

*“I Am Not So Patriotic as I Was Once”:  
The Effects of Military Occupation on  
the Occupying Union Soldiers during  
the Civil War*

JUDKIN BROWNING

When Joseph Barlow, a corporal in Company I of the 23d Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, wrote his wife from New Bern, North Carolina, in April 1862, he was not a happy man. Though his unit had just helped capture the eastern North Carolina ports of New Bern and Beaufort, the twenty-eight-year-old former shoemaker from Newburyport, who had originally enlisted in the army on April 15, 1861, wrote, “I have had just about as much to do with the army as I want” and hoped for a speedy end to the war. On December 26, 1862, after performing tedious occupation duty in eastern North Carolina for eight months and hearing about Union military defeats on far off fields, Barlow complained, “we are all getting sick of this war.” Five months later, after the latest Union defeat at Chancellorsville, Barlow despaired that “this war has played out.” In October 1863, while still in New Bern, the disheartened Barlow strongly suggested that he might leave the army, claiming, “I don’t think much about enlisting again.”<sup>1</sup>

However, on December 2, 1863, Barlow did reenlist. In September 1864,

1. Barlow originally enlisted in the 8th Massachusetts Volunteer Militia (Three Months’ Regiment) on April 15, 1861, before enlisting in the 23d Massachusetts on September 23, 1861. Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, Apr. 5, 1862, Dec. 26, 1862, May 22, 1863, Oct. 7, 1863, Joseph Barlow Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa. (hereafter cited as USAMHI); Massachusetts Adjutant General’s Office, *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War*, 8 vols. (Norwood, Mass.: Norwood Press, 1931–35), 1:518, 2:764.

after a brief sojourn in Virginia, Barlow's unit was back in New Bern, performing the occupation duty in which it had been engaged for nearly two years, yet Barlow manifested a decidedly different spirit. Reaffirming his commitment to the Union cause, Barlow wrote to his wife that he opposed Gen. George B. McClellan's presidential bid as the Democratic candidate running on a peace platform. The Massachusetts soldier avowed, "The soldiers will not vote for a man that will dishonor them and so our ticket is Lincoln and Johnson." Reflecting his determination to win the war, he declared that there should be "no peace with Rebels until they lay down their arms and surrender."<sup>2</sup> Barlow had often griped about the war and his service ever since he first began participating in occupation duty in the spring of 1862. The monotonous experience of occupation and the military defeats suffered elsewhere frequently caused his morale to sag. Yet his determination to serve until final victory illustrates that soldiers can still be committed to their military service even if their morale suffers at times.

Like Joseph Barlow, occupying Union soldiers exhibited a relatively high level of commitment to their duty, while frequently suffering through disheartening stretches of despair. While several scholars have analyzed soldiers' motivations and what sustained their morale particularly through harrowing combat situations, practically nothing has been written on how the experience of military occupation affected Union soldier morale and motivation. James McPherson, Gerald Linderman, and Earl Hess have written excellent, if not always congruent, studies of what motivated men to fight, and how the experience of combat shaped soldiers' definitions of personal courage and either sharpened or blunted their motivations to continue serving.<sup>3</sup> But what of those soldiers who enlisted for the same patriotic reasons but were forced into tedious occupation duty and had very rare opportunities to experience traditional combat?

For soldiers on occupation duty, there was no opportunity for glory, none of the exhilaration or anticipation of engaging in combat, and few chances to build the bonds of camaraderie that battle experience helped forge between

2. Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, Sept. 23, 1864, Barlow Papers; Massachusetts Adjutant General's Office, *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War*, 2:764.

3. The three major classics in this genre are James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), and Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1997).

soldiers. Instead, they acted as police units, forced into constant contact with white southern civilians and black slaves; they became victims of clandestine attacks and carried out Federal policies (such as emancipation and confiscation) of which several disapproved. This was not why they had enlisted, and they voiced a decided lack of satisfaction with their duties as a result. The experience of occupation and its many disagreeable duties forced soldiers to reexamine their views on the war and the nation that they fought to preserve. For many soldiers, their experience fostered a less idealistic view of the nation and its aims, and several became far more cynical than they had been when they enlisted. Yet, they persevered despite their disgruntlement. This article will explore the ways soldiers sustained their motivations while serving in a backwater region far removed from the glorious battlefields that dominated the nation's attention.

To properly analyze the effects of Civil War military occupation on Union soldiers, one must gather a substantial amount of empirical data, preferably by examining a specific occupied region, in order to follow the daily minutiae of occupying troops as they carried out the Federal government's policies in the midst of a diverse local populace that alternately embraced and rejected them. Because it was occupied early and remained that way continuously throughout the war, eastern North Carolina—particularly the neighboring coastal counties of Carteret and Craven (with their respective county seats of Beaufort and New Bern)—serves as an excellent case study to examine the social and psychological effects of military occupation on the soldiers who did the occupying during the Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

A Union expeditionary force occupied the Carteret and Craven County region at the southern tip of the Outer Banks in March 1862, beginning an occupation that would last the rest of the war. Many of the soldiers, reflecting the sentiments of the Lincoln administration, expected to be welcomed by loyal citizens. They believed that a few southern political leaders had led the majority of the people into secession and that most people were truly unionists at heart. This appeared to be the case early on, but such support for the Union declined as governmental policies and military actions alienated the local white populace. Once the mental shift from liberation to occupation

4. Such an examination offers a useful counterpoint to Stephen V. Ash's excellent work on Union occupation, which concentrated on the effects of occupation on those southerners whose lands were occupied. Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861–1865* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995).

occurred among the resident populace, resentment and hostility increased, profoundly altering civilian-military relations. In eastern North Carolina, the once friendly local populace's growing hatred of the occupation affected the Union soldiers in a variety of ways.<sup>5</sup>

The Union soldiers who occupied the region were mainly volunteers who sought to preserve the Republic that the founding fathers had created. However, their experience along the coast of North Carolina exposed them not only to the petty tyrannies of army life, but also an environment foreign to them, as the climate, inhabitants, and culture of the coastal North Carolina region shocked northern soldiers' sensibilities. Their unhappiness led to much grumbling. Soldiers complained about the weather, the land, the people, the rations, their fellow soldiers, the army, and their officers. Ultimately, the monotonous experience of occupation tested their convictions—weakening some while strengthening others. Union soldiers serving in the occupied region suffered from sagging morale caused both by military defeats elsewhere and by their own sense that the government was not utilizing them in the most efficient manner to end the war. Despite their personal denunciations of their own particular circumstances and even the policies of the Federal government, the majority of soldiers remained highly motivated to fulfill their duty—sustaining the war effort until its conclusion. Their letters reveal that the majority of Union soldiers managed to suppress their inward despair in order to fulfill their strong sense of duty.

While much has been written on how occupation affected southern communities, practically nothing has been written on how it changed the Union soldiers who served in the occupied regions.<sup>6</sup> Even fewer scholarly studies analyze the Union military side of occupation, and they explore the shift in military policy from one of conciliation early in the war to a much harsher tone beginning in the summer of 1862.<sup>7</sup> These other works analyze

5. For more on the occupation's effect on the local white population, see Judkin Browning, "Removing the Mask of Nationality: Unionism, Racism, and Federal Military Occupation in Eastern North Carolina, 1862–1865," *Journal of Southern History* 71 (Aug. 2005): 589–620.

6. For works that examine the effects of occupation on southern communities, see Ash, *When the Yankees Came*; Daniel E. Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990); Peter Maslowski, *Treason Must Be Made Odious: Military Occupation and Wartime Reconstruction in Nashville, Tennessee* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1978).

7. Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995); Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counter-*

policy decisions from within the Union command structure, but this study of eastern North Carolina allows for a first hand, ground-level account of how those decisions affected the Union soldiers who carried out Federal policies. Such an examination enhances historians' understanding of occupation, especially by exploring how the experience of occupation affects the occupier. It allows historians to analyze important questions: how did soldiers' lives, their interpretation of the war in which they were fighting, and their views of American society and national policies change as a result of intensive interaction with a subjected people?

During the course of the Union occupation of New Bern and Beaufort, men from approximately forty-five different regiments served for varying periods of time in the region—anywhere from two months to more than two years. These men came from the northeastern states. Fifteen regiments came from Massachusetts, while several units hailed from Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. When they enlisted, the men answered no specific call to come to the North Carolina coast to deal with refugee slaves and local unionists. But in December 1861, Lincoln authorized Gen. Ambrose Burnside to lead an expeditionary force to seize the ports and sounds of coastal North Carolina. In the early spring of 1862, Burnside captured Roanoke Island—which controlled waterborne access to the Albemarle Sound—as well as New Bern and Beaufort, two important ports at the southern edge of the Outer Banks. New Bern provided an excellent base for staging raids into the Confederate hinterland, while Beaufort's deep harbor not only offered a perfect refuge from unpredictable Atlantic storms, but it also served as a prime refueling and repair station for ships on blockade duty. Burnside's quick success made him very popular with his army.<sup>8</sup>

The troops may have loved their bewhiskered commander, but they did not adore the region to which he brought them. North Carolina might as well have been a foreign country, for that is how many northern soldiers viewed

---

*insurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860–1941* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1998), esp. chap. 1.

8. Abraham Lincoln to Ambrose E. Burnside, Dec. 26, 1861, in *Abraham Lincoln, Slavery, and the Civil War: Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. by Michael P. Johnson (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 149. For more a detailed account of Burnside's military expedition, see Richard Allen Sauer, *The Burnside Expedition in North Carolina: A Succession of Honorable Victories* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside, 1996). For more on Beaufort's wartime role as blockading port, see Dan Blair, "One Good Port': Beaufort Harbor, North Carolina, 1863–1864," *North Carolina Historical Review* 79 (July 2002): 301–26.

the climate, landscape, and inhabitants of the area. Their impressions of eastern North Carolina's natural environment were largely unfavorable. One soldier wrote, "All of us felt, I believe, that if we were fighting for soil and not for ideas, there was nothing in that first view worth conquering or holding. One drop of Northern blood was too large a price for a million acres."<sup>9</sup> The ubiquitous swamps of eastern North Carolina were difficult to navigate and served as havens for thousands of snakes, mosquitoes, flies, wood ticks, and other enemies that tormented the northern soldiers. The men also suffered from an oppressive, downright diabolical heat that seemed to radiate out of the miasmatic swamps. A Massachusetts soldier declared one hot July day, "I don't believe the devil would live here if he wasn't obliged to."<sup>10</sup>

While the natural environment seemed foreign to Union soldiers, local inhabitants also left a distinctly unfavorable impression on many. Northern soldiers had heard much about the supposedly degraded poor whites of the South, and exposure to them during the war did little to alter the profoundly negative opinions that soldiers brought with them. Daniel Read Larned, General Burnside's personal secretary, wrote that the poor whites of New Bern "are a most forlorn and miserable set of people." He described their "contemptible" appearance, saying "they are white a[s] chalk, long, lean, a[nd] lanky with long yellow hair."<sup>11</sup> Another soldier claimed, "They are horribly sallow, pale, and all have the shakes."<sup>12</sup> One Massachusetts soldier was struck by their ignorance, declaring, "The fact is the poor whites of the south are not so well informed as a boy ten years old in the north and have not much more judgement."<sup>13</sup>

The unattractive features that characterized some southern white women particularly disturbed the young males serving in the Union army. One sol-

9. Albert W. Mann, *History of the Forty-fifth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia* (Boston: W. Spooner, 1908), 316.

10. George Jewett to "Deck," July 8, 1862, George O. Jewett Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as LC).

11. Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, Mar. 23, 1862, Daniel Read Larned to sister, Mar. 24, 1862, box 1, Daniel Read Larned Papers, LC.

12. Henry Clapp to mother, Nov. 14, 1862, in *Letters to the Home Circle: The North Carolina Service of Pvt. Henry A. Clapp, Company F, Forty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, 1862-1863*, ed. by John R. Barden (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1998), 22.

13. Charles Henry Tubbs to wife, Feb. 25-Mar. 3, 1863, Charles Henry Tubbs Letters, North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C. (hereafter cited as NCSA).

dier wrote to his wife in November 1862, “all the female population here are rather black & rough looking.”<sup>14</sup> Another proclaimed, “there is not a woman in all North Carolina that I would snap my finger for.”<sup>15</sup> Many soldiers also excoriated the peculiar southern female practice of taking snuff, which they found revolting and horribly unrefined. “The women here, both white and black, ‘dig’ snuff like thunder,” proclaimed George Jewett. He described the process to a friend: “they put the snuff on a piece of pine, and stick it up in their gums, and then smack their lips as though they were eating something peculiarly nice. It will do for niggers but white women, faugh!”<sup>16</sup> Charles B. Quick, a sergeant in the 3d New York Light Artillery, expressed a sentiment that many shared when he wrote his wife, “I keep looking forward to the time when I shall leave this miserable place & go where there are civilized people.” His experience in the South had left him with nothing but unfavorable impressions of the white men and women: “They are not civilized people in this part of the world, they are worse than our hogs and cattle at the north.”<sup>17</sup>

While soldiers may have been disgusted by the appearance and habits of the local whites, they were shocked by the overwhelming numbers of African Americans in the region. Though the armies ultimately freed the slaves, the majority of soldiers did not consider the abolition of slavery to be a primary motivation for their enlistment. Many carried strong racist feelings to war with them, and their exposure to blacks often reinforced their preconceived notions of blacks as inferior beings. Few of these soldiers had any exposure to blacks before the war, and in North Carolina they were forced into a crucible of racial adjustment.<sup>18</sup> Just a couple of examples will effectively convey the soldiers’ attitudes about their exposure to African Americans. On the oppressively hot afternoon of July 11, 1862, Capt. William Augustus Walker of the 27th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment sat inside a house in

14. Oliver W. Peabody to Mary Peabody, Nov. 17, 1862, Oliver W. Peabody Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston (hereafter cited as MHS).

15. Alfred Otis Chamberlin to sister, Oct. 7, 1862, Alfred Otis Chamberlin Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke Univ., Durham, N.C. (hereafter cited as DU).

16. George Jewett to “Deck,” June 1, 1862, Jewett Collection.

17. Charles Quick to “Sister Mary,” Feb. 25, 1863, Charles B. Quick Correspondence, Southern Historical Collection, Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as SHC).

18. David A. Cecere, “Carrying the Home Front to War: Soldiers, Race, and New England Culture during the Civil War,” in *Union Soldiers and the Northern Home Front: Wartime Experiences and Postwar Adjustments*, ed. by Paul A. Cimbal and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2002), 293–323.

downtown New Bern and witnessed a “great buck nigger, very black and very fragrant,” with “bare feet, tattered shirt and knotted hair” fanning the flies away from a lieutenant as he wrote. Though he agreed that “the flies are really tormenting and the heat is intolerable,” Walker averred, “I had rather endure both, than to have one of those confounded dirty niggers anywhere within twenty feet of me.” This officer, an avowed abolitionist, still believed “as a class they are lazy, filthy, ragged, dishonest and confounded stupid.”<sup>19</sup> Walker’s last comment encapsulated the majority of northern soldiers’ beliefs regarding slaves. Capt. William G. Leonard of the 46th Massachusetts Regiment wrote, “Many of them are too lazy to work well, & they need the restraint of the soldier & the discipline of Courts Martial to make them profitable laborers.”<sup>20</sup>

Many soldiers took advantage of the slaves whenever possible, abusing their friendliness and exploiting their ignorance. They played dangerous pranks on the former slaves, used them as exotic toys, and often forced them to dance for Union soldiers’ amusement. Dexter Ladd recorded on the back lining of his diary an example of the impromptu and humiliating “oaths” the soldiers required escaping slaves to take: “I, Junius Long, or any other man do Solemnly Swear to Support the Constitution of these United States and Black yer Boots, get a Pail of water and shine up your Brasses and Bear True allegiance to the Pope of Rome, John Brown and Brigham Young, So help me General Burnside or any other man.”<sup>21</sup>

These testimonials reveal that northern white images of southern blacks were, in the words of historian David Cecere, initially “marked by two-dimensional understandings of African Americans: blacks were subhuman, simple-minded, amusing pets, often the butt of jokes.” These images were rooted in the eighteenth-century developments of racial ideology, in which whites justified their own exploitation of blacks by creating a negative racial image of African Americans. Theories of racial inferiority stemmed from a form of biological determinism, which stated that blacks were intellectually

19. William Augustus Walker to Sister, July 11, 14, 1862, in *Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front*, ed. by Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievers (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1996), 61–62.

20. William G. Leonard to John G. Foster, Apr. 26, 1863, box 2, part 1, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, Records of the U.S. Continental Commands, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereafter cited as RG 393).

21. Inner lining of Dexter Ladd diary, Dexter Ladd Papers, Civil War Miscellaneous Collection, USAMHI.



and socially inferior, largely because they did not share “civilized” European cultural traits. The first year of exposure often brought out the worst in soldiers’ racial prejudice.<sup>22</sup>

Much bitterness stemmed from the Federal government’s efforts to enlist black men into the armed forces, beginning in February 1863. One local white civilian noted, “Mutterings of discontent which are heard from officers and soldiers plainly indicates that this Negro which has been introduced among them stings their pride, [and] quenches their ambition.”<sup>23</sup> Mary Peabody, a Massachusetts lady visiting her Union officer husband in New Bern, wrote to a friend, “This question of Negro regiments is going I hope to be fairly tried, but the feeling against them is doubtless very strong and it seems to me strangely puerile.” Typically resentment was hierarchical. Peabody wrote, “As a rule it seems to grow stronger as you descend in rank, the privates having more feeling than the officers.” Yet, this was not always true. Over dinner one day in 1863, Cdre. H. K. Davenport, commander of the Union gunboat squadrons, asked Mary’s husband, Capt. Oliver Peabody, “What should you do, sir, if you were to meet a Nigger Colonel, Should you salute him?” “Certainly, I should,” replied the captain, adding that rank outweighed skin color. Mary related, “The commodore looked at him with horror and getting up from his chair gesticulated violently exclaiming in his indignation, ‘My blood boils at the thought.’”<sup>24</sup>

For practical reasons, white Union soldiers eventually accepted black troops as, if nothing else, a means to help end the war. When the 55th Massachusetts (“Colored”) Regiment arrived in July 1863, a Union surgeon declared, “We were very glad to see them, even if they are black, for our garrison has been quite small. . . . I do not object to black soldiers, but rather, think they should do some of the fighting.”<sup>25</sup> Other northern military personnel found their initial impressions to be wrong. Exposure to black troops instilled a greater appreciation for their temerity. A naval officer was impressed with the black soldiers he watched drill in June 1863: “There is a firmness & determination in their looks & in the way in which they handle a musket that I like.” The officer admitted his misconception of them: “I never have believed that a

22. Cecere, “Carrying the Home Front to War,” 297.

23. Entry dated July 3, 1863, diary of James Rumley, Levi Woodbury Pigott Collection, NCSA.

24. Mary Peabody to [unknown], Mar. 1, 1863, Peabody Papers.

25. John M. Spear, “Army Life in the Twenty-fourth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Dec. 1861 to Dec. 1864, 1892,” (typescript), 173, MHS.

common plantation negro could be brought to face a white man. I supposed that everything in the shape of spirit & self-respect had been crushed out of them generations back, but am glad to find myself mistaken."<sup>26</sup>

These comments suggest that a shift in racial attitudes occurred as soldiers spent more time around the freedmen. Some historians have argued that white Union soldiers developed a stronger commitment to abolition as they ventured into the South and observed the effects of slavery.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, in eastern North Carolina constant interaction with blacks changed many soldiers' preconceptions, creating more complex racial models. These altered understandings of national and racial identities suggest that an occupier's extensive exposure to seemingly foreign groups has the potential to lead to a reappraisal of ingrained attitudes. As a result, the cultural exchanges can be positive instead of consistently negative. However, much depends on the individual's sense of empathy or heightened consciousness. Exposure to African Americans did not alter all Union soldiers' opinions. In eastern North Carolina, some northern soldiers helped African Americans try to acquire land, obtain employment, and gain elements of education, but others did not embrace the emancipatory impulse and chose to abuse and inflict terror and violence on the former slaves whenever possible. In fact, the Federal government and its soldiers would grapple with the dilemma of what to do with the freedpeople in the region for several years after emancipation.<sup>28</sup>

Their exposure to what they considered to be filthy former slaves and the unrefined habits of local whites (especially women) could disgust the northern soldiers, but it primarily just served to remind them that they were in a foreign environment. However, their frequently hostile encounters with local whites often served to weaken their morale. Much of this stemmed from the Union

26. William F. Keeler to Anna Keeler, June 30, 1863, quoted in James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 127.

27. Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2007); Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1995).

28. For examples of assistance in acquiring land and gaining employment, see Horace James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina, 1864. With an Appendix containing the History and Management of Freedmen in this Department up to June 1st 1865* (Boston: W.F. Brown, 1865). For examples of soldiers helping former slaves acquire education, see Judkin Browning, "'Bringing Light to Our Land . . . When She Was Dark as Night': Northerners, Freedpeople, and Education during Military Occupation in North Carolina, 1862–1865," *American Nineteenth Century History* 9 (Mar. 2008): 1–17. For more on postwar experience in the region, see Roberta Sue Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen: Race Relations during Presidential Reconstruction, 1865–67* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1985).

soldiers' inability to understand what motivated local whites. Soon after Union occupation began in March 1862, many whites took oaths of allegiance and proclaimed themselves unionists, though such a claim did not necessarily reveal any ideological or patriotic motivations. Whites of all classes sought to protect their self-interests, but they had multiple, often divergent, motivations. Some sought to protect their property, while others used occupation for economic or social advancement. Regardless, most whites who did not flee upon the Union army's arrival initially accepted Union occupation and appeared to get along well with the Union soldiers. After the war, George Allen, whose Rhode Island regiment departed for Virginia on June 30, 1862, fondly remembered his time in the region: "We can never forget our life in Beaufort, or the pleasant relation sustained with its inhabitants."<sup>29</sup>

Though the majority of local whites initially welcomed the Union soldiers, not every relation was as pleasant as Allen recalled. In nostalgic memoirs written decades after the fact, soldiers could remember their tours affectionately, but in their contemporary letters home, they noted intractable individuals who expressed fervent resentment of the occupiers, either through verbal insults or physical attacks. These acts of hostility gradually increased the discontent of the soldiers who were the target of southern abuse. Women were particularly outspoken in offering insults to Union soldiers. When a Union officer tried to talk with a white lady in New Bern shortly after the battle for that town, she became agitated and defiant and "remarked that she Could blow Abe Linkon's Brains out with a pistol."<sup>30</sup> Massachusetts soldiers were digging a grave for a fallen comrade in May 1862 "when one of those secesh ladies was passing along—she stopped and told them to dig it deeper. They asked why? She said that the journey to hell might be shorter."<sup>31</sup> Such comments shocked northern soldiers not accustomed to hearing women speak so aggressively. One officer commented upon a lady who had profanely railed at the Union soldiers for allowing her slaves to runaway: "I told her it sounded very strange to a northerner to hear such language from a lady."<sup>32</sup>

29. George H. Allen, *Forty-six Months with the Fourth R. I. Volunteers in the War of 1861 to 1865 . . .* (Providence: J. A. & R. A. Reid, printers, 1887), 119.

30. Entry dated Mar. 18, 1862, in *From New Bern to Fredericksburg: Captain James Wren's Diary, B Company, 48th Pennsylvania Volunteers, February 20, 1862–December 17, 1862*, ed. by John Michael Priest (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane, 1990), 13.

31. I. N. Roberts to Ebenezer Hunt, May 24, 1862, Ebenezer Hunt Papers, MHS.

32. Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, Mar. 20, 1862, box 1, Larned Papers.

Such aggressiveness by secessionist women against Union soldiers was certainly not unique to North Carolina. Perhaps the most famous examples of such behavior come from Gen. Benjamin Butler's occupation of New Orleans in 1862, where southern women crossed over streets rather than pass Union soldiers on a sidewalk, refused to share churches or public transportation with soldiers, and even dumped the contents of their chamber pots on the heads of passing soldiers. As historian George Rable suggests in a persuasive essay, women took such aggressive actions not only to demonstrate their own defiance but also to shame southern men. Rather than resisting traditional gender roles and codes of honor, women were reinforcing their conception of masculinity. "For women who accepted traditional definitions of masculine honor," Rable writes, "their menfolk had thoroughly disgraced themselves, first by surrendering the city and then by fitting their necks to the despot's yoke." These defiant women were dedicated to making the occupying soldiers' lives as uncomfortable as possible.<sup>33</sup>

Though referring specifically to New Orleans, Rable's statement applies equally well to New Bern and Beaufort. The local male secessionists had either fled or surrendered, but few Union soldiers would admit in 1862 that much of the female population had. "The secesh ladies seem the most bitter enemies we have—I think if we had them to fight, we should find it warmer work," wrote one Massachusetts soldier in May 1862. Two months later he reaffirmed, "The women are more bitter than the men. They are very open in their declarations. I heard one fine looking and intelligent lady say that, never, never, would the southern people live under the 'stars and stripes.'"<sup>34</sup> One Union soldier recorded his encounter with a local woman in June 1862, stating, "I'd bet you would have laughed if you had heard the lecturing I got from a woman in this city, she was talking about the mean contemptible Yankees and about Genl. McClellan. I told her she had better shut up and then she gave me what Paddy gave the drum [a slap]."<sup>35</sup> Despite this hostility, northern social values—rooted in the Victorian ideals of women as innately pious, submissive, fragile, and subordinate to males—still found women to be nonthreatening and ultimately not representing a potentially violent

33. George C. Rable, "Missing in Action': Women of the Confederacy," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. by Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), 139.

34. I. N. Roberts to Ebenezer Hunt, May 24, 1862, and July 19, 1862, Hunt Papers, MHS.

35. William Amerman to "Cousin Aletta," June 30, 1862, William P. Amerman Papers, Norwich Civil War Round Table, USAMHI.

force, regardless of what came out of their mouths. Similar words uttered from the mouths of men, however, would not be tolerated so benignly.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the verbal insults from the fairer sex, the clandestine, small-unit, hit-and-run attacks perpetrated by Confederate military units and civilian sympathizers tried the patience of the occupying Union soldiers. Soldiers occasionally discovered guerrilla violence practiced upon local unionists. In June 1862, a New Jersey soldier told of a “party of Confederates (farmers by day and soldiers at night)” who evaded Union pickets and kidnapped a local minister. The victim “had refused to identify himself with the cause of rebellion,” decried the soldier, “and having committed the crime of addressing a Union meeting, composed of his neighbors, incurred the mortal hate of secessionists, who embraced this opportunity of wreaking vengeance upon him.”<sup>37</sup> Mary Peabody reported in February 1863: “Just across the river here from New berne, the Secesh are hunting down the Union people, men women and children with the greatest inhumanity and barbarity.”<sup>38</sup> Local Confederate sympathizers also actively sought to sabotage the Union infrastructure. Rebels torched an important steam saw mill outside of Beaufort in May 1863, often sabotaged the railroad track between New Bern and Beaufort, and burned the printing office of the Union-controlled *New Bern Daily Progress* in December 1864. In perhaps the most impressive feat, Rebels burned Cape Lookout Lighthouse on April 3, 1864, increasing the difficulty of navigation for Union blockading vessels and transports. The inability to prevent all of these outrages increased the soldiers’ sense of military impotence and heightened their resentment.<sup>39</sup>

Though Confederates attacked civilians and property supposedly under Union protection, they also harassed Yankee military outposts. Union soldiers were annoyed that they could rarely bring the Rebel fighters to a full battle. Hale Wesson, a soldier in the 23d Massachusetts, informed his father in September 1862, “There is not much fighting here except bush whacking

36. For example, when local native Haney Smith cursed a guard, he was thrown in jail immediately. Mrs. Haney Smith to Gen. John G. Foster, Sept. 3, 1862, box 1, part 1, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393.

37. J. Madison Drake, *The History of the Ninth New Jersey Veteran Vols., A Record of Its Service from Sept. 13th, 1861, to July 12th, 1865* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Journal Printing House, 1889), 75.

38. Mary Peabody to Livy, Feb. 23, 1863, Peabody Papers.

39. George Frederick Jourdan to wife, May 3, 1863, folder 9, box 1, Civil War Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; Jeremiah Stetson to wife, July 4, 1863, Jeremiah Stetson Papers, SHC; William Jackson to George Root, Dec. 4, 1864, George A. Root Letters, DU; James Gifford to parents, Apr. 3, 1864, James E. Gifford Papers, SHC.

with Guirillas[;] nine of our regiment has been shot as yet.”<sup>40</sup> The soldiers felt far too vulnerable in the face of guerrillas who intimately knew the local terrain. About three o’ clock one morning in November 1862, some mounted Confederate guerrillas attacked the guard of a Union encampment outside of New Bern before fleeing through the woods. At daylight, the northern captain noted, “By the tracks they appeared to be well mounted and acquainted with the by roads—and were around us in several directions during the night.”<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, guerrillas seemed to be hiding everywhere in the woods and along the rivers around New Bern. When Massachusetts surgeon John M. Spear traveled via canoe from Portsmouth to New Bern with two black assistants one night, he noted, “The banks of the Neuse River swarmed with guerrillas. . . . We could see their fires and hear them talking, and there would be an occasional shot.”<sup>42</sup> The frequency of clandestine raids on Union lines set the northern soldiers on edge. One Rhode Island soldier recalled his experience on picket duty one night in a dense pine forest: “Everything appeared to assume a weird and strange appearance. Our imaginations would see in every stump a rebel, and the hogs that run at large through the forest of North Carolina, appeared in the darkness like men coming towards us.” Undoubtedly, many a porcine adversary paid the last full measure of devotion that night.<sup>43</sup>

Clandestine violence occurred within the city limits as well. On the night of July 25, 1862, Rebel sympathizers shot and seriously wounded a soldier from the 23d Massachusetts Regiment while he was on patrol in one of New Bern’s districts, which was “infested with suspicious persons.”<sup>44</sup> The perpetrator got away in the night. One of the soldier’s angry comrades suggested a harsh reprisal tactic: “They had ought to take everyone else they catch and shoot them. That would stop it as quick as anything.”<sup>45</sup> Instead, Gen. John G. Foster, commanding the Union forces in North Carolina, quickly ordered

40. Hale Wesson to father, Sept. 2, 1862, Hale Wesson Letters (microfilm), Special Collections & Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory Univ., Atlanta, Ga. (hereafter cited as EU).

41. Captain Cole to Southard Hoffman, Nov. 15, 1862, box 1, part 1, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393.

42. Spear, “Army Life in the Twenty-fourth Regiment,” 126–27.

43. John K. Burlingame, *History of the Fifth Regiment of Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, during Three Years and a Half of Service in North Carolina. January 1862–June 1865* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1892), 56.

44. Herbert E. Valentine, *Story of Co. F, 23d Massachusetts Volunteers in the War for the Union, 1861–1865* (Boston: W. B. Clarke & Co., 1896), 61.

45. Frederick Osborne to Mother, July 25, 1862, in *Private Osborne, Massachusetts 23rd Volunteers: Burnside Expedition, Roanoke Island, Second Front against Richmond*, ed. by Frank B. Marcotte, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1999), 92–93.

the regiment to destroy the house from which the shot was fired, as well as four houses nearby and all the surrounding outbuildings. Foster arrested the six residents of the suspected house, despite their protestations of innocence. That afternoon the regiment “leveled” the house until “it was prostrate [*sic*] finally amidst the loud cheers of soldiers, darkies, and some of the citizens.”<sup>46</sup> Foster further warned the gathered crowd of citizens that he would “make a camp ground of the whole City if they don’t stop shooting his men.”<sup>47</sup>

Such harsh reprisals, however, did not eliminate the attacks, as some locals continued to take potshots at sentries throughout the summer.<sup>48</sup> When Union doctors in Portsmouth, in Carteret County, suspected the few inhabitants there of plotting to capture the hospital, they sent out soldiers to confiscate all the guns from people who were not known Union men.<sup>49</sup> Massachusetts soldier Edward Bartlett raged at the Janus-faced loyalty of the local inhabitants: “There are a set of poor whites around here, who are Union-looking citizens in the day time and ‘guerrillas’ at night, who raise hogs and sweet potatoes by day and in the night shoot our pickets.”<sup>50</sup> Another soldier agreed, claiming that though he was certain that the guerrillas who plagued his unit “dressed in citizen’s clothes, and shot our men in cold blood, whenever opportunity offered,” identification was difficult, because “when they saw a considerable body of our men approaching, they were unionists, neutrals, or ‘know nothings,’ as they chose.” Occupying soldiers greatly resented their inability to distinguish friend from foe in this new kind of war.<sup>51</sup>

These acts of violence only heightened the desire for retribution among the disgruntled occupiers. The ambiguity of southern allegiances led to increasingly punitive measures by Union soldiers, which included the confiscation and destruction of property and an increased number of arrests of suspicious local white residents. As has been true of conflicts throughout American history, when the occupying American soldier no longer is able to clearly distinguish combatant from non-combatant, the scale of retribution and retaliation grows. Once soldiers reach the point of considering every

46. James Edward Glazier to “Dear Parents,” Aug. 1, 1862, James Edward Glazier Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. The author would like to thank Michael Thomas Smith for researching the Glazier papers for him.

47. Entry dated July 26, 1862, Ladd diary.

48. Caroline Howard to “Cousin Harvey,” Aug. 21, 1862, Edmund Ruffin Beckwith Papers, SHC.

49. Dr. Hall Curtis to Gen. Foster, [Sept. 9, 1862], box 1, Letters Received, Part 1, Department of North Carolina, RG 393.

50. Edward Bartlett to Martha, Jan. 30, 1863, Edward J. Bartlett Papers, MHS.

51. Mann, *History of the Forty-fifth Regiment*, 219.

civilian to be a potential enemy, they justify engaging in harsher actions against those civilians, which often leads to a moral degradation among the combatants themselves. One Union soldier wrote in August 1862 that his regiment found two Union cavalymen who had been “all Shot two pieces” by Confederate guerrillas. The men had been stripped and robbed of all money and possessions, and one of the victims even “had his stabbed heart cut in half with a knife.” The soldier soberly wrote home, “So you can See how they treat our Soldiers.”<sup>52</sup> New York soldier Isaac N. Parker told of Union troops who had been killed and left out in the open in humiliating positions, stripped down to their undergarments. Parker suggested that he would rather die than be captured by the Rebels, informing his sister that he knew a similar fate awaited him if he were “captured whole.”<sup>53</sup>

The deliberate decision to make a public spectacle of these degraded and humiliated corpses imparted a symbolic message. Rebels, too militarily weak to reconquer their former geographical possessions, could at least momentarily demonstrate their power through an exercise of terror—suggesting to Union soldiers that they occupied a hostile land and that venturing outside the safety of their garrisons could bring gruesome results. In addition, in February 1864, after capturing a detachment of the 2d North Carolina Union Infantry Regiment in an isolated outpost near New Bern, Confederates publicly executed twenty-two of these native North Carolina soldiers who had deserted from the Confederate army. Such an execution warned of the high price of treason. In the eyes of the Confederates, those men who had forsaken their country’s cause and joined that of the enemy had insulted their sovereign nation. The Confederate spectacles of corpse mutilation and executions were state-sanctioned terror tactics to cow both Union soldiers and unionists. Moreover, such actions spoke to an elevating sense of retributive violence, drifting away from a gentleman’s code of warfare, and facilitating the use of “the hard hand of war.”<sup>54</sup>

52. John Timmerman to Mary, Aug. 4, 1862, John D. Timmerman Papers, USAMHI.

53. Isaac Newton Parker to Martha Hoyt Parker, Apr. 1, 1864, in *A Seneca Indian in the Union Army, The Civil War Letters of Sergeant Isaac Newton Parker, 1861–1865*, ed. by Laurence M. Hauptman (Shippensburg, Pa.: Burd Street Press, 1995), 97.

54. Donald E. Collins, “War Crime or Justice? General George Pickett and the Mass Execution of Deserters in Civil War Kinston, North Carolina,” in *The Art of Command in the Civil War*, ed. by Steven E. Woodworth (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1998), 50–83. For more on the use of corpses to send political messages, see Franny Nudelman, *John Brown’s Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004).



Reflecting the escalating sense of retaliation and retribution, Union soldiers took out their vengeance on locals of ambiguous loyalty and took particular delight in roughing up suspected guerrillas. Massachusetts soldier William Lind related an incident in which he captured an armed male civilian while raiding farms where Confederate partisans had been active. Lind “took him by the throat” and marched him out to the road. Lind related that his captain “told me to take him out there and shoot him [if] the devil would not give up his arms to us. I told him to hand them over or I would run my bayonet through him.” Lind candidly admitted, “I did stick it into [him] a little.” Lind recounted how the man “[shook] like a leaf” and “begged so hard for his life.” They spared him but plundered all the valuables from his house as retribution for aiding the guerrillas.<sup>55</sup> The chance of catching and exacting retribution on guerrillas was a strong motivation for many soldiers. Alfred Holcomb admitted to his brother, “I would go twenty miles enny day to get a squint across my old musket at one of the cowardly devils.”<sup>56</sup> The problem was that guerrillas blended into the countryside so well that 20-mile marches to catch them seemed necessary. As one Union soldier sardonically commented, “The Rebels youst to say that it took 5 yankees to whip one of them, but it is the other way[;] it takes 5 yankees to catch one of them.” Having to endure this peculiar, ungentlemanly form of waging war greatly increased the dissatisfaction of Union soldiers serving under occupation in eastern North Carolina.<sup>57</sup>

Tied to a limited geographic region with little prospect for a major battle and subjected to constant annoyance by small Rebel units, the Union soldiers on occupation duty had ample reasons to voice their displeasure. Regional pride caused divisions within the army as well, as New England soldiers showed disdain for their Mid-Atlantic comrades. They also resented drafted or bounty men. Soldiers maintained a certain code of respectability and were often contemptuous of those who must be lured by bounties or coerced by force of arms into enlisting in the army.<sup>58</sup>

55. William Lind to Thomas Lind, July 28, 1862, and Aug. 1, 1862, William W. Lind Papers, USAMHI.

56. Alfred Holcomb to Milton Holcomb, Aug. 22, 1862, Alfred Holcomb Papers, USAMHI.

57. John S. Bartlett to “My Dear Affectionate Sister,” June 4, [1862], box 1, Civil War Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Conn.

58. For more on regional loyalties and contempt of drafted men, see Herbert Cooley to father, July 26, 1863, Herbert A. Cooley Papers, SHC; Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32; William H. Jackson to George A. Root, May 5, 1864, Root Letters; Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, Aug. 25, 1863, Barlow Papers.

Coupled with regional pride and the rivalries between volunteers, bounty men, and conscripts, was the average soldier's general dislike of the rigors, drudgery, and perceived injustices of army life, which were exacerbated in the unbroken tedium of occupation. Massachusetts soldier Joseph Barlow likened army service in an occupation zone to "being shut up in the State Prison."<sup>59</sup> Those who were not complaining about being inmates complained about being the guards, as all found the daily grind of guard duty disagreeable. Edward Bartlett, whose regiment was assigned to provost duty in New Bern in April 1863, wrote, "I don't fancy it much. . . . The chief duty is to arrest drunken soldiers, salute officers, and make privates show there passes—in short a sort of policeman." Three weeks later, Bartlett underscored his disappointment: "Provost duty is horrible. The whole regiment despises it."<sup>60</sup> Guards also had to spend nearly all their spare time preparing their gear for duty. J. Waldo Denny of the 25th Massachusetts remembered the strict requirements for soldiers serving on guard duty: "Everything was in perfect order: every boot on the line possessed to an excelsior shine, every strap, buckle and button was in its place; each cap-visor was square to the front, and the bayonets and brasses shone with a brightness that proved the industry and pains-taking character of the men of the battalion." As a result, Alfred Holcomb, of the 27th Massachusetts, noted, "This is the hardest duty that we [have] ever done."<sup>61</sup> The hardship stemmed from the duty's unrelenting monotony more than the threat of physical danger.

Monotony led many soldiers to drown their loneliness and boredom in the bottle, occasionally with disastrous results. Local treasury agent John Hedrick reported to his brother that twenty-five-year-old Lt. William Pollock of the 3d New York Artillery "committed suicide by blowing his brains out with a pistol" on the sweltering night of Monday, August 4, 1863. Though Hedrick did not know specifically what inner demons tormented the lieutenant, he surmised that liquor helped fortify him to the task, acknowledging that Pollock "had been in the habit of drinking excessively for some time past."<sup>62</sup>

59. Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, July 5, 1862, Barlow Papers.

60. Edward Bartlett to Martha, Apr. 23 and May 12, 1863, Bartlett Papers.

61. J. Waldo Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Mass. Volunteer Infantry, with Burnside's Coast Division, 18th Army Corps, and Army of the James* (Worcester: Putnam & Davis, Publishers, 1879), 116; Alfred Holcomb to Milton Holcomb, June 21, 1862, Holcomb Papers.

62. John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, Aug. 6, 1863, in John A. Hedrick, *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist: John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, 1862–1865*, ed. by Judkin Browning and Michael Thomas Smith (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 2001), 142.

Other soldiers fortified themselves with enough liquid courage to make known their true feelings about their service and those under whom they served. On Thanksgiving Day 1862, several soldiers became intoxicated and delivered impromptu speeches on the rebellion and their military service. "One remarked in his speech that he did not enlist for no \$2000[;] he enlisted because he was a d—m fool." Observing the axiom of *in vino veritas*, Dexter Ladd remarked that the statement was "pretty near the Truth."<sup>63</sup>

Several soldiers longed for combat in order to relieve the boredom of occupation duty. One soldier remarked that his regiment gave three hearty cheers when they heard they were preparing to go on an expedition into the countryside: "Anything to break the monotony of camp life. The soldier even welcomes the fatigues of the march & the dangers of the battlefield as a change." A Union officer acknowledged after the war that though guard duty was not as dangerous as battle, "long continued duty in a city was not, however, desirable for a soldier. Its effect was very disastrous to a wholesome esprit du corps."<sup>64</sup>

The disgruntlement with army life under occupation combined with military reverses elsewhere to generate a growing sense of despair among some of the volunteers. From the summer of 1862 through the spring of 1863, Union armies suffered a string of humiliating defeats, especially in the eastern theater. Soldiers naturally became despondent about the lack of battlefield success and their inability to participate in the great fights. William Lind wrote on September 12, after the defeat at Second Manassas and the subsequent Confederate invasion of Maryland, "I believe . . . that the rebels is going to whip the north yet." On the same day, Isaac Roberts wrote to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt back home in Danvers, Massachusetts, "Just think of the precious lives that have been lost, to think nothing of the immense amount of property and money, then say if you don't think it best to finish up this cruel war." He asserted, "I have come to the conclusion that we can never whip the rebels."<sup>65</sup>

63. Entry for Nov. 27, 1862, Ladd diary.

64. Samuel C. Hunt to "dearest," Dec. 23, 1862, quoted in L. G. Williams, *A Place for Theodore: The Murder of Dr. Theodore Parkman, Boston, Massachusetts & Whitehall, North Carolina, A True Story* (Greeneville, N.C.: Holly Two Leaves Press, 1997), 73; Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Mass.*, 116.

65. William Lind to Thomas Lind, Sept. 12, 1862, in *The Long Road for Home: The Civil War Experiences of Four Farmboy Soldiers of the Twenty-Seventh Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteer Infantry as Told by their Personal Correspondence, 1861–1864*, ed. by Henry C. Lind (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1992), 105; Isaac N. Roberts to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, Sept. 12, 1862, Hunt Papers.

Even the news that the Army of the Potomac had turned back the Confederate army at Antietam in September 1862 did not produce a lasting feeling of success. By November, the despondency had returned for many. "I will be heartily glad when this infernal war is ended," wrote one soldier; "it seems as if one was to be kept from one's friends forever and all for want of proper management at Headquarters." Isaac Roberts, whose correspondence reveals him to be a decided pessimist, wrote after the poor result of the 1862 elections for Republicans (in which they lost thirty-five seats in the House of Representatives), "Now my last hope is almost gone. I am now ready to give up, and Dr., you have no idea of the growing dissatisfaction among the troops."<sup>66</sup>

The perpetually morose Roberts, who would die of disease in New Bern in October 1863, was not alone. Edward Bartlett wrote to his sister after hearing of Burnside's overwhelming defeat at Fredericksburg in December 1862, "All this fighting and killing men does not seem to amount to anything. We have pretty much come to the conclusion that fighting will never end the war."<sup>67</sup> His fellow soldier John H. B. Kent concurred, stating, "I have altered my mind with regard to its being every man's duty to do what he can to stop the war and further I do not think bullets will settle it."<sup>68</sup> Joseph Barlow agreed, enlightening his wife in a Christmas letter, "I tell you we are all getting sick of this war. It never will be settled by fighting; the way things are going on it never will be over."<sup>69</sup>

These sentiments speak to the larger problem of weakened morale among Union soldiers in the occupation zone. No soldiers in North Carolina recorded their experience away from the major bloody battlefields as a fortunate break; instead their spirits sagged as their likelihood of fighting diminished. Quite simply, soldiers stuck in occupation duty questioned the legitimacy of their usage. They had volunteered to help preserve the Union but could not see how their duty in a secondary field helped further that aim. As military psychologists Reuven Gal and Frederick Manning postulate, "Perhaps it should not be surprising that in an all-volunteer force there is a stronger relationship between the soldier's morale and the extent to which he per-

66. David Lucius Craft to Sister, Nov. 19, 1862, David Lucius Craft Papers, DU; Isaac N. Roberts to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, Nov. 10, 1862, Hunt Papers.

67. Massachusetts Adjutant General's Office, *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War*, 2:772; Edward Bartlett to Martha, Dec. 26, 1862, Bartlett Papers.

68. John H. B. Kent to "Mr. Baxter & Teachers & members of the Harris Place Sabbath School," Dec. 29, 1862, George H. Baxter Letters (microfilm), MHS.

69. Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, Dec. 26, 1862, Barlow Papers.

ceives his service as meaningful. The volunteer, after all, made a conscious decision that military service was a worthwhile endeavor. His feelings of whether this service makes a contribution to his country” are “reflected in his level of morale.”<sup>70</sup>

Morale is a broad and amorphous concept, with many characteristics and factors influencing it. One military psychiatrist has argued that morale is “the net satisfaction derived from acceptable progress toward goals or from the attaining of goals.”<sup>71</sup> A sociologist has concluded that morale “is a measure of one’s disposition to give one’s self to the objective in hand.”<sup>72</sup> Each definition supports the notion that a soldier has to feel he is being used in the most efficacious manner toward achieving victory. One’s level of morale is directly influenced by “a sense of fruitful participation in [one’s] work.”<sup>73</sup> Hence, those soldiers who are removed from the possibility of combat, or any similar action they perceive as integral to the cause or the maintenance of their country, tend to suffer a lagging morale. As Reuven Gal has noted, when “the course of war carried you far away from your country’s borders and from your own home, when the justification of such a war becomes questionable—then the issue of the perceived legitimacy of that war by the soldier becomes a crucial factor concerning his morale and combat readiness.”<sup>74</sup>

Most scholars concur that soldiers either engaged in or daily anticipating combat possessed a higher level of morale than soldiers serving in quiet sectors. Three psychologists studied a sample of Israeli soldiers during two periods of service in Lebanon—the invasion of June 1982 and the military occupation of 1983 to 1984. They found that morale and unit cohesion were much higher during the invasion than the occupation, as during the latter, “soldiers reported a marked decline in their personal endorsement of the official goals of the military operation, in the endorsement of soldiers and officers in their unit, and in that of the nation as a whole.” These social scientists contrasted this with the high morale of combat: “The cohesive military

70. Reuven Gal and Frederick J. Manning, “Morale and Its Components: A Cross-National Comparison,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 17 (Apr. 1987): 389.

71. Nathaniel Warner, “The Morale of Troops on Occupation Duty,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 102 (May 1946): 749.

72. William Ernest Hocking, “The Nature of Morale,” *American Journal of Sociology* 47 (Nov. 1941): 303.

73. John C. M. Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 108.

74. Reuven Gal, “Unit Morale: From a Theoretical Puzzle to an Empirical Illustration—An Israeli Example,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 16 (June 1986): 561.

unit operating in a stressful combat situation would appear to be governed by the *Musketeer Imperative*—“One for all and all for one.”<sup>75</sup>

One military psychiatrist has noted that troops on occupation duty typically exhibit three key emotions: frustration, resentment, and depression. Resentment was the most common and led to the traditional response of “griping,” in which “the troops expounded on their grievances with a vehemence which revealed their hostile mood.”<sup>76</sup> Indeed, soldiers on occupation duty in New Bern and Beaufort during the Civil War exhibited these traits. Some even directed their anger beyond just their local situation and reflected on the conduct of the war at the highest levels. Joseph Barlow, stationed in New Bern in 1863, denounced the administration’s handling of the war, its seeming indifference to its soldiers, and those who seemed to be profiting on the backs of the soldiers: “What does the infernal traitor and contractors care about my life or any Soldier’s life. This is a war for to make money with our blood.”<sup>77</sup>

As these sociological, psychological, and psychiatric studies reveal, morale is often lowest among those soldiers stationed in secondary arenas, while the morale of those in the armies on the front lines is frequently higher. The chance to engage in decisive battle, to contribute something tangible toward ultimate victory often boosted men’s spirits. “In defining morale,” wrote British military historian John Baynes, “there is no better tonic for soldiers than to win a battle.” Soldiers on occupation duty in North Carolina faced little prospect of engaging in battle, much less winning one. This demoralization reached its zenith in 1863. Though disenchantment did not cease after this pivotal year, fewer soldiers were so candid in their letters about their unhappiness. Perhaps many had simply tired of repeating the same laments to their loved ones, but more likely, as the prospect of ultimate victory became more likely, soldiers’ outlooks improved.<sup>78</sup>

A soldier’s patriotism may lose its initial incandescence; he may grow despondent; he may, at times, doubt his country’s chances of success, especially in the wake of military defeats; however, despite these feelings of despair, a

75. Norman A. Milgram, Ruth Orenstein, and Ezer Zafrir, “Stressors, Personal Resources, and Social Supports in Military Performance during Wartime,” *Military Psychology* 1 (Apr. 1989): 192, 196 (emphasis in original). Gal and Manning agreed that “proximity to a potential adversary gives additional emphasis to those determinants of personal morale related to survival and success in combat.” Gal and Manning, “Morale and Its Components,” 387.

76. Warner, “The Morale of Troops on Occupation Duty,” 752, 754.

77. Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, May 22, 1863, Barlow Papers.

78. Baynes, *Morale*, 237, quoted in McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 155.

major theme that emerges from the letters of the occupying soldiers in North Carolina is one of *steadfastness*. Though many soldiers complained about army life, they still had a sense of duty and obligation to see their service through to its ultimate and, they hoped, successful conclusion. Charles B. Quick, of the 3d New York Artillery, exemplified this ability of soldiers to remain committed despite their hardships. In May 1862, Quick had written to his sister, Mary, "I sometimes do feel as if I did not want to be a Soldier & then I think it is no worse for me than others & I let such thoughts pass & perform such duty as are required of me without making any complaint." Ten months later, he repeated a similar theme but with a greater degree of pride, writing to Mary: "I have often thought that I was sorry that I ever enlisted but now I am glad that I did enlist when I did, for now I feel as if I had done part of my duty toward my Country." Though he had been badly burned in a tent accident, Charles reaffirmed to his sister his commitment to his unit in a strong display of *esprit de corps*: "As long as the Regiment stays I want to stay with them, and I feel it my duty to do so." He concluded, "It does not seem right for me to go home until we are shure of Victory."<sup>79</sup> Like Quick, the majority of soldiers who left letters managed to curb their inner sense of despondency in order to discharge their duties.

Even in some of the darkest moments, soldiers found reason to hope. After hearing of the defeat at Chancellorsville in May 1863, Josiah Wood of the 27th Massachusetts penned a stirring lament: "O how I long to sie this rebellion chrushed that there may not be any more such cenes of blood and suffering but peace and prosperity again smile on an undivided and happy country." He followed this requiem with an earnest call for greater sacrifice: "but we must make up our minds to work." Wood was confident of final triumph, remarking, "it is hard to guess how long this war may last . . . [but] I have no fears for the final result." Henry Clapp also mourned the defeat at Chancellorsville: "Today we are all profoundly in the dumps on account of the news from Hooker. I am by turns hopelessly depressed, decidedly elated, furiously indignant." However, like Wood, Clapp testily declared, "I am wild with every body, also, for talking as if this defeat—if it is one—were going to ruin our cause."<sup>80</sup>

79. Charles Quick to "Sister Mary," May 5, 1862, Mar. 26, 1863, and July 30, 1862, Quick Correspondence.

80. Josiah Wood to Reanna, Dec. 22, 1862, May 12, 1863, May 31, 1863, Josiah Wood Papers, DU; Henry Clapp to Willie, May 12, 1863, in Barden, *Letters to the Home Circle*, 204.

Even while many civilians in the North called for an end to the war, soldiers refused to follow suit. In fact, those who issued increasingly louder calls for peace—such as the Peace Democrats, or “Copperheads,” led by Ohio congressman Clement Vallandigham—greatly angered soldiers in the occupied region. In April 1863, New York soldier Herbert Cooley wrote to his father from New Bern asking him to warn his friends that “they must not join the Copperheads and resist the draft for a division of the people of the North at the present would be disastrous to our arms.” Cooley had once told his father that he often felt he wanted to “quit the army forever,” but he contained his unhappiness and in July 1863 was not only no longer interested in leaving the army but also was angry that his fellow New Yorkers were revolting against the draft and not volunteering to join the army instead: “Why do they not come up manfully to the support of those already in the field and who (if I must say it myself) are making almost Superhuman efforts to crush and root [out] the rebellion.”<sup>81</sup>

Cooley was not the only one disgusted with the dissenters at home. In his final letter, written on May 18, 1863, four days before he was killed outside of New Bern in a skirmish with Confederates, Col. John Richter Jones of the 58th Pennsylvania Regiment shared his earnest conviction that the war must be not stopped before final victory. “It is better for the great interests of man to expend the whole present generation at the North, than to consent to the separation of the American nation,” Jones wrote. “We are not ready for peace yet. If it were patched up by nominal restoration of the Union, it would be but a hollow truce. We must whip the South into proper respect for us.” Jones then turned his anger on those who called for an immediate cessation of hostilities: “The men who cry peace before the time for peace will stand historically with the men of the Hartford Convention,” referring to the ill-fated antiwar Federalist conference of 1814. “Stand by the Government until the storm is over, and then settle whether it ought to have thrown A’s or B’s goods overboard to lighten the ship. This is the only patriotic doctrine.”<sup>82</sup>

After the military successes in 1863, few soldiers’ letters addressed the issue of peace before ultimate victory. Even though soldiers had complained about their mismanagement in occupation duty and had become dejected over the Union’s defeats, most soldiers rededicated themselves to the cause.

81. Herbert Cooley to “Dear Father,” Apr. 8 and July 26, 1863, Cooley Papers.

82. John Richter Jones to Joseph A. Clay, May 18, 1863, unidentified newspaper clipping, John Richter Jones Papers, SHC.



By March 1864, when explaining to his wife why a majority of the men in his regiment reenlisted after their original three-year enlistments expired, New York officer Nelson Chapin summed up the convictions for the soldiers in the occupied region: "It is a very great mistake to suppose the soldier does not think. Our soldiers are closer thinkers and reasoners than the people at home. It is the soldiers who have educated the people at home to a true knowledge of objects the rebels had in view and to a just perception of our great duties in this contest."<sup>83</sup> Mary Peabody observed the same thoughtful tendencies among the soldiers, asserting, "I think the men in the army are much more hopeful and patient than the thinking people at home." Indeed, the large number of soldiers who likely voted for Abraham Lincoln in November 1864 helped propel the president to his reelection victory. These soldiers voted in favor of continuing to prosecute the war to its ultimately successful conclusion.<sup>84</sup>

Thinking soldiers also recognized the root cause of the war, and the need to eradicate it. Despite their personal distaste for African Americans, many soldiers pragmatically embraced emancipation. Joseph Barlow had stated in June 1862 that he opposed emancipation because he feared it would prompt the South to fight on indefinitely. But on October 23, 1862, Barlow had reevaluated his position and proclaimed to his wife, "I do like the President's Proclamation. I back him up in anything to put down this rebellion." Other soldiers welcomed emancipation as the war's new moral imperative for tearing down the divisive institution of slavery. Charles Duren declared that he was committed, "to help in not only restoring [the Union] to what it was before but more, to cleanse it from *the* curse of slavery *forever*."<sup>85</sup> Most soldiers knew that sectional conflict would never end as long as slavery remained intact. John Spear admitted, "The President's Proclamation is pretty rough on the South, but I am very glad he has got up the courage to issue it, for Slavery is certainly the cause of this war, and just so long as it exists, just so long will there be trouble between the North and the South."<sup>86</sup> In a 4th of July oration given to Massachusetts soldiers in New Bern, Horace

83. Nelson Chapin to "My dear wife," Mar. 6, 1864, Nelson Chapin Papers, *Civil War Times Illustrated* Collection, USAMHI.

84. Mary Peabody to [unknown], Mar. 1, 1863, Peabody Papers.

85. Charles Duren to Father, Sept. 21, 1861, Charles M. Duren Papers, EU (emphasis in original). For more on soldiers' recognition of slavery as the primary reason for the war, see Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*.

86. Spear, "Army Life in the Twenty-fourth Regiment," 110.

James, a Massachusetts chaplain, asserted: "We aim at a union purified. It does not wholly satisfy us that its integrity is to be maintained, we long to see it improved and strengthened in every element that enters into material greatness." James saw the fruits of emancipation as justifying the enormous sacrifice: "The volunteers have not gone in by hundreds of thousands to win a barren victory at the cost of a dead man in almost every family. We don't want to die for nothing."<sup>87</sup>

The belief in this cause helped fortify the Union soldiers serving in their dreary duty in North Carolina. In January 1863, Massachusetts soldier Benjamin Day proclaimed his resolve, which was shared by many of his compatriots: "let us if necessary fight anew the battles of the revolution[;] let us spill our blood if necessary to protect that liberty unsullied for our children."<sup>88</sup> That same month, John Spear somberly reflected on the enormous costs of the war but did not surrender to despair. "I do not have the least inclination to give up," he vowed, "but will fight it out even if it should take ten years, yes, or twenty, for before we are through I want to see the curse of slavery, which is the real cause of the war, wiped from the land."<sup>89</sup> Nelson Chapin was just as dedicated as Spear: "We had better carry on this war twenty years longer than to yield one iota of our rights. The Rebels have forfeited all theirs, and now we have but one thing to do, make one vigorous effort and the rebels must yield, and then with universal emancipation we shall have lasting peace and prosperity."<sup>90</sup>

While seeking over the course of three years of occupation the elusive victory that would grant that peace and prosperity, Union soldiers became fed up with the hostility they encountered from local residents, as well as the drudgery of daily duty. They looked forward to returning home. When news arrived in New Bern on April 11, 1865, that Robert E. Lee had surrendered his army at Appomattox, Thomas Carey, a soldier in 15th Connecticut, rejoiced: "Such news as this awakens the liveliest emotions in camp. We talk of home with bright anticipations tonight."<sup>91</sup> Many Union soldiers undoubtedly

87. Horace James, *An Oration Delivered in Newbern, North Carolina, before the Twenty-fifth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, July 4, 1862* (Boston: W. F. Brown and Company, 1862), 24–25.

88. Entry for Jan. 10, 1863, journal of Benjamin H. Day, Civil War Collection, Beverly Historical Society and Museum, Beverly, Mass.

89. Spear, "Army Life in the Twenty-fourth Regiment," 132.

90. Nelson Chapin to "My dear wife," Jan. 6, 1863, Chapin Papers.

91. Entry dated Apr. 11, 1865, Thomas J. Carey diary, SHC.

shared this sentiment. They wished to leave this unappreciative sandy stretch of North Carolina as soon as possible. Local white residents could not have agreed more. The perceived heavy-handed tactics of the army had angered many locals. Years after the war, Elizabeth Oakes wrote a friend describing the locals' attitudes in Beaufort, claiming that "they were for the Union mostly"; 'but,' she added tellingly, 'an army is an army,'" implying that its prolonged presence would naturally engender resentment.<sup>92</sup>

Union soldiers ultimately maintained a steadfastness for the cause of putting down the rebellion, but the experience of occupation had changed them. The dull experience of occupation, the psychological lack of satisfaction in their military endeavors, the enforcement of often distasteful Federal policies, and the emerging hostility of local whites all changed the idealistic enlistee into a more cynical veteran. Although he assured his friend that he intended to serve until final victory, Connecticut soldier William H. Jackson candidly acknowledged in October 1864 from New Bern, "I am sorry to say though that I am not so patriotic as I was once." Jackson's succinct comment reveals that he no longer retained the same unchallenged faith in the righteousness of his country's cause that he had when he enlisted. His extended contact with both the agents of the Federal government and the southern citizens who challenged that government's legitimacy altered his perceptions of the nation for which he fought. A prolonged exposure to the petty tyrannies of army life, the monotony of occupation, unpopular Federal policies, degraded southern inhabitants, and the natural and cultural environments of coastal North Carolina, so dissimilar to his own, had tempered his patriotic convictions. Undoubtedly, thousands of soldiers who experienced the hardship and dissatisfaction of occupation duty while serving to maintain the Union shared Jackson's lament.<sup>93</sup>

92. Elizabeth Oakes quoted in David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001), 166.

93. William H. Jackson to George A. Root, Oct. 28, 1864, Root Letters.

Copyright of Civil War History is the property of Kent State University Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.