Lincoln placed General Ulysses S. Grant in charge of all Union forces. In early May, Grant embarked on a strategy that included attacks against military and civilian targets alike and that accepted huge casualties to achieve victory. Grant led his troops overland through the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg campaigns in attempts to take Richmond and defeat Lee’s Confederate forces. General William Tecumseh Sherman, meanwhile, pushed back the Confederate Army in Tennessee and invaded Georgia. By August 1864, Sherman had forced Confederate General John Bell Hood’s army to retreat to Atlanta, one of the most important cities in the South. Early the following month, Sherman’s army swept into Atlanta, cutting the South in half. A sense of impending doom spread among those who were loyal to the Confederacy.

MAP 11.3 The Conquest of the South, 1861–1865

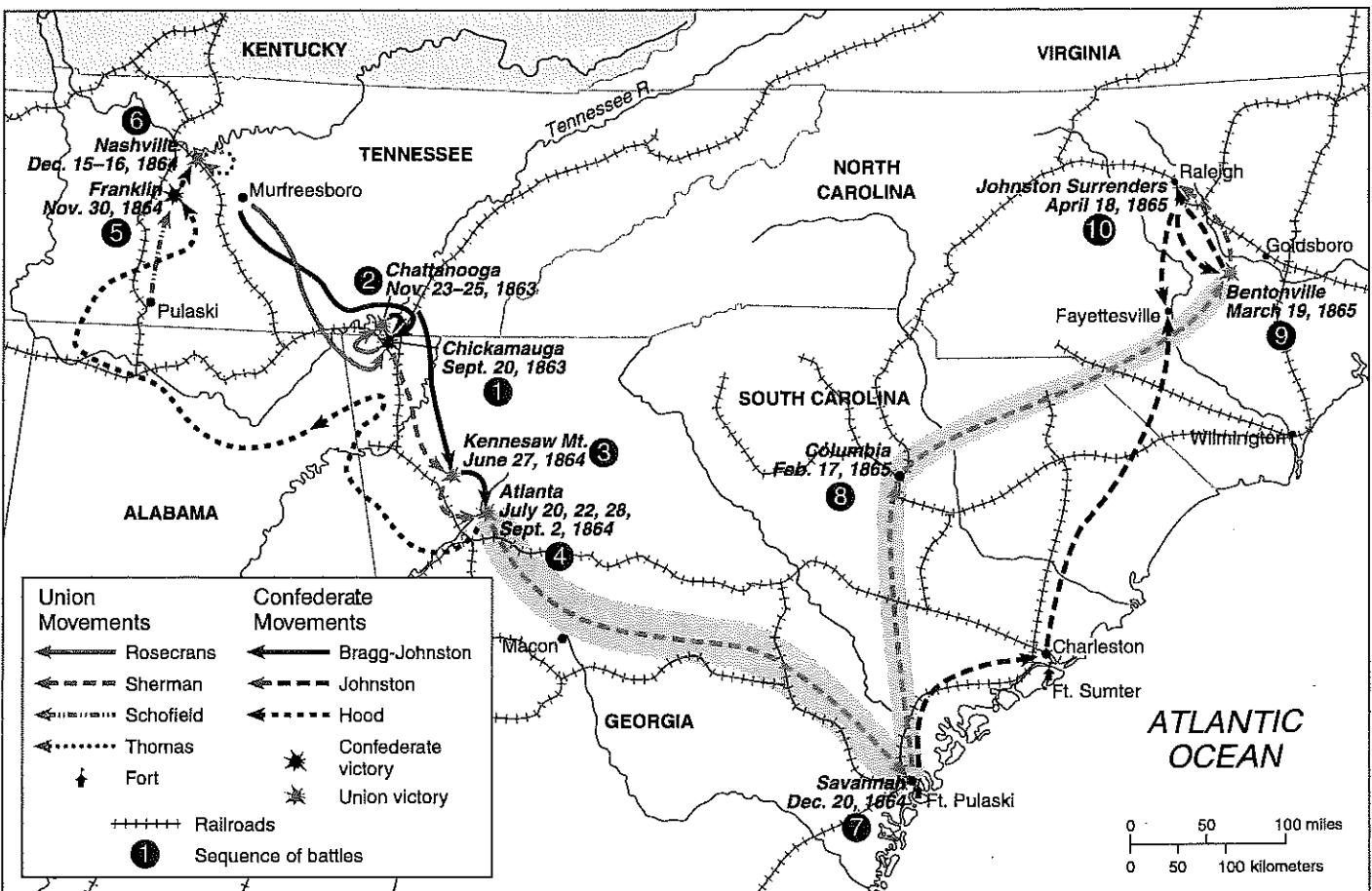
Although Confederate forces maintained control over nearly half the area of the South until the end of the war, they did lose control over critical communication and supply lines. As Union forces penetrated the South from the North and the West, strategic railroad, communication, and shipping lines fell into Union hands. At the same time, bloody and prolonged military campaigns in many areas had devastated the Confederate Army, which was recruiting soldiers from a smaller and diminishing pool of men.

MAP 11.4 Sherman's March Through the Confederacy

Sherman's march through Georgia has been memorialized in films and novels as well as in history books. The spectacular, if horrific, burning of Atlanta has gained particular attention. But for Sherman's troops, destroying Atlanta was only the beginning of a seven-month campaign of destruction that brought Union soldiers into the homes, kitchens, barns, and bedrooms of Confederate families from Atlanta, Georgia, through Columbia, South Carolina, and into Bentonville and Raleigh, North Carolina. Moreover, the devastation that Sherman's march wrought was psychological as well as physical, and it drew women, black and white, into the center of the Civil War.

Sherman then began his 300-mile march across Georgia, from Atlanta to the sea, and then up through the Carolinas (Map 11.4). Embracing the concept of "total war," his troops sought to destroy everything in their path. They cut a swath of destruction 50 to 60 miles wide, destroying crops, livestock, and houses before they reached Savannah in late December. Civilians—which often meant women and children—were now official targets of Union military strategists. Sherman's all-white army uprooted thousands of slaves, many of whom tried to attach themselves to the Union forces. In all, nearly 18,000 slaves—men, women, and children—left their plantations to join the victorious Union Army on its march to the sea. To the fleeing slaves' dismay, Sherman's troops turned many away. Marauding Confederate forces subsequently captured many of them, killing some and re-enslaving others.

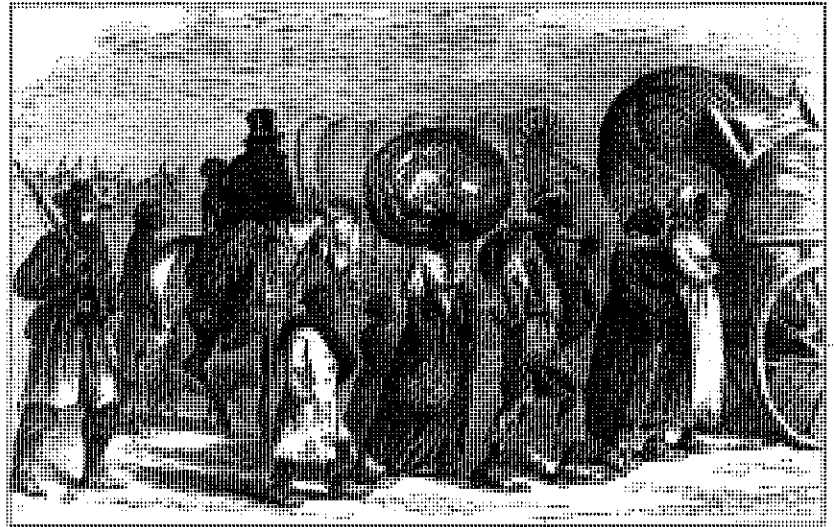
Sherman's callous actions caused a scandal in Washington. In January 1865, Lincoln dispatched Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to Georgia to investigate the charges. In an extraordinary meeting held in Savannah, Stanton and Sherman met with twenty black ministers to hear their complaints about mistreatment of contrabands and to inquire what, in their opinion, African Americans wanted, now that slavery was ending. The ministers spoke movingly of the war lifting "the yoke of bondage"; freed slaves now "could reap the fruit of their own labor" and, by being given land, could



“take care of ourselves, and assist the Government in maintaining our freedom.” Four days later, Sherman responded to the ministers’ demands and issued his controversial Field Order Number 15, setting aside more than four hundred thousand acres of captured Confederate land to be divided into small plots for the freed slaves. Perhaps as significant as Sherman’s order was the fact that a major official of the national government had traveled to Georgia to ask ordinary African Americans what they wanted. The Civil War had truly had revolutionary consequences.

Those consequences were far-reaching. At the end of 1864, as defeat loomed, Confederate leaders themselves began to talk of emancipating the slaves. At almost the same moment that Stanton and Sherman were meeting with African American ministers in Savannah, Jefferson Davis was calling for the general recruitment of slaves into the Confederate Army, their payment to include freedom for themselves and their families. The Confederate Congress ultimately passed such a law in early 1865, but it came too late to allow African Americans actually to enlist in the southern army. The event nonetheless demonstrated a startling fact: the southern planters who had seceded from the Union to protect the institution of slavery were now openly adopting policies that would inevitably destroy it.

As Sherman led his troops north from Georgia and through the Carolinas, Grant’s troops were overwhelming Lee’s besieged army in Richmond. In one of the war’s most dramatic moments, seasoned African American troops under Grant’s command led the final assault on Richmond. They marched into the capital of the Confederacy carrying the Stars and Stripes and singing the anthem to John Brown, much to the amazement of Richmond’s citizenry, black and white. Finally, in April 1865, with fewer than 30,000 soldiers remaining under his command, Lee surrendered, signing the agreement along with Grant at the home of William McLean in Appomattox Court House, Virginia. Two large Confederate armies continued to engage Union forces in North Carolina and west of the Mississippi and the Confederate government continued on until May, having been reestablished in Georgia, to which Jefferson Davis fled. Still, the Civil War, for all intents and purposes, had come to an end.



Contrabands Accompanying the Line of Sherman's March Through Georgia

This illustration from a March 1865 *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* showed a stereotyped view of the men, women, and children who followed the Union Army's campaign through Georgia. But to northern readers, the engraving's significance may have lain in its unmistakable message about slaves' utter hatred of slavery. "The oft expressed fallacy that they preferred slavery to freedom," ran the picture caption, "... [has been] 'crushed to earth,' ... never to rise again." *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, March 18, 1865 — American Social History Project.



Jefferson Davis as an Unprotected Female!

Union troops captured the former president of the Confederacy in May 1865. Whether Davis, who had eluded arrest for over a month, was actually wearing his wife's dress when he was caught is open to question. Nonetheless, the depiction of the captured Davis in woman's clothes was featured in many illustrations and cartoons in the northern press. These images, like earlier pictures of southern women sending their men to war and rioting, questioned the South's claims of courage and chivalry by showing its men and women reversing traditional sex roles. *Harper's Weekly*, May 27, 1865 — American Social History Project.

Conclusion: Revolutionary Consequences and Daunting Questions

The legal abolition of slavery had been initiated in Washington a few months earlier. In 1864, the Republican Party had endorsed a constitutional amendment that would forever end slavery in the United States. On January 31, 1865, Congress finally passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude anywhere within the jurisdiction of the United States.

Wartime experiences, moreover, had changed the attitudes of many northerners, who had seen firsthand the “peculiar institution” and the suffering it inflicted on African Americans. In some places, new attitudes were translated into law. Ohio, California, and Illinois

repealed statutes barring blacks from testifying in court and serving on juries. In May 1865, Massachusetts passed the first comprehensive public accommodations law in U.S. history, ensuring equal treatment for blacks and whites in theaters, stores, schools, and other social spaces. Earlier, San Francisco, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and even New York City had desegregated their streetcars. The logic of a war against the enslavement of southern blacks was now extended to encompass at least limited rights for African Americans in the North.

Still, the task of rebuilding the United States following four years of bitter warfare was daunting. Before it could even begin, a new tragedy engulfed the nation. On April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln as he sat in a box at Ford's Theatre watching a play. It was just five days after Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House.

Lincoln's assassination marked the end of an era. Conflict between two social systems—one based on slavery, the other on free labor—had plagued the nation since the American Revolution. More than 600,000 Americans had died in the Civil War, but the issue of slavery was resolved once and for all. In the process, nearly four million Americans who had once been slaves were freed. Now, in the spring of 1865, all Americans had to confront difficult new questions: Who would lead the nation during this difficult time? Would Confederate political and military leaders be punished for their participation in the war? Could the nation prosper, given the devastating impact of the war on southern agriculture? How could the nation address the balance between federal power and states' rights that had fueled secession? Most important, what would be the role of newly freed African Americans in the political and economic reconstruction of the South and the nation?

“A Jubilee of Freedom”: Black Charlestonians Celebrate Emancipation

The meaning of freedom for enslaved African Americans can be glimpsed in the following report from Charleston, South Carolina, which was published in the New York Daily Tribune on April 4, 1865—just five days before Lee’s surrender. Charleston boasted one of the largest and most important African American communities in the antebellum South. Two months after the Confederate Army fled, the city’s black men and women organized a parade to celebrate their emancipation. The parade numbered thousands of marchers and included dramatic tableaux, banners, and songs. Like their white working-class counterparts who had held similar events in the decades before the war, African Americans used such public celebrations to symbolize their deeply held beliefs and feelings.

It was a jubilee of freedom, a hosannah to their deliverers. First came the marshals and their aides, followed by a band of music; then the Twenty-First [U.S. Colored] Regiment; then the clergymen of the different churches, carrying open Bibles; then an open car drawn by four white horses. In this car there were fifteen colored ladies dressed in white—to represent the fifteen recent slave states. A long procession of women followed the car. Then the children—1,800 in line, at least. They sang:

John Brown’s body lies a mould’ring in the grave,
We go marching on!

This verse, however, was not nearly so popular as one which rapidly supplanted all the others, until along the mile or more of children, marching two abreast, no other sound could be heard than

We’ll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree!
As we go marching on!

After the children came the various trades. The fisherman, with a banner bearing an emblematical device and the words, “The Fisherman welcome you, [U.S. Army] General [Rufus] Saxton.” . . . The carpenters carried their planes, the masons their trowels, the teamsters their whips, the coopers their adzes. The bakers’ crackers hung around their necks; the paper-carriers [had] a banner and each a copy of the Charleston Courier; the wheelwrights a large wheel; and the fire companies, ten in number, their foremen with their trumpets.

A large cart, drawn by two dilapidated horses, followed the trades. On this cart was an auctioneer’s block and a black man with a bell represented a Negro trader. This man had himself been sold several times, and two women and a child who sat on the block had also been knocked down at auction in Charleston.

As the cart moved along, the mock-auctioneer rang his bell and cried out: “How much am I offered for this good cook? She is an excellent cook, gentlemen. . . . Who bids?”

“Two hundred’s bid! Two-fifty. Three hundred.”

“Who bids? Who bids?”

Women burst into tears as they saw this tableau and, forgetting that it was a mimic scene, shouted wildly:

“Give me back my children! Give me back my children!”

The Years in Review

1860

- Republican Abraham Lincoln is elected president.
- South Carolina secedes from the Union on December 20.
- To keep border states such as Maryland in the Union, President Lincoln waives the right of habeas corpus, puts secessionists in jail, arrests state legislators, and limits freedom of the press.

1861

- Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas secede from the United States.
- On February 9, representatives of the seceded southern states establish the Confederate States of America and elect Mississippian Jefferson Davis as president.
- Fort Sumter surrenders to Confederate forces on April 14.
- The Upper South states of Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee join the Confederacy.
- At the first battle at Bull Run, in northern Virginia, 22,000 Southerners push back an attack by 30,000 Union troops; civilians bring picnics to the battle site, intending to watch a military spectacle, but have to flee for their lives.
- Federal government establishes the U.S. Sanitary Commission to coordinate efforts of female volunteers providing medical care to Union soldiers.
- In May, General Benjamin Butler declares escaped slaves to be “contraband” of war, property that rebel slave owners had forfeited by the act of rebellion.
- In August, Congress passes its first confiscation act, proclaiming that any slave owner whose bondsmen were used by the Confederate Army would thereafter lose all claim to those slaves.
- Lincoln appeases border state slaveholders by reversing General John C. Frémont’s field order freeing all slaves owned by Confederate sympathizers in Missouri.

1862

- The Union Navy captures New Orleans, largely owing to a successful blockade of Confederate ports.
- Union troops commanded by Ulysses S. Grant win a battle at Shiloh in western Tennessee.
- Congress approves the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and appropriates \$600,000 to assist former slaves in colonizing Haiti, Liberia, and Central America.

- Congress passes a second confiscation bill, which declares the slaves of Confederate supporters to be free.
- The Confederate Congress passes the first conscription act in American history; after a few months, it is modified to exempt from military service owners of 20 or more slaves.
- Union commanders establish “contraband camps” for families of African American soldiers.
- During the summer, Confederate troops led by Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson win a series of stunning victories in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley.
- On September 17, nearly 8,000 soldiers are killed in battle at Antietam, Maryland, as Union troops stop the advance of Confederate troops; Lincoln announces a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation five days later.
- Confederates achieve key military victories at Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Vicksburg, Mississippi.
- The first black Union regiment is organized.
- Robert E. Lee is appointed commander of the Confederate Army.

1863

- On January 1, the Emancipation Proclamation declares the end of slavery in the rebellious states.
- In March, Congress passes a Conscription Act to select military recruits by lottery, but the new law contains a loophole allowing men to pay \$300 to the government in lieu of serving or to hire a substitute to serve.
- Richmond women riot over severe food shortages.
- African American soldiers display particular courage in battles at Port Hudson and Milliken’s Bend, Louisiana, helping to improve northerners’ attitudes toward black soldiers.
- Union soldiers defeat Confederate forces at the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1–3); more than 50,000 combatants die.
- On July 4, 30,000 Confederate troops surrender at Vicksburg, Mississippi, after a six-week Union siege.
- Violent protests against the draft erupt in New York City on July 13–16; 105 people die in bloodiest urban riot in U.S. history.
- Lincoln delivers the Gettysburg Address, declaring “a new birth of freedom” for the nation.

- Low wages and expansion of federal government power drive an economic boom in the North.

1864

- Federal troops crush the Parrott arms factory strike.
- The Democratic Party nominates Union General George B. McClellan for president; he loses to Lincoln.
- In February, African American Union soldier William Walker refuses to take orders until he is given pay equal to that of white soldiers; he is charged with mutiny and executed by firing squad.
- In May, the War Department equalizes pay between black and white recruits.
- Lumbee Indian Henry Berry Lowry organizes a band of Indians, aggrieved whites, and poor blacks, which wages guerrilla war against Confederate troops and the North Carolina Home Guard.
- General William Tecumseh Sherman captures Atlanta and begins a “March to the Sea.”

1865

- Sherman issues Field Order Number 15, which sets aside over four hundred thousand acres of captured Confederate land to be divided into small plots for freed slaves.
- The Confederate Congress enacts a law allowing the general recruitment of slaves into the Confederate Army, their payment to include freedom for themselves and their families; the law comes too late for any slaves actually to serve.
- The U.S. Congress passes and states ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which ends slavery.
- Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox Court House.
- John Wilkes Booth shoots President Abraham Lincoln while Lincoln is attending a play at Ford's Theatre; Vice President Andrew Johnson takes office when Lincoln dies the next day.

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