

NETTA TAYLOR AND THE DIVIDED OHIO HOME FRONT, 1861-1865

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Netta Taylor and the Divided Ohio Home Front, 1861-1865

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## ABSTRACT

Netta Taylor's letters to her husband are a window into the experiences of women on the divided Ohio home front during the American Civil War. This dissertation will use her writings to view the experiences of women in that region and highlight the problems they faced that were unique to the majority of Northern women. Fear of Confederate raids, the reality of tensions along the Ohio border, family divisions caused by the war, and the role of the Copperheads, as well as the domestic upheaval created by the war, were all unique to these women and are all topics that have been greatly neglected in studies of women on the Northern home front. In short, this study probes the nature of that overlooked wartime experience and what it meant to the women who were left behind to try and navigate this divided home front throughout the war. The study will consider these three broad topics: financial issues, patriotism and support for the war, and family obligations.

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## INTRODUCTION

In acknowledgment of the firing on Fort Sumter on April 15, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion of the Southern states. In response, over 30,000 Ohioans rushed to enlist, greatly exceeding the 13,000 men from Ohio that President Lincoln had requested.<sup>1</sup> Among those 30,000 new recruits was a twenty-four-year old lawyer from Georgetown, Ohio, named Thomas Thompson Taylor. Much like many of the ninety-day recruits, Taylor was a young man, from a predominately rural area who was anxious to make a name for himself through his martial exploits. Watching him march out of town was his wife Margaret Antoinette Taylor. Unlike her husband, she did not have visions of military glory; she instead saw a bleak future for herself and her small children without their provider and protector.

The Taylors lived on a small farm called Elmwood Cottage in southwestern Ohio, near the quiet community of Georgetown. Thomas Taylor had migrated to the Georgetown region in 1855 to study law under the supervision of his uncle and was admitted to the bar in 1857. In addition to studying law, he began courting Margaret White, a member of a prominent local family. Her father, John D. White, had been, both a schoolteacher and a member of the state legislature. Her two older brothers were also leading members of the community.

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<sup>1</sup> George Knepper. *Ohio and Its People* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003).

Carr White was a doctor, and Chilton White was a lawyer and a member of the House of Representatives as well as a former state senator.

Margaret (or “Netta” as she was called) herself was fairly well educated. More than likely, she had attended the Georgetown school at which her father taught. Her letters reveal a familiarity with literature and history, as well as, current events. Female education in the mid-nineteenth century was still designed with the idea that a “woman’s needs, interests, and abilities were presumed different, and her schooling continued to prepare her for and direct her toward a role in the home.”<sup>2</sup> Public schooling for the primary years generally offered girls the same educational opportunity as boys; however, when boys could then move on to universities or to apprentice with other male professionals, girls returned to the home. By the time Netta was a young girl there were numerous “girls’ schools” offering educational opportunities for young women, mainly in the fine arts, for the daughters of middle and upper-class families. In addition, “female seminaries” offering young women educational opportunities similar to those given their male counterparts, were beginning to arise across the Northern states. However, there is no evidence that Netta, or her sisters, received any additional educational opportunities other than those afforded by their father’s school.

While the lack of “secondary” schooling might seem unusual for the daughters of such a prominent family, it was not out of the ordinary in rural Georgetown. John White’s school was a subscription school, which essentially

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Kelly, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 60.

meant that the parents of his students paid tuition for their children to attend. Evidence strongly suggests that the majority of students in the White school were boys, since parents in a cash-poor area were considerably more likely to work to send their boys to school than they were their daughters (who would most likely, marry rather than enter into the public sphere).

Thomas Taylor and Margaret White were married in January of 1858, and the future seemed bright for the young couple. Taylor began a rise to prominence in his own right through the late 1850s and early 1860s. In addition to being a young lawyer, he purchased a half interest in a local drugstore, briefly co-owned and edited a newspaper, and was elected “by a large majority” to the position of prosecuting attorney of Brown County.<sup>3</sup> By 1861 Tom and Netta Taylor’s family had grown to include two infant sons, Miles and Thomas Jr., and they seemed to be a young family with a bright future.<sup>4</sup>

With Taylor’s enlistment in the Union Army, Netta Taylor found herself, like many women during the Civil War, in the unfamiliar position of not only caring for the household tasks but also taking on responsibilities that had previously been her husband’s concern. Suddenly, Netta found herself overseeing not only the family farm but her husband’s business interests as well. While it was not unusual in the Georgetown area for women to oversee the production of food items for sale, such as butter and eggs, women were generally excluded from

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Castel. *Tom Taylor’s Civil War* (Lawrence, KS: The University of Kansas Press, 3). Thomas Taylor enjoyed being at the forefront of whatever business he undertook. While the newspaper business was becoming more established in the Northern states, Taylor’s paper was one of only 4,051 newspapers in the entire nation, according to the 1860 census.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Antoinette Taylor was known as “Netta” to her friends and family. In nearly all of the personal letters that have survived she signed herself “Netta,” and, in order to differentiate her from the other two Margarets in her immediate family, she will be referred to as “Netta” throughout this narrative.



most avenues of business. There were female teachers and mantuamakers, as dressmakers and milliners were called. However, evidence suggests that, in Georgetown, other positions of female employment, such as weavers and store clerks, were filled by men. In keeping with this tradition, when Thomas went off to war, Netta did not actually go to work at his drugstore but simply “checked-in” periodically for financial reports and to settle bills of credit. Her lack of familiarity with the business and her half-hearted attempts to oversee her husband’s interests would have serious consequences as the war dragged on.

In an attempt to keep connected with her husband through the separation of war, beginning in May of 1861 and continuing through July of 1865, Netta wrote nearly 150 letters to him in the field. In addition to local gossip and family news, her letters detailed her attempts to reconcile her beliefs on the war with her husband’s service, as well as the problems faced by those living on the Ohio border and the difficulties they encountered throughout the war.

Netta Taylor’s letters offer the unusual opportunity to follow one Ohio woman as she attempted to make sense of the upheaval around her, and her points of view as they changed over the course of the war. Taylor was typical in the sense that the majority of women left behind during the Civil War were from rural communities, young, and found themselves left to their own devices for the first time in their lives.<sup>5</sup> However, Netta also offers a unique perspective in that she was educated and relatively well-off financially. She had the resources to hire help for both the fields and the household. Netta was very frank in her letters

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<sup>5</sup> Nina Silber. *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* ( Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

to her husband about her opinions on the war, as well as her views on how he was conducting himself and what should be done differently both at home and in the field. She thought for herself and expected to be taken seriously; yet, at the same time, she was not above appealing to stereotypical “female” behavior if she felt it would help to further her position. Her letters offer not only a glimpse into a white, middle-class Union woman’s life in a strongly Confederate-sympathizing region, but also a portrait of a marriage in which both husband and wife loved, respected, and viewed the other as an equal partner, in a family living through the upheaval and separation caused by war.<sup>6</sup>

Netta’s writings allow for an intimate look into the wartime experiences of a Northern woman from a region, known as the “West,” that has been relatively ignored in Civil War scholarship. A quick survey of scholarship focusing on women during the war reveals that it is overwhelmingly slanted toward the Confederate female experience. This bias is understandable since it can be argued that Southern women experienced the war more intimately than their Northern sisters. Many Southern women found themselves on the front lines, as refugees, or as victims of shortages of food and other basic supplies. When the

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<sup>6</sup> For more on marriage and gender relations during the American Civil War see: Carol K. Bleser and Lesley J. Gordon, eds., *Intimate Strategies of the Civil War: Military Commanders and their Wives*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Catherine Clinton, ed. *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds. *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Margaret S. Creighton, *The Colors of Courage: Gettysburg’s Forgotten History, Immigrants, Women, and African Americans in the Civil War’s Defining Battle*. (New York: Basic Books, 2005), Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Elizabeth Leonard, *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994); Nina Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); and Lyde Cullen Sizer. *The Political Word of Northern Women Writers and the Civil War, 1850-1872*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

experiences of Northern women have been examined, the focus has overwhelmingly been on women from New England and the Mid-Atlantic region. These women were leaders in the abolitionist movement. They served as organizers in local and national aid societies, such as the Sanitary Commission, and they played important roles as government and medical workers. However, in spite of the attention focused on these women's valuable contributions, their experiences were not typical of the Northern female experience.

A look at the average Northern soldier tells us that he was young and from a rural area. A significant number came from states that make up the current Mid-west. Therefore, it makes sense that this Northern soldier's female counterpart, and the wives, mothers, and sisters of these Western recruits, would offer up a more common female wartime experience than those of their Eastern sisters. This in no way negates the importance of Eastern women's experiences, but, instead turns the focus on a group of Northern women who would have found the experience as foreign as that of their Confederate counterparts. Netta Taylor offers a perfect opportunity to pull back the curtain on this neglected female wartime experience. Her writings, in addition to being extremely literate, offer keen observations on both her neighbors and the political climate of the region in general. They also have the added significance of being part of a family collection that was preserved throughout the decades. The collection includes writings from her husband, allowing a dialogue between the couple to be observed. Newspaper clippings and other miscellaneous documents provide a relatively complete picture of their personal, as well as their community's wartime

experience. While it cannot be argued that their experiences were the standard experience for all rural, Western couples, it does offer a look into the wartime lives of this overlooked segment of the Northern home front.

Almost as soon as the last shot had been fired, numerous memoirs of women who lived through the Civil War were published, either for public consumption or to be privately passed among family and friends. These memoirs detailed the women's experiences of the war and their attempts to make sense of the upheaval around them and their roles within this new reality. The majority of these memoirs were written by Southern women, who, as part of the losing side, had a definite interest in not only preserving their wartime experiences but also justifying their actions and those of their loved ones in defense of their homes and families.

Probably the most famous of these female war memoirs was written by Mary Chesnut, an elite Southern woman who wrote of her experiences among powerful Confederate politicians.<sup>7</sup> Many other Southern women followed Chestnut's lead and wanted to preserve their recollections of the war.<sup>8</sup> Fewer Northern women published accounts of their wartime experiences. Those who did were generally women who had participated in the war not just as observers, as did Gettysburg native Tillie Pierce, but as active role players, like relief worker

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<sup>7</sup> See, C. Vann Woodward, ed. *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Some of the more famous Southern women's wartime memoirs are: Belle Boyd. *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*. (New York: Blelock and Company, 1865). Judith McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War, by a Lady of Virginia* (repr. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), Elliot Ashkenazi, ed. *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing Up in New Orleans, 1861-1862*. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), John Q. Anderson, ed. *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868*. (repr. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), Charles East, ed. *Sarah Morgan: The Diary of a Southern Woman*. (repr. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

and nurse Mary Livermore, and spy Sarah Edmonds. Celebrated author Louisa May Alcott also published a fictionalized account of her hospital work.<sup>9</sup> What these more famous women had in common with the unknown Netta Taylor is that they all used diaries and/or letters to record their personal experiences throughout the war. They recorded everything from their fear of losing loved ones and the terror of being caught in the actual fighting to the more mundane accounts of everyday life, such as doing household chores and raising children.

However, there is also a major difference between the forms in which they wrote about their experiences. Diaries were generally a medium in which the writer could record her private, intimate thoughts without fear of anyone reading them, much less commenting on their properness. Many of the Civil War era memoirs that exist today were originally diaries that were carefully edited in order to present the diarist in a positive light, while glossing over (or omitting completely) anything negative or unpleasant regarding the writer and/or her friends and family.<sup>10</sup> Many Civil War memoirs were published years after the war's conclusion, and, with the passage of time, events in the past were often looked upon wistfully or used as a way to justify what was currently happening. With letters, one gets a more immediate sense of what was happening in the author's life at that particular moment in time. There was little to no editing after

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<sup>9</sup> Louisa May Alcott. *Hospital Sketches*. Tillie Pierce Allman. *At Gettysburg, or What a Girl Saw and Heard of the Battle*. (New York: W. Lake Borland, 1889), Emma S. Edmonds. *Nurse and Spy in the Union Army: Comprising the Adventures and Experiences of a Woman in Hospitals, Camps, and Battlefields*. (Hartford, CT: W.S. Williams and Co., 1865). Mary Livermore. *My Story of the War: A Woman's Narrative*, (repr. New York: Da Capo Press, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Several of the major female war memoirs that were created from carefully edited wartime letters and diaries include: Mary Boykin Chesnut's *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, Sarah Morgan's *The Diary of a Southern Woman*; and Varina Davis's postwar biography of her husband *Jefferson Davis: A Memoir by his Wife*.

a letter was written, which could allow the author's true thoughts and opinions to come through more clearly than in edited memoirs. However, that does not mean that self-editing did not take place. Netta clearly took into consideration the audience of her letters, namely her husband, and attempted to craft them in a way that would sway him to her way of seeing things. Her most common topic, that of him leaving the service and returning to his family, was often couched in terms designed to play upon her lonely husband's sense of love and duty to his family. For example, she often reminded him that his sons had no idea who he was since he had been gone so long, and that she herself was unwell and needed him home, not only "heal" her but to lift the burdens of being a single parent from her shoulders. She carefully chose what information to relay and what to keep from Thomas, often to his exasperation, throughout the war.

What makes Netta Taylor's letters unique is that, while many Civil War letters were preserved, the overwhelming majority of them were those written by soldiers, not by those left at home, especially women. The Taylor letters are also uncommon in that both the letters of the husband and the wife have been preserved, providing a snapshot of a marriage and a young family tested by war from both the male and female perspective.

Another way in which Taylor's account differs from the published memoirs is in her intended audience: namely her husband. Netta was not writing for a public audience, and, as a result, her letters offer a very candid look at her life. She could be manipulative, needy, and opinionated. She was not a "heroine," as many of the titles of published memoirs suggest. She did not spend her time

volunteering in Soldiers' Aid Societies or working at patriotic endeavors: instead, she concerned herself with caring for her family and encouraging her husband to give up his pursuit of martial glory and return to his family, where he belonged. While Netta Taylor was not an outspoken supporter of the war effort, she was intelligent and wrote informed letters of the situation at home and her understanding of the larger events of the conflict. She wrote insightfully, and, often with a deeper understanding than her husband, regarding human nature and the realities of day-to-day life. As a result, over one hundred years later, a reader can relate to her. Netta comes across as very human, with numerous flaws, not as a patriotic ideal that could not be lived up to, but as an average woman struggling to make sense of what was happening around her. She was a wife and mother doing the best she could in the circumstances in which she lived.

In contrast, that heroic ideal has been passed down through popular culture and early historians' studies of women during the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> Netta Taylor's letters offer not the often unattainable version of womanhood, but an unvarnished and, many times, unflattering, look at what life was like for many women during the war. Not every woman was an aid worker, nurse, or patriotic supporter of the war; however, if one were to survey many of the published wartime accounts of women, one would come away with that impression. The reality for the majority of women was probably much closer to that of Taylor's: filled with housework, boredom, and worry. Women such as Mary Chesnut and

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<sup>11</sup> For one of the earliest examples of heroic and "true" women and their roles during the Civil War see: Frank Moore, *Women of the War; Their Heroism and Self-Sacrifice* (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton and Co., 1867).

Mary Livermore wrote with the public in mind, editing their wartime memories as they prepared them for publication. Taylor's letters contain no such self-censorship and, as a result, are a more accurate barometer for the "here and now" feelings of women on the home front. Taylor wrote what she felt at that moment, and, while she sometimes apologized in later epistles for her "rashness" in writing, she never went back and edited herself or her emotions in her letters.

She also seemed to not concern herself with creating an image of herself as a "heroic" soldier's wife, bravely carrying on while her husband did his patriotic duty. She detailed her neighbors' negative reactions to her behavior, reporting that they did not consider her actions "proper" for the wife of a soldier. Netta could in no way be confused with the women of the Spartan tradition, in terms of her support for her husband's military exploits. She actively encouraged him to come home and assured him that he had done his duty by his country; since he had fulfilled his requirement to his nation, she argued that he must return home and take care of his family. She was also uninterested in using her newfound freedom as the acting head of the family to expand her influence and opportunities beyond what she considered to be acceptable for women of her station. As a result, her oversight of her husband's business transactions and collection and payment of debts was often spotty at best, in spite of her competence in these tasks.

From her home outside of Georgetown, Ohio, Netta Taylor was positioned to view the divisiveness of the war on the Ohio home front. Her farm was a relatively short distance from both Ripley, a center of abolitionist activity, and



Cincinnati, a city divided between its Copperhead stronghold and a strong anti-slavery presence. On a more personal level, she saw her own family bitterly divided by the war. Her husband and brother Carr both enlisted in the Union Army, while her brother Chilton and other family members, including her mother, actively supported the Peace Democrats, leaving her torn between the two. Historian Albert Castel has stated that Netta Taylor was herself a Copperhead, because of her numerous entreaties for her husband to return home. However, based on the more than one hundred letters she wrote to her husband throughout the war, this author cannot support that conclusion.<sup>12</sup>

Castel seems to have based his conclusions on Netta's frequent urging of her husband to leave the military and return home to his family. If one were to only focus on the writings of Tom Taylor, it is easy to see how one might posit the idea that Netta opposed the war.

It can be inferred through Thomas Taylor's writings that Netta's frequent pleas to return home were frustrating to him. Taylor found himself living a life more exciting than the one he had left at home. He was seeing new places and people, rising within the ranks, and had dreams of martial glory that would be unfulfilled if he gave into his wife's pleas. His desire to prove himself on the battlefield and return to Georgetown a military hero became especially pronounced after his less than glorious departure from that town following a failed recruiting mission. This is not to say he did not miss Netta and his children. It is very clear through his letters that he deeply and passionately loved and missed Netta. He frequently tried to appease her with promises of a return home

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<sup>12</sup> Historian Albert Castel makes this claim in his book, *Tom Taylor's Civil War*.

or that he would try to remove himself from his regiment; when those did not work, he sometimes lashed out at her for her lack of understanding of the work he was doing and what it would mean for their future. In fact, the one constant tension between the couple throughout the war was Netta's failure to understand or acknowledge that Tom's public identity demanded that he actively participate in the war and that he return home a model of the heroic soldier. At the same time, Netta's domestic identity would not permit her to acknowledge an alternative identity for her husband other than head of the household, husband, and father.

However, a different picture of Netta appears when one reads her accounts of the same time period. Her letters are not filled with hope for the future and dreams of martial glory; instead, they detail the everyday drudgery of running a farm and caring for two small children, the fear of being unable to pay debts, and her inability to obtain money from her soldier husband. She also suffered from a crippling fear that Tom would be killed and she would be left alone to raise their children. She did not want a dead hero, but a living and breathing husband, and was hurt and angry when Tom failed to respond to her pleas for him to return home. She was not a woman who heroically rose to the challenge when her husband left for war. She hated having to care for business and financial obligations and longed for the day when Tom would return and protect her from having to serve as a "public" woman. Unlike her husband, who spent time socializing with others, she felt very isolated from family members who supported the South and those in her town, often remarking that "soldiers' wives" were

forgotten and pushed aside by others in the community. While Netta was clearly anti-war in the sense that she did not want her husband away fighting, and possibly dying, her writings show contempt for the “Butternuts” in her community. She rejoiced with each Union victory, being especially supportive of Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. She took pride in being a soldier’s wife and in her husband’s accomplishments. However, unlike Tom, she would have gladly traded those accomplishments and honors in exchange for having her family together again.

The idea of the “divided family” is a familiar one among scholars of the Civil War, and popular culture is full of references to brother fighting brother.<sup>13</sup> However, most of the scholarship concerning family divisiveness focuses primarily on Southern families, especially those in the border areas of Kentucky, Missouri, and what would become West Virginia. The fact that there were divided Ohio families is not widely acknowledged. With the exception of New England and the large urban centers of the North scholars paid little attention to the effect of the war on other Northern communities.<sup>14</sup> The Midwest region, or the “West” as its inhabitants referred to it, has been particularly overlooked in the literature

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<sup>13</sup> The idea of “brother vs. brother” is a popular characterization of the Civil War. For more on divided families during the war see: Stephen Berry. *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided by War*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007); Amy M. Taylor. *The Divided Family in Civil War America*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> However, this is slowly changing with the publication of community studies, such as: Edward Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), as well as works examining the relationship between the home front and the battlefield, including: Joan Cashin, ed. *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), Kathleen Ernst. *Too Afraid to Cry: Maryland Civilians in the Antietam Campaign*. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999); Reid Mitchell. *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Scott Nelson, and Carol Sheriff. *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America’s Civil War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

concerning the home front and the war. Within this Midwest region, the state of Ohio held a special importance throughout the Civil War years.

In addition to being the third largest state at the time, the railroad lines in Ohio provided a vital link from the East to the Mississippi River Valley, allowing for the movement of troops and supplies. The state was also a key supplier of troops to the Union war effort. Ohio politicians took seriously the idea that “Ohio must lead” and set about organizing enlisted men and appointing officers. Many of the men who would become national war heroes, including Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, and George Custer, were Ohio natives. Ohio was also a hotbed of political activity in the years leading up to and throughout the Civil War. The abolitionist movement was very strong in Ohio and the state was an important stop on the Underground Railroad for escaping slaves.

In spite of all its support for the Union war effort, Ohio was a bitterly divided state over the issue of the war itself. Northeastern Ohio, settled by people from New England, was an area of strong Union and anti-slavery sentiment. The southwestern region of the state, settled predominately by Southerners migrating north, was equally strong in its support for the Confederacy’s right to leave the Union peacefully, if not the Confederacy itself. The Copperhead, or Peace Democrat movement was especially strong in this region, and many Ohio families found themselves divided over the issue of the war. Cincinnati and other cities of southwest Ohio had attracted many German and Irish immigrants, as well as a significant population of free African Americans and escaped slaves, to job opportunities on the docks and in city businesses. The presence of these

minority groups exacerbated tensions in the region as they competed for jobs with the cities' populations, often willing to work for less than native workers. They also brought "foreign" influences, such as Catholicism, into local communities, which put them in opposition with the predominantly Protestant civic leadership. Citizens of southwestern Ohio, regardless of ethnic, religious, or racial background, also faced the very real threat of Confederate raids across the Ohio River. For these reasons, the wartime experiences of those in southwestern Ohio were unique among the experiences of those on the Union home front throughout the Civil War, yet they are often overlooked.<sup>15</sup>

Netta Taylor's letters to her husband are a window into the experiences of women on that divided Ohio home front. This dissertation will use her writings to view the experiences of women on the contested Ohio home front and highlight the problems they faced that were unique to the majority of Northern women. Fear of Confederate raids, the reality of tensions along the Ohio border, family divisions caused by the war, and the role of the Copperheads, as well as the domestic upheaval created by the war, were all unique to these women and are all topics that have been greatly neglected in studies of women on the Northern home front. While the primary source material for this work is the collection of more than one hundred letters Margaret Antoinette Taylor wrote to her husband

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<sup>15</sup> See also: Stephane Elise Booth, *Buckeye Women: The History of Ohio's Daughters*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001); Christine Dee, ed. *Ohio's War: The Civil War in Documents*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006); Frank Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), George Knepper. *Ohio and Its People*. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), Lucy Murphey, and Wendy Hamand Venet, eds. *Midwestern Women: Work, Community and Leadership at the Crossroads*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); Jennifer Weber. *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Jean Fagen Yellin and John C. Van Horne. *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

throughout the Civil War, her letters were not the only material considered. Where possible the veracity of Netta's writings are checked against newspaper reports, 1860 census figures, maps and other wartime accounts of the region. While Thomas Taylor was also a prolific letter writer, his writings are used to simply fill in the blanks of Netta's accounts, as he was not a first hand observer of the situation in Georgetown throughout the war. Also, being taken into account are Netta's own biases and agendas in writing to her husband. While it is impossible to know exactly what she was thinking as she wrote, inferences can be made, especially regarding her desire for her husband to return home, and these were also taken into consideration throughout the completion of this project.

In short, this study probes the nature of that overlooked wartime experience and what it meant to the women who were left behind to try and navigate this divided home front throughout the war. The study will consider these three broad topics: financial issues, patriotism and support for the war, and family obligations. Many women experienced financial problems once their husbands, or other male provider, left for the war. They were overwhelmed, in many instances, by the necessity of having to take control of their husband's accounts. Activities such as paying bills, collecting debts, negotiating to purchase items, and overseeing building projects were the cause of great anxiety and concern among many women who stepped into the role of caring for the family's finances. As time went on, their competency increased, yet their anxiety never completely vanished.

These women were also conflicted in their patriotic duties and their support for the war. They faced challenges in trying to reconcile ideas offered by the Copperhead movement and the Peace Democrats with being supportive of the Union enlistments of their husbands and brothers. How did this support increase or decrease when faced with the reality of war (e.g. Morgan's Raid) at their doorstep? The issue of patriotism also impacted the ways in which women were viewed within the community. How were the wives of Union soldiers viewed in this pro-Southern community? Did they feel isolated by family members and neighbors who were not pro-Union or could they rely upon the support of their family and friends in spite of differing wartime views? Soldiers' wives, especially officers' wives, were under intense community scrutiny and were judged as to whether or not they were "good soldier's wives" based on their actions. How did women adapt to this added stress?

Another concern facing these women was their increased family obligations. With their husbands at war, women were left to be both mother and father to their children. How did they handle this new role? Was it more difficult for them being in a pro-Southern area while their husbands fought for the Union? What did this mean for female support networks? The war placed a great strain on the marriages of these women and their soldier husbands. Issues that needed to be addressed included, Rumors, and fears, of infidelity, fear of the pre-war home-life being forgotten, fear that the husband might be wounded or killed in battle and what that would mean for the family left behind,

tensions, and the need to readjust to one another once the husband returned home.

The four main chapters will address each of these themes chronologically, which will allow the reader to see changes over time. In addition to the three major themes each chapter will also address sub-topics that relate not only to the major themes, but also to the specific time and place of the war.<sup>16</sup> Chapter 1 will cover the war's early years 1861-1862. The initial optimism concerning the victory of the Union will be examined, in addition to the "growing pains" experienced by women like Netta Taylor, who were left to manage family farms and businesses on their own for the first time in their lives. How did the women navigate their new "public" roles while at the same time attempting to remain grounded within the domestic sphere? By 1862, not only had the hope of an easy Union victory faded, but one can also clearly see the breaks in family relationships caused by the war. Chapter 2 focuses on 1863, which was a turning point in the war with the Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. It was also a year of extreme stress for the Taylor family. Thomas Taylor was serving in a combat role in the Deep South, which limited communication between the couple and added to the tensions experienced by both. In 1863, the war came home to Georgetown, Ohio when Morgan's Raid came through the community. The reaction of the community members highlights the conflicts and divisions of a border community during the Civil War. Chapter 3 concentrates on the year

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<sup>16</sup> This dissertation is not concerned with retracing the chronology of the war or the major battles and campaigns, except where it directly pertains to the Taylors and/or Georgetown, Ohio. However, certain aspects of the war, the draft, Morgan's Raid, and the role of Copperheads will be discussed in relation to the border experiences of the Taylor family and those like them.



1864, the beginning of the end of the war. Netta's letters reveal the frustration felt by families who could see that the Union would eventually be victorious, yet lived in fear of news from the front concerning the thousands of casualties and reports of destruction in the war's closing battles. Chapter 4 focuses on 1865, which represented the immediate end of the war and the limbo in which families like the Taylors found themselves as the war ended. The men were still part of the Union military, waiting to be mustered out. For Thomas Taylor, this meant a new position in Washington, D.C. and a final chance to achieve the promotion he so desired. For Netta, it meant a continuation of the drudgery and boredom that had marked the war years, and continued loneliness for a husband who did not seem to share her desire to return to domestic bliss.

Obviously, there are limits to what a study such as this can illuminate. While Netta Taylor's letters shed light on the experience of white, middle-class women on the Ohio border during the war, hers was not the only female experience of that time and place. Netta Taylor offers a look into the life of a different type of woman than what has been traditionally celebrated in the history of the war. She did not experience battle firsthand. She was not a patriotic aid worker or nurse, and much of her wartime experience was spent waiting. She waited for letters from her husband; for the casualty reports, in hopes that she did not see a familiar name; and for the day when her family would be reunited. In the midst of this waiting, life went on. She cared for her children and home, ran the family farm, supervised the hired help, and performed hundreds of other mundane chores to keep her home and family together until her husband's

return. Compared to many published accounts written by women during the war, Netta Taylor was rather ordinary and unexceptional; yet what can be taken from Netta's writing and her experiences is the reality of the war for many women regardless of their location. Most were not heroic in the traditional sense, and very few did remarkable things during the war. Instead, the majority were probably women like Netta, women who remained at home throughout the war, doing their best to keep things together, and longing for the day when they would be reunited with their soldiers. The goal for this study is to provide a starting point for future inquiry. By shedding light on this "ordinary," middle-class, white, female experience on the divided Ohio home front during the American Civil War, the groundwork will be laid for future studies into the lives of other women who navigated and created meaning out of that contested ground throughout the war.

When dealing with personal family letters/records, it is sometimes confusing to the reader as to how people are related or where exactly they fit within the narrative. The White and Taylor families are no exceptions. There are several cases of family members who shared identical or similar names. People sometimes appear in the narrative and then simply vanish from the record. Nicknames or initials are also used. While it would have been clear to the person receiving the letter who was being discussed, it is not so clear to those reading the letters over one hundred years later. As much as possible, neighbors and community figures have been identified through the use of census records, newspapers, and community histories of Brown County. For family members not central to the narrative many have simply been identified as "sister of," "cousin

of,” and so on. The following is a listing and brief biographical sketch of the key figures of the narrative.

**Margaret Antoinette “Netta” White Taylor (b. 1836, d. September 29, 1913) -**

In her early twenties at the beginning of the war, “Netta” was the mother of two young sons, Miles and Thomas Jr. (the family would eventually grow to include eight children; seven sons and a daughter), and the wife of Thomas Taylor whom she married on January 17, 1858. She was a member of the White family. Her father had been a schoolteacher and a local politician, and her older brothers were well-connected and respected members of the Georgetown community as well. She was well educated, and had possibly taught school before her marriage<sup>17</sup>. She was knowledgeable on current affairs and talked about them openly and seemingly as an equal to her husband. Netta is buried beside her husband at Arlington National Cemetery.

**Thomas Thomson Taylor (b. November 27, 1836, d. February 15, 1908) –**

Husband of Netta Taylor. Taylor was only in his early twenties when the war began but he had made a name for himself in Georgetown, Ohio. Taylor owned a half-interest in a drugstore, owned and edited a local newspaper, and served as prosecuting attorney of Brown County. He originally enlisted for ninety days, but re-enlisted in a new regiment, the 47<sup>th</sup> Ohio, when his term expired. Taylor began his military career as a recruiter in Ohio, participated in Sherman’s March to the

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<sup>17</sup> Historian Albert Castel remarks that Netta had taught school before her marriage in his book, *Tom Taylor’s Civil War*. It is possible that she taught but this author was unable to prove or disprove this statement.

Sea, and ended his career in Washington, D.C, serving on a general court martial. Taylor also rose in rank throughout the war, serving as a captain from August 1861 to April of 1863, a major until 1865, and finally as a brevet brigadier general. Following the war Taylor briefly returned to Georgetown, Ohio, before moving his family in 1867 to Edina, Missouri, where he ran a local newspaper. In 1872, citing failing health, Taylor moved his family once again, this time to Hutchinson, Kansas where he raised stock on a 1,120 acre farm and served in the state legislature. In 1892, the Taylor family moved for the final time, to Lake Charles, Louisiana after he accepted the job of general counsel for the St. Louis, Watkins, and Gulf Railroad. Here they were reunited with the Southern branch of the Taylor family (Taylor's older brother, Ziba, had been a blockade runner, and his son, also named Tom Taylor, had fought for the Confederacy). Taylor spent his remaining years as a railroad lawyer and bankruptcy referee and worked on a variety of community and church projects. Thomas Taylor is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

**Miles Taylor and Thomas Taylor Jr. – Sons of Netta and Thomas Taylor.**

Miles was born prematurely on September 18, 1858, and Thomas Jr. was born December 28, 1860. A third son, Carr, would be born December 15, 1863. The remaining Taylor children would be born after the war: Sarah Elizabeth (Bessie) born October 18, 1866; Hiram Chilton, born March 3, 1867; Bruce Linville born

July 16, 1871; George Searing, born August 30, 1874; and the final son, Edgar Clarence, born October 9, 1877.<sup>18</sup>

**John D. and Margaret White – (John Donaldson, b. October 25, 1796, d. May 1855) (Margaret Baker White, b. 1806, d.1867)** Parents of Netta Taylor. John Donaldson was born in North Carolina, and moved with his parents to Kentucky where he married Margaret Baker. The White's son, Carr, was born in Kentucky before the family moved to Georgetown, Ohio. In Georgetown, John Donaldson taught school (his most famous pupil was Ulysses S. Grant); served as county surveyor; was a Representative and, later, a senator to the Ohio State Legislature; and, in the last years of his life served as Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer of Brown County. The Whites had nine children: Carr, Grafton (who died prior to the Civil War), Chilton, Ann (d. 1863), Margaret "Netta," John G. (b. 1837, d.?), Leonard (b. Jan. 14, 1841, d. June 15, 1862), Mary Jane (b. 1843, d. October 29, 1864), and Elizabeth (b. 1846, d. ?).. By the time of the Civil War, Margaret White had been a widow for several years and was no longer living on the family farm, but in Georgetown proper.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The biographical data on the Taylor children is taken from: Thomas Taylor, "My Family and I: Being a Genealogical and Biographical Sketch of Thomas Thomson Taylor," (typewritten transcript of the original), 1903. p. 21. Taylor (Miles and Family) Papers, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

<sup>19</sup> In *Tom Taylor's Civil War* historian Albert Castel refers to Netta's father numerous times as "Hugh Donaldson White." However, Thomas Taylor, in "My Family and I," Ulysses S. Grant in his memoirs (Ulysses S. Grant *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*. [repr]New York: DeCapo Press, 1982). 9, and the 1850 census all refer to him as "John D. White." It is unclear exactly what the living arrangement of Margaret White was during the 1860s. Her husband had owned property in town that was divided between his sons Carr and Chilton after his death. Since Chilton already had his own residence it appears that Margaret, and her unmarried children, lived in the section of the townhouse left to Chilton by his father.

**Carr White (b. 1823, d. September 30 1871)** - Older brother of Netta Taylor. A doctor and veteran of the Mexican War, he married Melita Waterman on November 14, 1847. They had three children, Anna, Stephen, and Ulysses Grant. Carr served as captain of Georgetown's three-month volunteers. He served with the 12<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry throughout the war, ending with the rank of brevet brigadier general. When Carr was in Georgetown on leave, Netta Taylor relied on him in her husband's absence, to help make sense of the Taylor's financial situation and to provide medical care to her children.

**Chilton White (b. February 6, 1826, d. December 7, 1900)** – Older brother of Netta Taylor, husband to Fannie. Chilton began his career as a teacher before studying law. Admitted to the bar in 1848, he was very active in the Democratic Party. White served as the Prosecuting Attorney of Brown County from 1852-1854, as a state senator from 1859-1860, and as a member of the US House of Representatives from March 1861 – March 1865. He also was the executor of Elmwood Cottage, which Thomas and Netta Taylor rented from him. That would serve as a source of tension between the two families as did White's Copperhead sympathies. By 1862 there would be a break between Chilton White's family and Thomas Taylor's family that would not begin to resolve until the end of the war. Following the war, White was a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention in 1873, and in 1896, he was an unsuccessful candidate for Secretary of State. He died in Georgetown, Ohio on December 7, 1900 and is buried in Confidence Cemetery.

## CHAPTER 1

1861-1862

“Will we ever be permitted to enjoy each other’s society again?”

When the Civil War began in 1861, very few people anticipated that it would last more than a few months. Politicians and local leaders hoped to attract recruits by promising them a brief term of enlistment - thirty-days - and a conflict from which nearly all would return home covered in glory. Thousands hurried to enlist following the firing on Fort Sumter, out of fear that the war would end before they had the opportunity to serve. Thomas Taylor was among those who offered their service in the first wave of recruitments. In doing so, he set into motion a chain of events that would challenge his, and Netta’s, conceptions of gender roles, honor, love, and duty.

The Taylor’s tried to maintain their traditional roles in the early days of Thomas’s enlistment. Thomas would dictate what needed to be done, even going so far as to enlist a male surrogate to handle the family’s finances in his absence. While Netta did not want to assume responsibilities that had previously belonged to her husband, problems faced in the first months of Thomas’s enlistment caused her to gradually assume those duties, in addition to her own, and this fostered a sense of resentment toward her husband. As it became clear that the war would last longer than the promised few months, Netta found herself

struggling with not only her husband's duties, but also a growing sense of isolation from her community, which she blamed on being the wife of a Union officer. The issues Netta struggled with throughout 1861 and 1862, had commonalities with those facing many other young couples separated by war, and were intensified by the community in which Netta found herself during the war years. She did not see herself as having a support network upon which she could lean during her husband's absence. She watched as friends and family members drifted away because of divisions over the war, and she felt a growing alienation with her community as she struggled to adjust to life without Thomas.

For the majority of the people on the Northern home front, the larger, more abstract, issues of the war were not nearly as important as how the war affected their immediate lives. As Northern men went off to war, the women left behind found themselves struggling with finances, family concerns, and questions of patriotism and support for the war. These issues and problems were magnified for the people who lived in border regions, and this can clearly be seen through the experiences of the Taylor family of Georgetown, Ohio.

Georgetown, Ohio, the county seat of Brown County, is located near the Ohio River. Nearby lie the town of Ripley, once a noted center of abolitionism, and the city of Cincinnati, the "Queen City of the West." Cincinnati was the largest city in Ohio, one of the leading Midwestern cities of the era, and a city noted for its divided sympathies during the war. Many Westerners viewed Cincinnati as the "intellectual and cultural capital of the West." It was also the center of the industrial revolution in Ohio for several reasons. First, Cincinnati



featured vital railroad and river links. Second, it possessed the industrial capability to produce not only food and leather goods but also war materials, such as warships and ammunition.<sup>20</sup>

Southwestern Ohio was also known as the “Butternut” region of the state, because many of its inhabitants had migrated to Ohio from Southern states, especially Virginia, and many were the sons and daughters of white Southern migrants. The term “Butternut” initially referred to those Southern migrants, more specifically to their clothes (butternut was the color of the dye used for their homespun textiles).<sup>21</sup> As a result, many whites in southwestern Ohio were, if not active supporters, at least sympathetic to the seceding Southern states and the Confederate cause. In addition to the regions’ Southern roots, the influx of new immigrants from Germany and Ireland changed the make-up and loyalties of the cities, creating large pockets of Union loyalty.

While Georgetown did not experience a large influx of immigrants, the town was caught between opposing views of what constituted being loyal to their community and country and what constituted being disloyal. Georgetown’s citizens found themselves divided between being a Union supporter or being a “Butternut” and supporting the South. This division separated friends, businessmen, and even families. As family members found themselves on

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<sup>20</sup> Knepper, 226. See also, James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture*. (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1989). During the Civil War, the term “Midwest” was not used in reference to Ohio; instead, Ohioans referred to themselves as “Westerners” who lived in the West or Northwest. Beginning in the 1840s and throughout the mid-1800s, the “West” referred to the area between the Ohio River and the Great Lakes. It was not until 1899 that the term “Middle West” was used to describe Ohio.

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). 3.

opposing sides of the conflict, tensions and feelings of isolation among those separated from their closest acquaintances developed.

On the eve of the American Civil War the future looked bright for Thomas and Margaret Antoinette “Netta” Taylor. Thomas was a promising lawyer in Georgetown, Ohio. He had just been elected prosecuting attorney for the county, owned half interest in a local drug store, and was beginning to accumulate a modest fortune.<sup>22</sup> In addition to his law practice, Taylor also rented a small farm, known as Elmwood Cottage, from his brother-in-law, Chilton White. He hired out much of the farm labor and also a hired a girl to help Netta with the housework and care of the children. A Democrat in a strongly Democratic region of the state, Taylor was positioned to benefit from the political stature and influence of Netta’s family, which included several regionally prominent, political, and socially influential members. There was no reason to doubt that his upward climb in Georgetown society would continue.<sup>23</sup>

On April 14, 1861 Thomas Taylor attended a meeting at the Brown County Court House in response to President Abraham Lincoln’s call for seventy-five-thousand volunteers. When the meeting ended a local military company was formed, with approximately thirty volunteers to answer Lincoln’s call to arms; among them was Thomas Taylor. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, Taylor and the other Georgetown volunteers, now numbering just over one hundred men, marched out of town

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<sup>22</sup> According to the 1860 census, Thomas Taylor, age 23, had accumulated a personal estate worth \$700, at a time when the typical wage laborer in Ohio made \$11 a month, on average.

<sup>23</sup> Netta (White) Taylor’s father had been a member of the state legislature; her older brothers, Chilton and Carr, were also leaders of Georgetown society. Chilton White had been a state senator and, at the time of the Civil War was a Democratic representative in the United States House of Representatives. Carr White was a well-respected physician.

toward Cincinnati to join the Twelfth Ohio and begin serving a three-month enlistment. With that initial enlistment the fortunes of the young Taylor family would change forever.

For Thomas and Netta, as for the thousands of families whose loved ones enlisted in the army during the Civil War, this would be the first time many of their husbands and sons would be miles away from home for an extended period of time. For those left behind, as well as those in the service, much time and effort was placed in trying to keep family ties strong in their absence. The Civil War generation was extremely literate and relied heavily upon letters to stay connected to loved ones, often referring to the arrival of a letter as a “visit” from the absent family member; Thomas and Netta Taylor were no different.

Several hundred Civil War-era letters from the Taylors survived, which attest to the importance that both placed on receiving news of the other. Netta wrote at least - “twice a week” - for most of the war, updating her husband on family news, community news, and her own desire to see him return safely home.<sup>24</sup> It has been argued that letters between a husband and wife during the Civil War also represented a - “moral dilemma” – to find ways to re-create a family support system while the two were separated.<sup>25</sup> Those articulating this argument describe three major techniques used by Northern women to help re-create this support network for their soldiers. The first, and most common, activity was to send food and medical supplies to the soldiers at the front. Such articles “embodied the ideals of family life and became tangible links to the soldiers’

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<sup>24</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 February 1862.

<sup>25</sup> Patricia Richard, *Busy Hands: Images of the Family in the Northern Civil War Effort*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003). 76.

loved ones back home.” The second strategy was to send personal items such as photos, favorite foods, and locks of hair to family members serving in the military, “which reified a wife’s love for her husband and evoked a deeper level of connectedness between home and camp.”<sup>26</sup> The final technique was simply to keep up a regular correspondence with family members at the front. That correspondence maintained and strengthened the link between the military front and the home front; through such correspondence, soldiers were often offered encouragement and moral warnings to remember their duties to their family, their country, and their God. The communications between Netta and Tom Taylor followed this general pattern, especially in the early days of the war.

Netta’s letters often contained small articles that she felt her husband needed or would find interesting. She often sent stamps and paper to facilitate Thomas’s letter writing. Items frequently included items newspaper clippings on the local political situation and other news that she felt he would find interesting, as well as information on court cases and how those in the area viewed the conduct of the war. She also sent him pictures of herself and the children, writing that, since they were unable to see each other in person, exchanging their “shadows, would be very acceptable,” because after Netta received his photograph in the mail she “felt almost like I had had a visit from you.”<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the photographs, Netta also used her letters that first year of the war as a way to link her husband to the family’s daily life at home. She

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<sup>26</sup> Richard, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 28 March 1862, OHS.

especially tried to keep him connected to their children, Miles and Thomas. Based on her writings, Netta wrestled with being a single parent, and many of her comments to her husband seem calculated to gain not only his sympathy but also a promise that he would leave the service and return to his family, where she believed he belonged. She felt her “inability to raise your sons and educate them without your kind aid,” and begged him to be careful and to return home quickly.<sup>28</sup> She also relayed the children’s illnesses and accomplishments, and stated that, if he did not return home soon, his children would not recognize him. Netta reminded him of the children’s birthdays and shared her sadness that the boys, especially Tommie (sic), “knows so little of his Pa...if you could only come home, he would soon learn to love you.” She wondered when the “dear little creature...will be permitted to see and know his Papa.”<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the first years of the war Netta also struggled with extreme loneliness in her husband’s absence. Nearly every letter detailed how lonely she was and how much she wished he would leave the service, because if anything were to happen to him she did not know how she would “survive the shock.”<sup>30</sup> She worried that they would never again “be permitted to enjoy each other’s society...God knows I hope we may but there are a great many chances against us.”<sup>31</sup> Her loneliness was a theme she often returned to in her letters, writing less than a month later that she was “entirely alone (with the exception of the

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<sup>28</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 20 October 1861, OHS.

<sup>29</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor. 21 and 25 September 1862, OHS.

<sup>30</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 29 May 1861. OHS.

<sup>31</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 14 September 1861, OHS.

babe in the cradle), and I am very sad and lonely, nay almost miserable...I do wish my dear that you would resign and come home.”<sup>32</sup>

Her feelings of loneliness and abandonment increased when rumors reached Georgetown that Thomas had married a Southern woman, that he was not going to return to Ohio, and that she (Netta) had gone insane from the news. The rumor was believable enough to many of the townspeople, so much so that they began asking Netta’s brother whether the story was true. Writing to her husband about her embarrassment, she stated, “I have never doubted your constancy one moment since I have been your wife, and I never shall. Let people say what they please.”<sup>33</sup> Her faith in her husband was tested a few months later when, upset over not having received any letters from Netta, Thomas lashed out, accusing her of neglecting her wifely duties and warning her that there were “other bright eyes, dimpled cheeks, and pouting lips” that would be willing to take her place.<sup>34</sup> She responded in anger, writing him that, in his letter of January 28<sup>th</sup> he had accused her of “neglect, indifference, [and] inattention to your comforts and wants” and asked him, “Why are you so ready to distrust me?...You have fallen into the same snare of which you warned me when you left home and to think you mistrue if I did not get letters from you frequently.” She also stated that she could prove that she had written him, since the woman renting rooms from her knew that she wrote “twice a week...and if you have not received them the God in Heaven only knows where they have gone. I often think of the way you are situated...and for that reason I have written often...and every night ere I

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<sup>32</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 20 October 1861, OHS.

<sup>33</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 14 October 1861, OHS.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Taylor to Netta Taylor, 28 January 1862, OHS.

close my eyes in sleep do I pray for you, that God may watch over you and protect and shield you from every temptation.”<sup>35</sup> Deeply hurt, she closed her letter by stating that she hoped that, after he had read it he would “think better of your little wife who has always endeared to do her duty in every respect.”<sup>36</sup>

After having received several of Netta’s letters, Thomas made an attempt at an apology and an explanation for his words, writing on Valentine’s Day, 1862, that;

The expression ‘pouting lips’ etc. do not apply to you but to myself – I say I meant that possibly such graces etc. might provoke me to a breach of vows and entice me terminally from my fidelity to you if you did not stretch forth a hand to save. I have always had the most unblemished confidence in you and your acts I have naught of jealousy in my composition and if I had there is not now, nor had there been anything in your conduct or character to excite it – I wish to place myself right in the event anything should occur.<sup>37</sup>

Netta seemed content with Thomas’s explanation, and things soon returned to normal between the two. However, a recurring theme in their letters throughout the remainder of the war was the belief that when letters did not arrive regularly, one was being “neglectful” and that the other had “ceased writing for a time” in order to “punish” the other.<sup>38</sup>

Thomas Taylor seemed to be well on his way to his goal of military glory when he was elected First Lieutenant of the regiment. However, his dreams of rising through the ranks were on the verge of derailing when the regiment was informed that it would be reorganized as a three-year regiment. The original

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<sup>35</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 February 1862, OHS.

<sup>36</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 February 1862, OHS.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Taylor to Netta Taylor, 14 February 1862. OHS.

<sup>38</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 May 1862. OHS.

three-month volunteers were given the opportunity to re-enlist or leave at the end of their original terms of service. Nearly all of the original Georgetown recruits decided to leave; Thomas Taylor remained. Realizing it would be difficult to start over as an enlisted man in the Twelfth, Taylor transferred at the end of his enlistment to the Forty-Seventh Ohio Infantry. Businessman Charles F. Wilstach organized the Forty-Seventh Ohio and was facing a manpower shortage. If Thomas Taylor could raise a company of men, he would be made a captain in the regiment. Recruiting men to serve in the Union Army was a challenge in the border region of southwestern Ohio. While many did rush to enlist following Ft. Sumter, once those thirty-day enlistments expired, it was a struggle to fill the ranks again.

In spite of the huge undertaking in trying to recruit men and with the promise of a captaincy, Taylor began a recruiting campaign throughout Georgetown and surrounding Brown County. Taylor had been popular before the war and, with his link to the prominent White family, his recruiting efforts seemed successful; he obtained the promises of over eighty men to join him in the regiment. However, in an event that would turn him against Georgetown forever, he went on July 27, 1861, to gather the men to march to Camp Clay, and only twenty-six men marched out of town with him. Making matters worse Netta had accompanied him in order to witness his triumph at the head of a company of recruits. Instead, she witnessed the townspeople of Georgetown as



they “laughed and jeered” and heaped abuse upon Taylor and his “company” of recruits – a humiliation he never forgot.<sup>39</sup>

It is unclear exactly what happened between Thomas Taylor and his recruits. One theory seems to be that, when approached by Taylor, many men, were persuaded by his rhetoric in the moment; however, once they had time to think their commitment over, they decided against military service. Many recruiters in the region reported problems in getting men to enlist since many feared that they would be sent to Virginia and into the heat of battle. Another possibility is that many of the leading citizens of the region sympathized with, if not actively supported, the South and used their powers of persuasion to counteract the promises made to Thomas Taylor. Whatever actually happened, the majority of Taylor’s “recruits” failed to report, and that seemed to destroy his hopes of obtaining a captaincy. They also exposed him, and by extension his family, to public humiliation at the hands of people who had been his friends and neighbors. Taylor never forgot the betrayal.

Netta Taylor tried to encourage her husband, pointing out that not everyone was pleased with the failure of his mission. She relayed a message from her sister-in-law Melita White to Thomas Taylor, that “if you haven’t any male friends in Georgetown you have plenty of female. She says she is proud to think she has one brother-in-law that is not a coward.”<sup>40</sup> While Thomas Taylor might have been comforted by her words, he no doubt would have been happier if one of his male friends or family members had offered their support instead.

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<sup>39</sup> Castel, *Tom Taylor’s Civil War*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 August 1861.

The event made such an impression on Taylor that, two years later, he was still hurt by the townspeople's reaction, stating that he would live anywhere other than Georgetown after the war because:

The citizens treated me so badly when I needed aid...all turned aside and gave themselves to a dastardly attempt to injure me, to crush me and oh, how they would have glorified had I yielded, succumbed to the pressure which was so overwhelming and so disastrous in its consequences – I felt ground under it and staggered but feared not to do my duty – I persevered – nothing daunted I went forward and I learn the community and an impartial tribunal to vindicate my character. The town of my adoption, the home of my wife and the birthplace of my children scorned me, yea spurned me from it...I cannot reconcile myself to return to it after my treatment – my friends, my relations and my enemies joined hands against me and after so much deception and treachery can I come back and again trust their false treacherous hearts and suffer myself again to be ensnared – No! No!<sup>41</sup>

Passions on both sides remained high and made it extremely difficult for friends and family who found themselves on different sides of the war to maintain their ties of friendship and community in the face of such divisions.

Thomas Taylor was not the only man who failed at recruiting in the border region. Other recruiters tried to form regiments in the area, but were met “with very poor recruitment,” “men in the area would rather go to Kentucky than Virginia – they are frightened about the hardships they have heard about Virginia and won't enlist.”<sup>42</sup> This was especially frustrating to those who had family members serving in the Union Army. When a year later, in 1862, recruiters still could not fill their ranks with men from the Georgetown area, Netta Taylor exploded in a letter to her husband saying, “It makes my blood boil to see and hear them, the office doors and corners are crowded with healthy, able

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<sup>41</sup> Thomas Taylor to Netta Taylor, 30 April 1863, OHS.

<sup>42</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 14 September 1861 20 October 1861, OHS.

bodied men discussing politics and [illegible] their country the last thought of. They crack jokes and laugh as loudly as though all was 'gay as marriage bells' but we do not feel thus who have sacrificed so much."<sup>43</sup> Taylor agreed with her sister-in-law, Melita White, who argued that "if she had the rule of things, she would put some of these brave home cowards where the Secesh would get them right soon, for he will get them sometime and the sooner the better."<sup>44</sup> She also felt the frustration of the recruiters who found that "all wish the government preserved, but not at the risk of their lives."<sup>45</sup>

Adding to the tension between Union and Southern supporters was a situation unique to the border region during the war – the fear of a Confederate invasion of Southern Ohio in order to disrupt commerce and harass the Union Army and its supporters. For the women in the community, especially those whose male family members were off to war, these tensions were especially frightening, as they struggled not only to protect their families and possessions, but also to maintain some semblance of a normal life. Netta Taylor found herself in a location where she was able to observe the community divisions over border issues, and, in spite of her best efforts, she was not completely successful in keeping those issues from impacting her immediate family and their sense of security within the community.

The first months following the surrender of Fort Sumter were especially tense along the border between North and South. As states sided with either the

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<sup>43</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 29 May 1862, OHS.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Melita White was the wife of Netta's brother Carr White. "Secesh" was a derogatory slang term for "secessionist."

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Union or the Confederacy, those who found themselves located on the border of an enemy state were deeply concerned for their safety and that of their property. This was especially true for those living on the Ohio-Kentucky border when it appeared to many that Kentucky would side with the newly formed Confederacy. Netta relayed this sense of uneasiness to her husband telling him about the “great excitement” that was going through the surrounding communities and the fear that “if Kentucky goes out of the Union, they [surrounding towns, and the citizens of Ripley were especially concerned] will be attacked.”<sup>46</sup> She also relayed that it was not just the white residents who were concerned, but that “the Negroes are very much alarmed” about the situation along the border.<sup>47</sup>

African Americans along the Ohio border found themselves in an uncertain situation after the outbreak of the war. The Cincinnati–Ripley–Georgetown region had a fairly large African American population compared to the rest of Ohio. Both free African Americans and runaway slaves came to the area to gain employment along the docks and in other manual labor jobs.<sup>48</sup> Cincinnati was seen as a symbol of freedom for runaways crossing the Ohio River, both Ripley and Georgetown were stops on the Underground Railroad and had a small, but vocal, abolitionist presence. However, the Georgetown vicinity was not as welcoming to runaways and free African Americans as one would expect, considering the abolitionist influence. African-Americans clashed with Irish and other white laborers in Cincinnati over work on the docks and in

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<sup>46</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 5 May 1861. OHS.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> According to the 1850 Census, Pleasant Township, of which Georgetown was the county seat, had a free population of 2,074. Of that number 39 males and 43 females were African American, those for whom occupations are listed were either laborers or domestics.

other industries.<sup>49</sup> With the outbreak of war, many African Americans, both those born free and runaway slaves, lived in fear of Confederate raiding parties crossing the Ohio border and stealing them South to be sold into slavery.

Georgetown appeared to escape much of the racial violence that plagued Cincinnati. This is not to say that there were not racial tensions within the community. For example, Netta commented on the murder of a white man by a “group of Negroes.” However, she remarked that the white man had had a reputation for cheating African Americans and implied that the man got what he deserved.

In spite of anecdotal evidence, the African American community in Georgetown remained relatively unknown. The majority of African Americans worked as manual laborers. Netta hired an African American farm hand to help with farm labor in her husband’s absence. She also mentioned that her mother hired an African American man to fix a lock. Thomas retained an African-American manservant to accompany him to war, and her brother Carr employed an African-American woman as a domestic servant. It is clear that the African American community filled the vital role of day laborer in Georgetown throughout the war.

The presence of African American laborers in Georgetown should not be taken as a sign of acceptance by the townspeople. The Democratic Party, to

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<sup>49</sup> The Irish and other poor whites deeply resented the arrival of African-Americans in the area and viewed them as competition for jobs. The white laborers were also enraged by the fact that the former slaves would work for considerably lower wages than white laborers would. The tensions between the two groups escalated into race riots in the early 1860s. See also, J. Matthew Gallman. *The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front*. (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1994). Charles Thomas Hickok, *The Negro in Ohio, 1802-1870*. (New York: AMS Press, 1975), (reprint 1896).

which the majority of Georgetown men belonged, strongly opposed African American labor. The increase in African-Americans seeking employment in the border region of the North gave credence to the fears of white workers for the security of their jobs. The Democratic press and politicians of the region fanned the flames of resentment among workers as they predicted that thousands of former slaves would flood the region, driving down wages, and forcing native workers out of their jobs and into abject poverty.<sup>50</sup>

African-Americans were viewed in Georgetown, as in most other Northern cities and towns, as second-class citizens who were considered both a threat and a necessary source of manual labor. In spite of their secondary status, other sources, including letters and county histories, seemed to indicate that the African American community grew throughout the war years and focused on building their own community institutions. Brown County had several African American schools. and a survey taken in the post- war years showed that Georgetown boasted five churches, three of which had African American congregations.

The African American community was not alone in fearing that Confederate raiders might cross the Ohio border; white citizens also lived in fear of border raiders, although for different reasons than their African American neighbors. Rumors of a Confederate invasion spread wildly along the Ohio border. The threat led to the creation of home guard patrols made up of

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<sup>50</sup> See also, Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), Leon Litwack. *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961). James McPherson,. *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted During the War for the Union*. (reprint New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

townspeople, and Georgetown was no exception. Netta's brother, Chilton White, served as an officer in one of the border patrols. She saw that as a good way to offset his Copperhead beliefs and said that it would "speak well for him" among the townspeople.<sup>51</sup> To counter the perceived threat, the towns of Ripley and Georgetown "raised two companies here, for border protection," yet, the communities were left undefended when the guards were called out. Taylor commented on the "military air" of the town and the fact that "all business suspended, [and] all that are able to carry a gun have been drilling." Women were also involved in preparing "five days rations" for the men to take on the march to Ripley.<sup>52</sup> When the home guard marched out of town, there were barely "twenty men left in town," and, in spite of the pride she felt in her brother's participation, there was also a sense of uneasiness at having most of the white, male population march out of town.

For Taylor, the departure of the home guard brought home the reality of war to her and the town. She realized that the war she read about in her husband's letters and in the newspapers was not "away, off in some other country, but now feel that it is almost at my own door."<sup>53</sup> Rumors were flying that the Confederates had taken Maysville, just over twenty miles away, "without firing a gun" and they were only "waiting for reinforcements [and] would then take Aberdeen, Ripley, and all the little towns between here and the city".<sup>54</sup> With all of the male members of her family gone, Netta faced the decision to either

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<sup>51</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 17 September 1862.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 13 September 1862.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

take her children and flee, or to remain in Georgetown. Even though many of her friends “advised [her] to take my children...to my sister-in-law and stay until things are settled on the border,” she remained undecided. She wrote of the situation to her husband arguing that “were it not for my little children I would not think of leaving my home to their mercy but would stay right here.”<sup>55</sup>

In spite of the fact that she had “no one to call on for protection but my Heavenly Father,” Netta wrote “I feel strong, am not excited and ready to faint at every report and believe me I shall cling to my children and do the best in my power to have them safe”.<sup>56</sup> She reassured her husband, and perhaps herself, that she was not a flighty woman and was prepared to weigh the situation and do what was best for the safety of her children and her property. She also stated that she was unsure about joining the refugees she saw passing through the town in flight. “Kentucky and Aberdeen is [are] almost vacated by women and children,” she wrote and thought that it was possibly safer to remain at home instead of setting out in the unknown with two small children.<sup>57</sup>

Adding to the climate of fear were reports of guerrilla activity in the region. Taylor recorded the death of a townsman she identified as Mr. S. Mr. S. was “shot by a guerrilla band near B while defending the wagon trains”. He “suffered intensely” for “about thirty-six hours” and “was conscious till death claimed him”. What made his death hard to bear for his family and friends was that “they [the guerrillas] shot him after he surrendered everything, his horse, money, watch, &c. but he killed two of them before he surrendered [and] I suppose if he had not

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 13 September 1862.



resisted they would have been more likely to have spared his life". Mr. S. was buried behind enemy lines and would "be brought home as soon as our forces get possession of the road".<sup>58</sup> While accounts of atrocities by guerrilla bands passed from neighbor to neighbor and helped to create a climate of fear within the community, the majority of these accounts were either false or greatly exaggerated. Of course, the people living on the border were unaware that the reports were false, and the stories contributed to the uneasiness of those living in the region. In spite of their location and the division among the townspeople between Confederate and Union supporters, the situation along the Ohio border never deteriorated into the violence that plagued Missouri and other border regions.<sup>59</sup> Several explanations have been posed as to why that did not happen.

One argument is that many "mid-nineteenth-century Americans felt their deepest ties with the local community rather than with the nation or even the state."<sup>60</sup> As a result, even with the differences in politics, it was more important to preserve the local community. Another argument states that Ohioans identified themselves as Westerners, rather than Northerners or Southerners, and, however much they might have identified with either the Northern or Confederate war efforts, their Western identity was supreme. As such, these Westerners "looked for common ground in Western solutions, such as the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of guerrilla violence that erupted in other regions of the country during the Civil War see: Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Edward Leslie, *The Devil Knows How to Ride: The True Story of William Clarke Quantrill and his Confederate Raiders*. (New York: Random House, 1996) and Daniel Sutherland, ed. *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*. (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1999).

<sup>60</sup> Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War*, 27.

Crittenden Compromise". In spite of the very vocal "pro-Southern rhetoric...[the] decades and generations in the Mid-west had not entirely eradicated...ties to the south but they were no longer southerners".<sup>61</sup>

In spite of this atmosphere of fear and division, there was support for the Union in Georgetown - although Union loyalists were not always as vocal as their Southern counterparts. The most basic level of Union support in Georgetown was made up of families who had members in the United States Army, as did Netta Taylor. That tier of support was primarily made up of women, children, and men too old for military service. Their dedication was narrowly focused on their family members in the Union Army and did not necessarily translate into support for the Union Army as a whole. It was through letters to their service members that these Union men and women showed their allegiance on a personal level.

Those letters offered personal backing for their men at the front and tended to focus more on personal pride in their soldier rather than any real attention to the larger military picture. Netta Taylor's letters of support to her husband fell into the same category. She spoke of wanting to see him in his new uniform, and feeling great pride upon hearing of his promotion. She also encouraged him by relaying information she had heard about him from others. In one example, she shares that Taylor's commanding officer Major Perry had informed her brother Carr that he believed Taylor was the "bravest man in western Virginia...and that he would rather lost any ten men in his regiment than

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<sup>61</sup> Etchenson, 139.

you [Taylor]. I assure you I felt flattered.”<sup>62</sup> In addition to feeling pride at their soldiers’ accomplishments, family members basked in their reflected glory by sharing the exploits of their soldiers they passed letters among family and friends, and published their soldiers’ letters from the front in local newspapers.

Throughout the early days of the war, letters to soldiers at the front reflected the belief that the war would not last long and that it was, in some ways, a grand adventure. The Taylors were no different in this regard; as late as January 1862, Netta relayed a message to her husband from her young son, Miles, who wanted to “tell papa that Santa Claus brought him a little gun to shoot Secesh with”.<sup>63</sup> As the months went by, however, the tone of letters to the front changed. While still professing pride in his service, Taylor also began showing impatience with the war, writing her husband, “I am getting out of patience with this war, and, if I were a man I would lay down my arms and go home. There is no justice in it from beginning and it is ruining all our best men”.<sup>64</sup> She also began advocating for an end to her husband’s service, urging him to “come home my dear, you have now been out a year and done good service, if you have not been in battle, it is no fault of yours.”<sup>65</sup> Those pleas to leave the service could frequently be traced to news of friends who were killed in battle. Netta stated that the war was being brought home to those left behind and begged her husband to understand why she was so uncomfortable with his military service.

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<sup>62</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 5 January 1862. OHS.

<sup>63</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 5 January 1862. OHS.

<sup>64</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 February 1862. OHS.

<sup>65</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 17 April 1862. OHS.

She also spoke out against the war's shift towards the abolition of slavery, which brought her into conflict with her husband's changing beliefs. She argued, "From the turn affaires have taken, if I were a soldier, I would feel very much like laying down my arms and returning home. I would never fight for the equality of the Negro. It would be a glorious thing for the country if the army would turn on the abolitionists and put them out of the way first."<sup>66</sup> Recent scholarship suggests that abolition was more important to the average soldier than has been previously acknowledged.<sup>67</sup> It has been well documented that many Union soldiers came to support abolition - not out of a sense of equality with African-Americans but as a military strategy aimed at ending the war more swiftly. There is no evidence in her wartime letters that Netta ever supported abolition however, the same cannot be said for Thomas. As the war continued, he distanced himself from his prewar beliefs and aligned himself with the Republican Party and their war aims, including the end of slavery, although he was never outspoken in his support for abolition.

With Thomas Taylor's departure for the army, Netta found herself in the unfamiliar position of not only taking care of the household chores but also running the farm, contracting building projects, hiring labor, and managing her husband's accounts with minimal assistance from family members. Like many people along the border, Netta's family was divided over the issue of the war. Her brother, Carr White, had also joined the Union Army and was elected

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<sup>66</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 1 June 1862. OHS.

<sup>67</sup> The idea that the abolition of slavery was more important to the common soldier of the Union Army than has been previously believed is argued in: Chandra Manning. *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery and the Civil War*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

Lieutenant Colonel of the Twelfth Ohio Volunteer Infantry (OVI). However, the majority of her other family members, were Copperheads, or Southern sympathizers. Feeling isolated from the traditional family support network, Netta found herself struggling to pay bills, collect debts, oversee hired help, and run the family farm and her husband's business accounts, as well as deal with the additional stress of undertaking such new roles.

Tom Taylor, like thousands of other husbands who went to war, attempted to minimize his wife's financial dealings while he was gone. It is unclear whether Thomas was concerned that his wife, who was unfamiliar with business dealings, would be cheated or cause damage to the family finances or if he was simply trying to continue his role as male provider and protector by appointing a surrogate. Whatever his reasons, he arranged for "Mr. Thomas" and George Marshall to dispense his pay to Netta. This dependence upon others who were not members of her immediate family made Netta uncomfortable.<sup>68</sup> She wrote to Thomas, describing her embarrassment; "It is very humiliating to me to be running to the office for money, and I cannot do it. Thomas does not seem disposed to give me any. Mrs. Thomas is very much distressed about my running to him for money [and] says it takes all he can collect to keep me, and I have never received a cent from him since you have been in the service but ten dollars."<sup>69</sup> In an attempt to alleviate his wife's embarrassment, Taylor arranged for her to present a note to Marshall, who was also her brother-in-law, asking

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<sup>68</sup> Taylor never identifies "Mr. Thomas" by his full name but a survey of the 1860 census suggests that it was Mr. David Thomas, a 34-year-old Georgetown lawyer. George Marshall was John G. Marshall of Georgetown. Marshall was married to Netta's sister, Ann.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Taylor Papers, MSS 7: OHS: Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 5 January 1862.

him to set up an account for her to draw money without having to go through Thomas.

Unfortunately, that proved to be a mistake, as Netta discovered when she attempted to access the money. When Netta attempted to draw against the account, she found that there was no money from which to draw and that, in fact, “Mr. Taylor owed a note of twenty-five dollars.”<sup>70</sup> Unsure of what to do, she wrote to her husband. Ten days later, she was still trying to access the money with no success, complaining, “I have not received a cent from them, and they are the last men I would ask a favor.”<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately, Thomas had chosen poorly in providing a protector for his wife. In spite of the family connection, Marshall did not live up to his role as Netta’s protector. The disappointment in Marshall’s failure was clearly evident when Netta informed her husband, “To our sorrow and regret, I have since learned that I was deceived by Marshall, and, my darling, [he] deceived, deceived you.” The note had never been presented, and, even though she did not know “what prompted him to act thus,” he [Marshall] was now a “ruined man [and] ought not to be held accountable for what he does.” It was not due to his treatment of his sister-in-law that he was “ruined;” instead, to the shame of the family, Marshall had been seen “frequently...reeling from one side of the pavement to the other” Netta begged Thomas to not “write or say anything to Marshall about it. It would make him angry, and he has no prudence, it might cause trouble in the family, and, for my dear sister’s sake, say nothing. Poor

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<sup>70</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 February 1862. OHS.

<sup>71</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 12 February 1862. OHS.

woman, I fear she is not long for this world she is passing away slowly, but surely.”<sup>72</sup>

Taylor had relied on the nineteenth-century societal belief that men were the protectors of female purity, including sheltering them from the impure world of business, and the strength of family ties to protect his wife and children while he was away. Custom, as well as law in many areas, prevented women from contracting business arrangements, signing contracts, and disposing of property and goods.<sup>73</sup> Also preventing women from stepping into the role of surrogate provider was the fact that many women were unfamiliar with the financial situations of their own families. According to nineteenth-century proscriptive writings, male family members were not only the financial providers but also the ones who paid debts, sold goods, and handled the day-to-day financial business of the family. While the strict division of business from domestic concerns might have been the ideal, it was not always the reality.

For many women from the lower and middle classes, that strict and gendered division of knowledge was a foreign ideal. While these women may not have known every aspect of their families financial situations, neither were

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<sup>72</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 9 March 1862. Netta’s sister was suffering from consumption and she would pass away before the end of the war. Based on information in Netta’s letters it appears that Mr. Marshall had a problem with alcohol and “melancholy” or depression in today’s medical terminology.

<sup>73</sup> For more on the legal status of women see: Victoria Bynum. *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Cornelia Hughes Dayton. *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Susanna Delfino, and Michele Gillespie, eds., *Neither Lady Nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Sally McMillen. *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Jane Pease, and William Pease. *Ladies, Women, and Wenches: Choice and Constraint in Antebellum Charleston and Boston*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990). and Kirsten Wood. *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution Through the Civil War*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

they completely ignorant about such matters. These women were often the chief consumers of their families, purchasing many of the goods needed for day-to-day life. Many of those in rural settings also produced goods, such as butter and eggs, for sale or trade within their communities, so they were active participants in the local economy. That is not to say that this limited experience within the local economy gave women the confidence or the knowledge needed to successfully navigate their family's financial dealings with little effort or concern, but neither were they as completely unprepared as has been suggested.<sup>74</sup>

With husbands, fathers, and brothers going off to war, women, both Northern and Southern, had to step into the role of running all aspects of the household; this included financial aspects as well as domestic. Some also needed to find ways to supplement the family's income. As a result, some young women joined the workforce by taking jobs in war-related industries. Some worked in munitions factories and sewed uniforms for the soldiers.<sup>75</sup> Many more women found themselves running the family farms and/or businesses with little or no experience in such matters and little aid from other family members. In an effort to save their female dependents from facing such challenges, men like Thomas Taylor set up male surrogates to handle the financial aspects of their enlistments; however, many found that this system did not always guarantee a

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<sup>74</sup> Information on the changing roles of women during the war can be found in: Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemy*; Joan Cashin, ed., *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). Drew Gilpin Faust. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Suzanne Lebsock. *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), and George Rabel. *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*. (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1989).

<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of women's employment, the types of jobs available and the average wages for each, during the mid-1800s see Virginia Penny. *The Employments of Women: A Encyclopedia of Woman's Work*. (Boston: Walker, Wise & Company, 1863).



happy outcome for their families.<sup>76</sup> Having failed in providing a financial protector for his family's interests, Tom turned over the management of their financial affairs to Netta, which would create a new set of challenges for the couple.

In some ways, Netta was a product of the ideal of domesticity that was prevalent throughout the country during the pre-war years. According to the ideal, women were concerned only with domestic matters and were submissive to the will of their husbands and fathers. That ideal proved to be problematic as more and more women, out of necessity stepped into the public sphere during the war.<sup>77</sup> In addition to the belief that women should not participate in business affairs, the reality was that, in most cases, women had little knowledge concerning their husbands' business dealings or even of the household finances. This lack of knowledge made it difficult for women to confidently step into the role of family financier.

Their uncertainty made women easy targets for unscrupulous businessmen and neighbors. Following Taylor's enlistment, Netta was "harassed by people presenting their bills; all want their money, and I cannot meet half of their demands".<sup>78</sup> Adding to her sense of being overwhelmed by creditors, was her lack of knowledge concerning the family finances. When a Mr. Dunham presented her with a "note against you for twenty-odd dollars" and

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<sup>76</sup> For a more complete discussion on female civilian economic trials, see "Cair, Anxiety, & Tryals," Life in the Wartime Union" in Scott Nelson and Carol Sheriff, *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America's Civil War*. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007);also, Silber, *Daughters of the Union*.

<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of the ideals of domesticity see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *Journal of American History*, 75,(1988), 9-39.

<sup>78</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 October 1863.

“wished” her to pay him she was unsure what to do and frantically wrote her husband asking, “Is it correct and shall I pay it? I cannot imagine what we owe him so much for”.<sup>79</sup> This lack of knowledge concerning the basics of the family’s finances greatly hampered many women’s attempts to carry on in their husband’s absences. Further complicating matters, many husbands, despite being unable to carry on the family business from the front lines, still attempted to dictate to their wives what should be done, even though their instructions did not make sense in light of the reality of the families situations. Their attempts at trying to maintain patriarchal control over their families were often met with frustration on the part of the wives left behind. Netta complained to her husband that “your letter containing advice and directions about the place would do very well for a person that had a plantation of Negroes but to one situated as I am it is rather perplexing”.<sup>80</sup> That frustration mounted as the women gained experience and confidence in running the family farms without assistance from their husbands. Women also began to feel a sense of ownership toward not only the land but the financial accounts of the family as well. That shift can clearly be seen in letters written over the course of the war, as accounts to their husbands in the field began to shift from discussions of how “your business is settled” to answering questions concerning the dispersal of “our finances,” to finally coming out and telling the absent husband how things should be done, as

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<sup>79</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 May 1862. OHS. Mr. Dunham possibly refers to Gideon Dunham a hardware merchant in Georgetown.

<sup>80</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 27 February 1865. OHS.

when Netta wrote Thomas saying that “I would not buy [the fence rails there] if I were you...you can get posts and railings cheaper here.”<sup>81</sup>

In spite of the growing confidence women like Netta felt in caring for the family farm, they also realized that they were in a vulnerable position when it came to hiring out work and purchasing supplies. The Taylors were better situated than many young couples. Throughout the war, Netta had hired a teenaged girl to help her with many of the household chores, such as cooking, washing, child care, and cleaning, which gave Netta more time to oversee the running of the farm.<sup>82</sup> Netta realized her limitations in trying to complete the farm work herself. Throughout the early years of the war, labor was at a premium. When it came time for her to get “my wood in and be sawed,” her fence fixed, and fields cut, it was difficult to find men to hire.<sup>83</sup> In addition to the shortage of labor, she faced the additional burden of being the wife of a Union Army officer in a Southern-sympathizing region, where she quickly discovered that “soldiers’ wives are always the last served”.<sup>84</sup>

Many times, Netta felt taken advantage of in her dealings with neighbors and family members. When Mr. Thomas sent her word that he was going to butcher his hogs, he offered her one, if she “would give him more than the market price”. She indignantly wrote her husband that “he [Mr. Thomas] thought

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<sup>81</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 14 February 1864. 14 May 1865 and 26 July 1865. OHS.

<sup>82</sup> Based on Netta’s letters she employed several hired girls over the course of the war. A girl named Tina was with the family the longest and treated almost as a family member. Tina had access to education and religious services, and was allowed freedom to visit friends and family members. Thomas Taylor also wrote personal letters to Tina and sent her small gifts, as he did for his two boys. While the Taylors did occasionally hire African-American laborers to do heavy farm work, and Netta’s brother Carr employed a live-in African-American woman as a domestic, evidence suggests that their hired girls were white and from local families.

<sup>83</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 9 October 1861. OHS.

<sup>84</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 12 November 1863. OHS.

that [I] would pay him any price but was very much mistaken.”<sup>85</sup> She had contracted with her brother-in-law, George Marshall, to have food provided for her cow, but, when it came time for him to deliver, he informed her that she had better sell her animals. “That food was so high it would not pay...to keep [the cow]”. Alarmed at what she called the “height of impudence,” she scrambled to find an alternative source of food. She complained to her husband that she supposed it was her brother Chilton who had soured Marshall on their deal, by spreading stories around town that “he [Chilton] did not know what you [Thomas] were doing with your money; that you did not try to pay for your property.”<sup>86</sup> Relations between Netta and her brother Chilton and his wife Fanny became strained in the early years of the war. Chilton was a Copperhead, and Fanny was a “real Southern Sympathizer, and you can make nothing else out of her. She is down on our army from first to last,” which made relations between the two women strained.<sup>87</sup>

More important to Netta’s financial well-being was her relationship with her brother Chilton. Chilton was the executor of Elmwood Cottage and rented it to Thomas and Netta Taylor. The property had long been a source of friction within the White family. Elmwood Cottage was originally owned by Netta’s father, John D. White. Upon his death in 1855, the property was left to his wife Margaret, for use “during her natural lifetime.” When she died, the property was

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<sup>85</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 5 December 1861. “Mr. Thomas” possibly refers to George Thomas an area farmer.

<sup>86</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, November 25, 1863. Thomas and Netta rented Elmwood Cottage Farm from her brother Chilton White. The agreement over the rent and rent payments seemed to be a source of tension between the two families. The tension was made worse by the families being divided over the war and the families would break off relations through the course of the war.

<sup>87</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 September 1862.

to be sold as the executors “thought fit,” and the profits were to be divided among his heirs.<sup>88</sup> This arrangement lasted until June 1860 when Margaret White brought suit against her son Carr in order to force the sale of Elmwood Cottage. Mrs. White won her petition when Carr failed to appear before the court. John G. Marshall and Chilton A. White were appointed by the court to oversee the sale of Elmwood Cottage once they provided a \$5,000 bond for the property.<sup>89</sup> That following December an agreement was entered into between Chilton White, John Marshall, and Thomas Taylor. According to the agreement, the Taylors would purchase Elmwood Cottage for the sum of \$1,500, and once the property was paid in full, the deed would be drawn up, giving sole ownership of the property to Netta.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the significant discount the Taylors appeared to have received on the property, it seems that they were not always on time with their payments. This contributed to the bad feelings between the families. In September of 1862, Netta wrote to her husband about the money they owed to her brother on the property, explaining that she had “not paid anything on the property,” as he had requested, until he sent her his pay from August. Because she had not received any money she “suppose[d] the paymaster did not come round as expected.” Instead, she would “see Chilt...and pay what money I can”. She had also failed in collecting any money on debts owed to Thomas Taylor, explaining that “it is almost impossible to get money”.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Will of John D. White

<sup>89</sup> Case #1678, 16 June 1860, Brown County Common Pleas Court.

<sup>90</sup> Brown County Recorders Office, 3 April 1865. 306.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Disillusioned with what she felt was poor treatment by her family and friends, Netta felt extremely isolated from her community and traditional avenues of support and assistance. Netta poured out her frustrations in letters to her husband, the one person she felt offered her support, even though he was hundreds of miles away. She had always encouraged him to leave the military when his enlistment ended, earlier if possible, but during this time her letters took on a more fearful tone as she realized the difficulty of raising two young children without assistance should Thomas be killed. She increasingly turned to other community examples in an attempt to convince her husband to return home to aid the family. One such example was the Bartlett family. The father had been killed in the war, and Netta used the family as an example of what could happen to their family should Thomas not return. Netta wrote Thomas that, if Mrs. Bartlett “cannot procure a pension, she will surely want – she has five little children and expects soon to have another, no home and nothing to live on”. Unfortunately for Netta, her pleas fell on deaf ears.<sup>92</sup>

Adding to Netta’s fear that the war would destroy her family was an event which she considered a domestic calamity for her extended family. In 1862, Netta’s brother-in-law, George Marshall, had enlisted in the Union Army and had himself “a splendid regiment” that Netta hoped would be “the making of him”.<sup>93</sup> In spite of Marshall’s past history of alcohol problems and the fact that his wife did not support his military service, he seemed to have “succeeded beyond his expectations [and] that everywhere but at home he received praise

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<sup>92</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 20 March 1862.

<sup>93</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 September 1862. OHS.

and his efforts were appreciated,” except by his wife.<sup>94</sup> He complained to Netta that her sister had “never given him a smile or a word of cheer since he commenced raising his regiment.” His goal was to make his family proud, and, “if there is one spark of love or pride in Ann, [to] arouse it.” Netta felt sorry for Marshall when he told her that “if my wife would just pat me on the shoulder and give me a smile and a word of cheer, I would be the happiest man on earth.” In Netta’s eyes her sister had failed as a wife. She wrote Thomas that she “pitied” Marshall, because her sister “had not acted as she should.”<sup>95</sup>

Netta’s new-found understanding and hope for her brother-in-law’s future came to an abrupt end in October of 1862. That month, Marshall suddenly returned to Georgetown from the service. What happened is not exactly clear, but Marshall apparently had a relapse into drunkenness and was “delirious most of the time”. For safety reasons, Netta’s brother Chilton arranged to have “three or four men with him [Marshall] day and night, [as] he threatened to kill Ann and then himself.”<sup>96</sup> Netta placed some of the blame on her sister, saying that “she is so foolish about him, will not allow him crossed in anything and [would] not let his arms taken from him until day before yesterday. When Chilt told her that ...if she did not give her consent the men would not watch him for their lives were in danger.”<sup>97</sup> Her sister also allowed him to “have as much whiskey as he wanted, [and] he kept two bottles under his pillow.” Netta did not understand why her sister acted as she did when she knew “that it is whiskey that brought him to

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, undated letter c. October 1862. OHS.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

this, and that he will never be better while he swills it down by the glass.” Netta feared that Marshall was “gone, nothing will restore him; we can do nothing to save him.”<sup>98</sup> This domestic tragedy affected all areas of the household. Netta stated that,

Ann looks like a shadow, thin and pale, weak and nervous, can scarcely go about, and the babe is very much afflicted, has a gathering in the ear and a very sore neck. Oh I never saw such a distracted house; of all the afflictions we have had in our family, we have seen nothing compared to this. He was better yesterday I have not heard today; he says as soon as he gets better he is going to Columbus to be reinstated.<sup>99</sup>

By the end of October, Marshall was better, but was still “deranged at times.” He seemed to “feel the disgrace very deeply” Netta hoped that “it may be a lesson to him,” but she was afraid that, “as soon as he is able to get out he will begin to dissipate and we will have the same scene acted out” again.<sup>100</sup>

Possibly one of the reasons that Netta felt so strongly about the problems within her sister’s family was because she saw them as a warning; she may have recognized what could happen to her own family if both she and Thomas did not honor their obligations to each other. While Marshall had experienced problems in the past, Netta seems to have blamed his collapse on the combination of his military experience and her sister’s failure to be a dutiful wife. She implied that Ann had neither spoken out against Marshall’s use of alcohol, nor honored her marriage promises to be a dutiful wife and support her husband with love and understanding. Following the incident with the Marshall family, in Netta’s letters to Thomas, she increased her professions of love, and desire for him to follow

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 31 October 1862. OHS.



the Christian path. She also urged him to be wary of the dangers of alcohol and other “temptations” that could be found in Army camps. Thomas himself acknowledged her power to reach out and “save” him from such temptations, and he often mentioned that her letters were the lifeline tethering him to an honorable and useful life. Netta viewed the destruction of the Marshall family’s domestic happiness as a tragedy that she would do everything in her power to prevent in her own.

Netta’s letter of October 31, 1862, is the last surviving letter that she wrote in 1862. By the fall of 1862, Netta had been running the Taylor household by herself for a little over a year. In spite of a rocky start, especially in terms of financial matters, she had grown into her new responsibilities. She now operated as her husband’s power of attorney and made financial decisions with limited input from him. She contracted with hired hands, cared for her family, and attempted to care for her husband’s business affairs. However, in spite of her apparent success in most of her dealings, she never enjoyed or felt fully comfortable with her new-found independence. She would have preferred her husband to return home to care for the family’s business and financial matters and allow her to return to her domestic duties uninterrupted. She was also deeply unhappy with their domestic arrangement, closing her final surviving letter of 1862 by telling her husband that she was “so tired of living this way, so unhappy and discontented living without you, indeed at times I am perfectly miserable...oh

dread thought what would become of your little family were you to be taken away...think of what I have written and give me a hearing this once".<sup>101</sup>

Netta and Thomas were briefly reunited during the winter of 1862, as he served as a recruiting officer from October 1862 through January 1863. Netta and her oldest son, Miles, travelled to Thomas Taylor's camp in October of 1862, where they remained with him for several weeks. It was during this time that his appointment to become a recruiting officer took effect, and this arrangement allowed him to spend weeks at home with his family instead of at winter camp with his fellow soldiers. However, in 1863, after enjoying a brief respite from the war Netta's frustration would only deepen as Thomas Taylor returned to his regiment, and the war came to Georgetown.

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<sup>101</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 31 October 1862, OHS.

## CHAPTER 2

1863

“People here today begin to feel and know that there is a war-”  
Georgetown, 1863

The year 1863 was the highpoint of societal divisions over the war in Georgetown, Ohio. The townspeople discovered the consequences of their beliefs when Confederate General John Hunt Morgan’s raiders rode through Georgetown in mid-summer. Their loyalties were also tested during the contentious gubernatorial election of 1863 and the campaign for the presidential election of 1864 between the Unionists and Copperheads. On a more personal level, those conflicts tested the bonds of love, loyalty and honor among families divided by politics and the war.

For Netta Taylor, 1863 began as well as she could have hoped: after months apart, her family was reunited. Thomas Taylor was serving as an army recruiter and found himself able to spend weeks at a time with his family. When his regiment left in January to join General Ulysses S. Grant in the effort to take the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg, Taylor remained stationed in Cincinnati. This location allowed him to stay in close proximity to his family and also gave him the time he needed to lobby for a promotion in his quest to achieve military honors. Tom Taylor’s lobbying, and that of his many political and military

connections, resulted in Thomas' promotion to Major in the Forty-Seventh Ohio from Ohio Governor David Tod. Newly promoted, Taylor eagerly left Ohio in mid-June to take part in the final assault on Vicksburg. When he left Netta and his children on June 19, the community he left behind was even more conflicted over the war than it had been in 1861.

As the war dragged on, Georgetown and its citizens became more deeply divided about what constituted loyalty to the country. The division between being identified as a Union supporter or a "Butternut" separated friends, businessmen, and even family members, as people found themselves on opposing sides of the conflict. This separation led to tensions and feelings of isolation among those separated from their closest acquaintances.

The term "Copperhead" came into use early in the Civil War. The term was used as early as 1861 by Ohio Republicans, who talked about the anti-war faction of the Democratic Party as a poisonous Copperhead snake lying in wait to strike and kill the Union. Traditionally, the term "Copperhead" was used to describe Southern sympathizers during the Civil War and has implied that those labeled as such were traitors to the Union cause. The reality of those who considered themselves Copperheads was considerably more complex than the tradition has taken into account.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> The idea of "Copperheadism" has been challenged by historian Frank Clement who in his works, *Lincoln's Critics: The Copperheads in the North* and *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War* argues that the Copperhead movement was a "myth" and that the number of people claiming to be Copperheads was greatly inflated by the Republican party during the war. Clement claims that these Copperheads were never much of a threat to the Union war effort. Clement's views on the threat posed by Copperheads is refuted by historian James McPherson and more recently in Jennifer Weber's *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North*.

Scholarship shows that Copperheads were conservative, anti-war, not necessarily pro-Confederate, Democrats who advocated a narrow interpretation of the Constitution and an immediate end to the war. While a small minority of Copperheads considered themselves to be pro-Confederacy, most saw themselves as supporting the solution that they believed was the best for preserving the United States. Generally speaking, one can argue that the majority of those who considered themselves Copperheads had a strong concern for personal liberties; they believed that the Lincoln administration was disregarding the Constitution and causing irreparable harm to the nation. They supported slavery, blamed abolitionists for starting the war, and viewed the South as an innocent victim of abolitionist zeal. They also supported a plan to resurrect the Crittenden Compromise, a constitutional amendment to protect slavery where it existed. While they did not necessarily want the Confederacy to win, they definitely did not desire to see the nation permanently divided. Instead, they hoped for a return to the pre-war status of the nation. Copperheads did not include pacifists or those who objected to the war for religious reasons. Many Northerners sympathized with the Copperhead ideals throughout the early years of the war when the Union army suffered one defeat after another; however, by the midpoint of the war, when major victories started occurring for the Union, most of these Copperhead supporters fell away and joined in support of President Lincoln and the war effort.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Jennifer Weber. *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 6.

While “Copperhead” was the term of choice used by Republican politicians and newspapers to describe Southern sympathizers, ordinary citizens used the term “Butternut” instead. The use of “Butternut” predates the Civil War and originally referred to the lower region of the West: “the southern tier of Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio,” as well as “areas along the rivers or southern border of Iowa.”<sup>104</sup> The term “Butternut” referred to the fact that those regions were primarily settled by small farmers and laborers from the upper South, who were originally called Butternuts because of the dye used for their homemade clothing. Ohio, especially southwestern Ohio, had a relatively high concentration of Butternuts, nearly 135,000 Southern-born citizens, or roughly 6% of the state’s population.<sup>105</sup> This segment of the population was considered more likely to side with the South than their neighbors who had been born and raised in the North. During the Civil War, the term “Butternut” took on a different meaning, - that of a Southern sympathizer-, and was used interchangeably with the term “Copperhead”.

Georgetown, Ohio, was a heavily Butternut region and many of its citizens found themselves divided over the issue of war. Netta Taylor’s family was no exception. Taylor’s brother Chilton Allen White, had served as a Democratic member of the Ohio state legislature from 1859-1860 and was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1861, serving until 1865. Throughout the war Chilton White, his family, and Netta Taylor’s mother Margaret White, were all outspoken supporters of the Copperhead cause. Taylor’s other brother,

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*.

Carr B. White, sided with the Union and served as a Colonel in the Twelfth Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Taylor was caught between the two, and her situation was further complicated by the fact that her husband, a Democrat who owed much of his early political success to the support of Chilton White, enlisted in the Union Army and eventually switched his allegiance to the Republicans and President Lincoln. Netta Taylor found herself walking a delicate line between supporting her husband and maintaining a close relationship with her family members. Unfortunately, as she and many other families in the region would discover, such a relationship was almost impossible to maintain.

Tensions between Taylor and her family are obvious throughout her wartime letters, but it appears that the family did attempt to maintain civil relations during the early days of the war. However, as the war entered its second year, many of those tensions reached a breaking point. Her sister-in-law Fanny was, in Netta's words, "a real Southern Sympathizer, and you can make nothing else out of her. She is down on our army from first to last." As a result of Fanny's outspoken support of the South, Taylor wrote to her husband that they did "not get along very smoothly."<sup>106</sup> Fanny's husband, Chilton White, was also outspoken in his anti-war position. It was such a matter of discussion that when Chilton was delayed in his return from Washington D.C., family members joked that "maybe Old Abe lock[ed] him up while he is there". Fanny did not find the joke amusing, and, while she protested that "he [Lincoln] would not dare do that," she was "uneasy" until her husband finally returned to Georgetown.<sup>107</sup> Relations

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<sup>106</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, September 7, 1862, OHS.

<sup>107</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, July 2, 1863, OHS.

continued to deteriorate between Taylor and her family to such an extent that even tragedies which would have brought family members together before the war further strained and dissolved their family bonds.

One such tragedy was the death of one of Netta's immediate family members. According to nineteenth-century customs surrounding death and mourning, the loss of a beloved family member was a time to unite the family. If there were clear signs that a person did not have long to live, the family united so that comfort could be provided in his or her last moments and what historians have called "a good death" could be witnessed.<sup>108</sup> A "good death" was said to have occurred when the dying person's family gathered at the bedside to not only witness his or her death but also record any last words as proof that the person died a Christian. In this way the loved ones could then look forward to being reunited someday in Heaven.

Netta's sister, Ann Marshall, was dying from tuberculosis, (or consumption, as it was often called) a disease that had already claimed several members of Netta's immediate family.<sup>109</sup> During the summer of 1863 the family began a death watch for Ann, whose health began failing dramatically after the birth of her child. Netta was deeply concerned about her sister's children and did not know what would happen to them once their mother passed away. She was especially

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<sup>108</sup> For a discussion of the idea of a "good death" see Drew Gilpin Faust. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

<sup>109</sup> Tuberculosis was perhaps the most deadly disease in nineteenth-century America, accounting for roughly 20% of all deaths. The average lifespan after being diagnosed with the disease ranged from fifteen to twenty-five years in the mid-1800s. See also: Mark Caldwell. *The Last Crusade: The War on Consumption, 1862-1954* (New York: Atheneum, 1988). Shelia M. Rothman, *Living in the Shadow of Death: Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History* (New York: Basic, 1994).



troubled when her sister gave her daughter “and the babe” to her mother to raise, and asked her husband to make arrangements to send her boys to school.

Ann’s husband, George Marshall, insulted Taylor by refusing to acknowledge her place in the family drama. Writing to her husband about the situation, she stated that, in the days leading up to her sister’s death they were frequently “at Marshall’s. He only nearly recognized me the night sister died...he had no kind word, no questions to ask in regard to you or my family. Oh how badly I felt to be treated thus, I would that it were otherwise but have we not made every advance that could be made?”<sup>110</sup> The situation became worse following Ann’s death when Marshall ignored the overtures of Ann’s family, and immediately began looking for a new wife with whom to set up “housekeeping.”<sup>111</sup> Netta appeared to draw parallels between what was happening in her sister’s family and what the future could hold for the Taylor family. She was deeply afraid that if something happened to Thomas she would be unable to care for the children properly, or, if she were to die in childbirth her household would descend into similar chaos.

As strained as relations were between the members of the family, there were still some attempts to reinforce family ties. However, as the war dragged on, even those slight attempts were abandoned. In spite of the tensions between Taylor and her family, there is evidence that Thomas Taylor tried to maintain

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<sup>110</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 August 1863, OHS. While the context of this letter suggests a difference of opinion on the war, it is also possible that Mr. Marshall’s snub of Taylor originated from earlier family tensions. Mr. Marshall was the same Marshall whom Thomas Taylor had left as a financial surrogate for him to care for his family when he went to war and Marshall, due to problems with alcohol and melancholy, failed the Taylor family in that capacity.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

contact with his Butternut in-laws throughout the war. His attempt at keeping the family connected, however, actually led to a larger break in the family relationship. At a family gathering in 1863, Chilton White announced that he had received a letter from Thomas Taylor requesting a favor; exactly what favor Taylor had requested was not recorded. White proceeded to insult Taylor in front of other family members. According to Netta's account, White stated that the family – especially Thomas Taylor – had refused to support him and had done “all they could against him, shortly after [Taylor] left home.”<sup>112</sup> White's wife Fanny joined in calling Taylor:

a mean, contemptible, ungrateful fellow that Mr. White had taken you in his office and given you a start in the world, the poor ignoramus. Oh you do not know how his words stung me when I thought of what a slave you had made of yourself for him...you shall never have anything to do with him in business as long as any words of mine can have any affect on you.<sup>113</sup>

Following this incident Netta Taylor did not seem to have any direct contact with Chilton and Fanny White until after the war.<sup>114</sup> They disappeared from her letters in any meaningful way, and instead, were only mentioned in passing when information was gathered from other family members with whom she maintained relationships. As an example, Netta heard that White had returned from Washington, but she herself had no firsthand knowledge of such a return. Taylor continued to have business dealings with White, because of the rental of Elmwood Cottage, but no meaningful personal contact was recorded. Netta believed that her brother attempted to undermine the well-being of her family in

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<sup>112</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 September 1863, OHS.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> In addition to the different positions on the war held by the Taylor's and the White's another contributing factor to the break between the two was financial. There was a great amount of tension between the two concerning the rent paid, or not paid, on Elmwood Cottage.

several circumstances; the instance that was most upsetting to her concerned rumors that originated with White concerning the honor of her husband.

Netta had contracted with her brother-in-law Marshall for him to provide food for her cow. When it came time to deliver, he informed her that she had better sell her animals, and “that food was so high it would not pay...to keep [the cow].” Alarmed at what she called the “height of impudence” she scrambled to find an alternative source of food and complained to her husband that she supposed it was her brother Chilton who had soured Mr. Marshall on the deal, by spreading rumors around town that “he [Chilton] did not know what you [Thomas] were doing with your money, that you did not try to pay for your property.”<sup>115</sup>

Disillusioned with her family and friends Netta felt extremely isolated from her community and traditional avenues of support and assistance. She poured out her frustrations in letters to her husband; the one person she felt could offer her support, even though he was hundreds of miles away. She had always encouraged him to leave the military when his enlistment ended, earlier if possible, but during that time her letters took on a more desperate tone, as though she realized the difficulty of raising two young children without assistance should Thomas be killed.

Those breaks with family members over the war left Taylor with a sense of isolation as she was cut off from the family one by one. As historian Stephen Berry argues, “The sibling relation was deeply sentimentalized in Victorian culture. Brothers and sisters were expected to love and rely on one another” and

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<sup>115</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 25 November 1863, OHS. This goes back to the disagreement concerning the rent for Elmwood Cottage.

it was very distressing when these bonds broke during the war.<sup>116</sup> To replace her Butternut family members, Taylor turned to her husband and frequently urged him to return home. She was lonely and did not like living as she did. She even began to agree with her husband about leaving Georgetown after the war and making a new start somewhere else, a position she had opposed vehemently when Thomas Taylor first proposed it in the early days of the war.

Adding to Netta's sense of isolation was the fact that her mother was a Copperhead supporter. While Taylor was quick to criticize others in her family for similar beliefs, she could not bring herself to break ties with her mother. Netta rationalized this behavior by stating that her mother had "made some very hard expressions, yet she has been very kind to me. I do not know how I would have got along if it had not been for her."<sup>117</sup> Apparently, her mother also refused to allow their differing views on the war to sever their connection, and she remained a strong, supportive presence in Taylor's life throughout the war.

Unlike many who found themselves completely cut off from their families over the war, Taylor not only kept a good relationship with her Butternut mother but also enjoyed the support of her brother, Carr B. White. Like Chilton, Carr was well connected in Georgetown society. He had fought in the Mexican War and worked as a doctor before the war began. Upon the outbreak of war, Carr, along with his brother-in-law, Thomas Taylor, enlisted in the Twelfth Ohio. Taylor would eventually change regiments, but Carr would serve as a Colonel in the Twelfth until he was mustered out in 1864. Netta Taylor relied heavily on Carr.

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<sup>116</sup> Stephen Berry. *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided by War*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007).24.

<sup>117</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 25 October 1863, OHS.

When he was home, she wrote of him visiting her and the children, seeing to business matters for her, and generally caring for things that needed a man's influence in the absence of her husband. When the Taylor's third son was born in December of 1863, Taylor wrote to her husband in the field about naming the child. She asked him, "What do you say to calling the babe after brother Carr? Do you think we could name it after a better man, a truer patriot?"<sup>118</sup> The baby was named Carr Taylor in honor of her brother, and his name served as a symbol of loyalty to family ties in spite of the war.

Such divisions among family members were especially frightening for Netta Taylor and women like her in the community in the summer of 1863, when the rumors of a Confederate invasion of Ohio became reality with Confederate General John Hunt Morgan's raid into southern Ohio. Possible Confederate raids, purposed to disrupt commerce and harass the Union Army and its supporters, had been a fear of border residents from the beginning of the war. For women left without male protection in border communities, these rumors were incredibly frightening. They found themselves left with only themselves to rely on as they struggled to protect their families and possessions and maintain some semblance of a normal life. With Morgan's Raid, Netta Taylor found herself in an unusual position, in that she was able to observe how the community divisions over the war played out in an actual combat situation. In spite of her best efforts, she was not completely successful in keeping those divisions from impacting her immediate family and her sense of security within the community.

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<sup>118</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 21 December 1863, OHS.

Since the firing on Fort Sumter, reports of guerrilla activity and Confederate raids spread from one border community to another and created an atmosphere of fear in those communities. The fact that many of the accounts were either false or greatly exaggerated did nothing to ease the fears of people along the border. However, not all reports of invasion by Confederate raiders were false, and the residents of Georgetown had a front-row seat to one of the most dramatic Confederate raids into the North during the war, “Morgan’s Raid.”

On Thursday, July 2, 1863, Confederate General John Hunt Morgan launched his raid through Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. The original plan was for a “divisionary raid” to allow Confederate General Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee to “fall back to a new position without being attacked or threatened by larger [Union] forces.”<sup>119</sup> Morgan’s orders were explicit; he was not to cross the Ohio River, but was to harass Union General Roscrans’ advance to Chattanooga. Morgan and his 2,500 men set off from Tennessee, traveled through Kentucky, crossed into Indiana, and rose through Indiana, and southwestern Ohio before being stopped two miles west of West Point, Ohio, over 1,000 miles later. In addition to harassing Union forces, Morgan and his men also captured much-needed supplies through their raids into small Northern communities.<sup>120</sup> By July 14, 1863, Morgan and his men were a mere ten miles from Cincinnati, and panic spread through Ohio communities as the home guard was called out to meet the Confederate threat. Morgan and his men stole horses,

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<sup>119</sup> Lester V. Horowitz. *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*. (Cincinnati, Ohio: Farmcourt Publishing Inc., 2001), 1.

<sup>120</sup> Horowitz documents at least 6,576 homes and shops north of the Mason-Dixon Line that were raided by Morgan and his men.

damaged the railroad, and burned over fifty wagons in a government wagon train, but did not enter Cincinnati proper.<sup>121</sup> Instead, in an attempt to keep ahead of the pursuing Union cavalry, Morgan split his force just outside of Williamsburg, Ohio, sending one column under the command of his brother Colonel Richard Morgan to Georgetown and on to Ripley. Colonel Morgan and the Fourteenth Kentucky entered Georgetown on Wednesday, July 15, 1863.

Morgan's Raid made the people of Georgetown "feel and know that there [wa]s a war." Approximately 200 men under the command of Col. Richard Morgan rode through the town, facing no opposition. The town's guard had gone to Ripley to assist, and, as a result, the only men remaining in the town were "Butternuts," who made "no defense." Most of the damage done by the raiders was economic, not physical. Taylor recorded that the raiders "robbed our stores and groceries, took just what they wanted. Newkirk's loss is about five hundred, Galbreath three, Adam Shane three, and Peter Shingler they almost broke up taking nearly everything out of their stores. They also took a great many horses, examined nearly every stable in town. They respected private property, entered but few dwellings and politely asked for something to eat, did not give us a call."<sup>122</sup> She did see two raiders in their "clover lot, I suppose looking for horses." However, the only loss they suffered was the "very little" they took out of the "drug store [where] they drank to your health [Thomas Taylor] and took George's big boots is all."<sup>123</sup> However, Netta had harsh words for many of her neighbors, whom she viewed as aiding the enemy. Some of the store owners welcomed the

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<sup>121</sup> Max R. Gard. *Morgan's Raid Into Ohio*. (Salem, Ohio: Lyle Printing and Publishing Co., 1963).

<sup>122</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 July 1863, OHS.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

raiders, throwing open the doors of their stores and telling them to “help themselves.” When one of the raiders “asked him [the store owner] his politics, he said Butternut, they bowed and said they wanted nothing of him. [Then] they asked which were the abolition stores, and one of our citizens took it upon themselves to show them.”<sup>124</sup> Several of the raiders “asked where Chilt lived and if he was in town” to pay their respects.<sup>125</sup> It was also widely reported around Georgetown that townspeople were serving as spies and guides for Morgan’s men.

Morgan’s Raiders found, if not a hero’s welcome, at least a friendly one in Georgetown. Townspeople “went out and met them [Morgan’s men], surrendered the town and conducted them in and entertained them as well as they could while here.”<sup>126</sup> The Copperhead storekeepers opened their stores and homes to the raiders. Craftsmen such as Henry Brunner, a local cobbler, repaired the raiders’ boots and shoes, and eager townspeople pointed out businesses and property which belonged to their Union neighbors to the raiders.<sup>127</sup> Taylor found it “humiliating to see these cowards the day the Rebs were here. They ran around with them from store to grocery and some drank with them, they laughed and talked with them and treated them as friendly as if they had been our own men and now they brag on them...I told some of them that I did not wonder at their good behavior, that it was not often they were treated as well as they were

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 July 1863, OHS.

<sup>127</sup> Horowitz, *The Longest Raid*.



here.”<sup>128</sup> According to claims filed to the State of Ohio for compensation for damages sustained during Morgan’s Raid, 256 residents of Brown County submitted claims for compensation which totaled \$32,784 – the majority dealing with the loss of horses.<sup>129</sup>

Other than terrorizing those living along the border and stealing horses, Morgan’s Raid was not successful. Morgan and his men kept ahead of the Union cavalry until they reached Buffington Island, where Union forces finally caught up with them. In a battle against both Union forces and home guard troops, Morgan lost more than 800 men who were either killed, wounded, or captured. He and his surviving troops attempted to make a run for safety and managed to stay one step ahead of pursuing forces for a week before finally being forced to surrender on July 26, 1863. Morgan’s command was destroyed, and he and his men were sent to various prison camps throughout the North. Morgan and several of his officers, seen as the more valuable prisoners of the group, were sent to the Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus. Morgan remained in prison until November 26, 1863 when he escaped from prison and made his way south to resume command of another Confederate regiment. General John Hunt Morgan was killed in battle within a year.

Following the capture of John Hunt Morgan, it seemed that much of the fear of another Confederate invasion greatly subsided, at least in Georgetown. Taylor made no further mention of raids, guerrillas, or the home guard in connection with raids from 1864 until the conclusion of her wartime letters. Furthermore,

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<sup>128</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 July 1863, OHS.

<sup>129</sup> *Report of the Commissioners of Morgan Raid Claims to the Governor of the State of Ohio*, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1864. (Columbus, Ohio: Richard Nevins, State Printer, 1865).

while Taylor's entreaties for her husband to leave the army and return to her and their children never completely disappeared from her letters, they diminished as the Union Army's fortunes changed in mid-1863 with Union victories in the Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

While Netta was worried about Confederate raiders in Georgetown, Thomas Taylor was taking part in the final stage of the siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi. He had rejoined his regiment on June 29 north of Vicksburg and found that his men had been attached to the XV Corps of General William Tecumseh Sherman, under the overall command of General Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee. Taylor's status remained a mystery to Netta who had received letters from him very infrequently since his departure. She was "anxious to learn whether" he was "in Sherman's division or not" and could "find out nothing definite" about Thomas's location, which added to her concern about his safety.<sup>130</sup> The reports of troop movements published in local papers added to her anxiety because they often contradicted each other. One account stated that the local regiments were "in pursuit" of the Confederate army, while the next report stated that the regiments had "returned to Vicksburg".<sup>131</sup>

Without confirming letters from Thomas, Netta was left to wonder and worry about his whereabouts. She admitted that not knowing what reports to believe left her in despair and realized that Thomas did not share her feelings. Because their "situations [were] so very different," when he thought of his family, Thomas was confident knowing that they were "safe at home surrounded by the comforts

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<sup>130</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 July 1863. OHS.

<sup>131</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 August 1863. OHS.

of life, deprived of nothing but your loved presence.” Netta did not have the same sense of comfort when she thought of Thomas, if she could have had similar assurance, “then the separation would be nothing.”<sup>132</sup> She reminded him that she lived for his letters and that she “prize[d] them, they are as precious as gold and put away very carefully.” She had a “large sack full” of his letters that she read and re-read and admitted that when she heard of raiders in the town, Thomas would “have laughed to have seen me running to hide it (the bag of letters)” from the Confederate soldiers.<sup>133</sup>

For Netta, letters from her husband were a reminder of his love and concern for her and their children. She would often remind him to write his “loving epistles more frequently” and compared receiving his letters to “angel visits” that were “few and far between.”<sup>134</sup> Writing that she had not received any letters recently, she reminded him “how happy I shall be to receive another” and shifted the blame for him not writing to the slow mail since she knew he had “written a good many... and it is hard that I do not receive them [since] I derive more pleasure in the receipt of them than aught else on earth.” She told him that “if it were not for your precious letters, I would have been crazy long ago, they are all that keep my spirits up and, though you write often, I get very impatient for them when they are so long on the way.”<sup>135</sup>

Unable to show her love for Thomas in person, Netta tried to use her letters to reassure him of her continued devotion. She would often enclose small

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<sup>132</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>133</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>134</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 20 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>135</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 11 October 1863. OHS.

gifts, asking him to “accept the little remembering [of] what your little wife would do if she had it in her power.”<sup>136</sup> Both Netta and Thomas were products of the Victorian era, when it became common to marry for love and to place a high value on a happy domestic life centered around the family unit. Based upon their surviving letters, the Taylor marriage appears to have been a very passionate and loving union. Love and romance were common themes in Victorian literature and in the Taylors’ letters as well. Thomas frequently asked Netta to “cherish [him] fondly and instill in the boys a deep love for their Pa” to which she replied that she “love[d him] more fondly and deeply than I did in the bright and happy days of our courtship.” Now, years later they had other “links to bind” them together, and Thomas’s “absence only strengthen[ed] the chain.” She longed for his return “that I may prove through a life of devotedness how near and dear you are to me.”<sup>137</sup>

Sexuality was not something readily discussed in letters of the time, even between a husband and wife; however, there are numerous veiled references in both Netta and Thomas’s letters to the more intimate details of their marriage.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>137</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 1 November 1863. OHS.

<sup>138</sup> For a discussion on socially acceptable, and unacceptable, views concerning female sexuality during the Civil War see: Carol Berkin’s *Civil War Wives: The Lives and Times of Angelina Grimke Weld, Varina Howell Davis, and Julia Dent Grant*. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2009). Carol Bleser. *In Joy and Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Drew Gilpin Faust. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Mary Kelley. *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). Thomas Lowry. *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn’t Tell: Sex in the Civil War*. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994). Reid Mitchell. *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Jane Schultz. *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

They both reminded each other of the times they had spent together alone, and vowed to shower the other with kisses the next time they met. Netta frequently promised to sit on his lap and be his “dear little wife” upon his return. She fantasized about his homecoming sharing that she “had been with you in my dreams...oh how sadly I miss you at this time.”<sup>139</sup>

When letters again began to arrive from Thomas, Netta learned that Taylor had been present at the fall of Vicksburg, and she wrote of her immense pride in the fact that her husband was:

present at the marching of the troops at Vicksburg. What a glorious victory it was, and best of all, that there may be no more sacrifice of life...I almost wished I was there to see our old flag waving over buildings where so long rebel ensigns had been floating. Grant has immortalized himself, and hereafter his name will be inseparably connected with our National Birthday. I am proud to say that my husband is in his army.<sup>140</sup>

In addition to complimenting her husband, she also felt “almost confident in your success [ending the war], you have such a splendid selection of officers, the very men to put things through,” and, with such men failure would be impossible.<sup>141</sup> She also passed along well wishes and support from friends at home in response to the news of the great Union victories at both Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

After so many months of discouraging news, Union supporters in Georgetown were ready to celebrate. When the news arrived, a spontaneous celebration occurred with “bonfires...guns fired, flags displayed, [and] a dozen or so speeches made, all seemed to rejoice down to the smallest child.” A more organized celebration took place the following day, which, in addition to a

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<sup>139</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 12 November 1863. OHS.

<sup>140</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 12 July 1863, OHS.

<sup>141</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 25 November 1863, OHS.

continuation of events from the previous day, included a Grand Illumination. Taylor took part in the celebration by illuminating her house and wrote that it seemed that the entire town “was one grand light.” It was even greater than the celebration she remembered as a child, which celebrated the returning Mexican War veterans. Even some of the Butternuts took part in the celebration, on a smaller scale. Taylor’s brother, Chilton White, “did not illuminate his house but tried to redeem himself by making a long and flowery speech” for the occasion.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to such large displays of patriotism, there were numerous public declarations of support for Union soldiers, their families, and the war in general on a much smaller scale. Like thousands of other communities across the North and South, with the outbreak of war, women organized into Soldier’s Aid Societies in order to do what they could for the war effort.<sup>143</sup> There is no proof that Netta Taylor was a member of a Soldier’s Aid Society but she described several different fundraisers that they organized. Entertainment was planned, including concerts at the local fair, Thanksgiving celebrations, strawberry festivals, and tableaux presentations, from which the “proceeds will be expended for suitable clothing and things for soldiers in the field and hospital.”<sup>144</sup> Netta never commented on her lack of involvement in aid for soldiers; however, based on records and scholarship concerning other women’s involvement in such work, a few inferences can be made. While aid work was the realm of middle-class

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<sup>142</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 12 July 1863, OHS.

<sup>143</sup> For information on Soldier’s Aid Societies see: Jeanie Attie. *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades*. (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1966), Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), Silber, *Daughters of the Union*.

<sup>144</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 September 1863, OHS.

women, and Netta Taylor was clearly middle class, many of the women were either older, with no small children in the home, or young women with no families of their own to care for. Even with a hired girl to help with the children and housework, Taylor may have felt too overwhelmed to attempt another significant undertaking. Another factor was location. Netta lived on the outskirts of town on a farm, not within the town limits. Fewer women who lived in rural areas participated in organized aid societies than their counterparts who lived in towns and cities. Perhaps, she might also have refrained from joining such an organization out of respect for her family, many of whom did not share the Taylors' political views. Whatever her reasons for not joining a soldiers' aid organization, she did support such organizations financially, through her attendance at many of their events and by her participation in community illuminations and other celebrations.

Membership levels and the number of projects organized by such societies fluctuated throughout the war. Societies ranged from small groups of women, who gathered informally to knit, sew, or produce jellies and jams for soldiers, to large professional organizations. The Sanitary Commission and the Christian Commission included both men and women who organized fairs and other elaborate entertainment, often raising large sums of money for soldiers at the front. Women also gathered informally as needs presented themselves, and when the regiments from the front returned to Georgetown, the informal soldiers' aid societies ran into opposition from their Butternut neighbors.

Georgetown was fortunate that, while the population was divided over the issue of the war, there was relatively little outright violence between the two groups. Opposition groups organized protests, gave speeches, and discouraged or encouraged (depending on which side they were on) soldier enlistments, but most of these activities took place within the boundaries of legal protest. Other communities were not so lucky. Ohio saw its share of violence during the Civil War, not from invading armies (although there were several Confederate raids into the state) but from its own citizens. Race riots erupted in Cincinnati, not far from Georgetown, in response to Irish dock workers being replaced by African-American “contrabands” who would work for considerably less money. A Circleville newspaper advocated violence against abolitionists for starting the war, stating that the abolitionists should hang “Till the flesh rot off their bones and the winds of Heaven whistle ‘Yankee Doodle’ through their loathsome skelitonz [sic]...It is a pity that there is not a more tormenting hell than that kept by Beelzebub for such abolition fiends.”<sup>145</sup> Communities sheltered men dodging the draft and had violent encounters with draft agents.

Not all of the violent behavior was confined to the male portion of the citizenship. In Clark County, Ohio, a female Butternut supporter came under attack by “four or five other women” at church for wearing a “butternut pin, which the women tried to remove.” The local paper remarked that the woman defended herself “heroically...and came out of the conflict sustaining no injury, except that some of the ribbons were torn from her bonnet.”<sup>146</sup> These examples show some

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<sup>145</sup> Weber, 64.

<sup>146</sup> Weber, 114,



of the extremes to which Ohioans went against their neighbors over the issue of the war. Compared to such activities, Georgetown was relatively peaceful throughout the war.

A flurry of events in 1863 signaled the beginning of the end for the Copperhead movement in Georgetown, events that could be traced to the upcoming election of 1864. In spite of victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in 1863 there still seemed to be no end in sight for the war. Union General Ulysses S. Grant was soon in charge of the war effort, and he seemed to be practicing a war of attrition with the Confederates. With thousands of casualties reported after nearly every significant engagement, the Northern public was growing tired of the massive casualty lists with seemingly little progress being made in exchange. President Abraham Lincoln was convinced that the 1864 election would bring defeat to him and his Republican party as the North wearied of the war.

The Copperheads seized on this opportunity and attempted to gain control of the Democratic Party's presidential nomination at their convention in Chicago. Chilton White attended the convention as a delegate and was there when Copperhead supporters made significant inroads into the Democratic Party platform. Former Union General George B. McClellan was nominated as the Democratic Party candidate, but a Copperhead, George Pendleton, would be chosen as his running mate. McClellan was still very popular among Union soldiers and portrayed himself as a candidate who could bring about an end to the fighting. Copperhead supporters wrote the party platform, which included a very strong peace platform that called for an immediate end to the war. The

1864 election was shaping up to be a referendum on the war itself: whether it should be continued and the country reunited or concluded with two separate nations created from the former United States. The 1863 gubernatorial election also played a role in the political tensions in Ohio at this time, especially the candidacy of conservative Ohio Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham who was known as the “most notorious Copperhead in the nation”<sup>147</sup>.

Vallandigham served as one of Ohio’s congressmen early in the war. He severely damaged his political career in 1862 by calling for peace at any cost and, as a result, found himself accused of treason. He lost his bid for reelection. Copperheads seized onto his calls for peace and considered him a leader in the Copperhead movement. He continued to give speeches calling for an end to the war and was generally a thorn in the side of Lincoln and other Republicans. In 1863, Union General Ambrose Burnside issued General Order No. 38 aimed specifically at Vallandigham, which stated that expressions of sympathy for the enemy would not be permitted in the Military District of Ohio. Vallandigham ignored that order and gave several Copperhead speeches throughout Ohio; he was arrested and sentenced to federal prison, but Lincoln had him banished to the South instead. From the South, Vallandigham made his way to Canada, where he ran for governor of Ohio.

Among Georgetown citizens, and Netta Taylor’s family, Vallandigham had a great deal of support. As the election approached, Taylor wrote to her husband that she was “afraid we are to have serious times here; the opposition between

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<sup>147</sup> Weber, 27.

parties growing more bitter every day.”<sup>148</sup> The Ohio soldiers at the front were interested in the Vollandigham situation in their home state, and Thomas Taylor was no different. He continually asked his wife for updates on the “Vollandigham meetings” and Netta Taylor responded by mailing newspaper accounts, along with what she had heard, to him.<sup>149</sup> She also remarked upon the support of family members for Vollandigham including her own small son, writing her husband that “we call Tom the little traitor...he will persist in hurraing for Vollandigham, it pleases grandma [Taylor’s mother] very much; she calls him her boy”<sup>150</sup>. Tom was approximately three years old at the time.

There was also small-scale violence leading up to the election by October of 1863. Netta remarked upon the “good deal of skirmishing between the Butternuts and the Union men; they wanted to have a general clearing up before the election.”<sup>151</sup> Taylor stated that the “skirmishing” was the highpoint of the election, remarking that “all passed off quietly here, the whiskey shops were closed; consequently, there was very little drunkenness and no fights and the result glorious. The Butternuts’ faces are very long...The Union people are to have a grand jubilee here tomorrow.”<sup>152</sup> Netta was especially pleased at the role her husband and by extension, the other soldiers, who voted against the Copperhead candidates played. She said that she was proud that her “husband’s name is on...a Roll of Honor” and that finally the “Vollandighamers begin to see where they stand. They are all very quiet here, do not say much about the

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<sup>148</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 July 1863, OHS.

<sup>149</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 September 1863, OHS.

<sup>150</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 21 September 1863, OHS.

<sup>151</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 11 October 1863, OHS.

<sup>152</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 18 October 1863, OHS.

elections.”<sup>153</sup> The defeat of Vallandigham and his fellow Copperhead candidates signified the beginning of the end for Copperheads throughout the North.

While 1863 saw the war come to Georgetown, more important to Netta was her ongoing struggle to make sense of the family’s finances and continue to care for her small children. She continued to be uncomfortable with her new role as the one who controlled the purse strings, and she often wrote to her husband that she “long[ed] so much for your return when you can take part of the responsibility off my shoulders, every day the burden is heavier.”<sup>154</sup> Her pleas for help intensified after she became pregnant with their third child and found herself unable to “go out and see to business as I used to and our business seems to be in such an unsettled state.”<sup>155</sup> She acknowledged that even though Thomas had “been good to send money home...it is all paid out for debts; I have nothing left to live on, and have to go right in debt again.” There were also underlying problems including the fact that Thomas “value[d] money too little and I fear unless you change your views and learn to prize it more highly it will never be any better for us.”<sup>156</sup> Her frustration spilled over into her letters to Thomas as she chastised him for spending money foolishly on unnecessary items, while she was left to be “harassed by people presenting their bills, [they] all want their money and I cannot meet half of their demands.” She continued to urge him to “manage differently” or that a better solution to their problems would be for him to “resign and come home and attend to your business and family.” She felt her “inability” to

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<sup>153</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 25 October 1863, OHS.

<sup>154</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 September 1863. OHS.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 October 1863. OHS.

manage their finances and argued that he could “arrange your business satisfactorily and make a good living” outside of the army.”<sup>157</sup> Her pleas for him to resign continued to be ignored, and Netta was left to attempt to care for her family’s financial well being.

Netta was further troubled by a sense that things were not going well with the drug store in which Thomas owned an interest. She begged Thomas to tell her “something about the Drug Store business,” the arrangements he had made concerning it, and what her rights were relative to the store, since she believed her husband’s partner was “living pretty fast and [is] rather selfish.”<sup>158</sup> She never received completely satisfactory answers to her questions, and her concerns would prove to be well founded in the coming year.

Netta was unable to focus much attention on possible problems with the drug store, as she soon found herself overseeing a large building project on their property – the construction of a new stable. From the beginning Netta had problems with the men who had been hired to do the work. It is unclear from her letters exactly who hired the men – although the letters seem to suggest that it was Thomas – but she had to oversee the work being done, and it appeared that the workers did not acknowledge her authority to do so. She complained that work had not yet commenced because “Lindsey has not brought the lumber for the stable yet,” and that she had to go “see him and Lidy and get them to work.”<sup>159</sup> Nearly a month later, she informed her husband that she “went to see Mr. Lidy this morning to try and get him to work on the stable” and that she

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<sup>157</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 October 1863. OHS.

<sup>158</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 July 1863. OHS.

<sup>159</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 July 1863. OHS.

“hope[d] they will get it up in time for me to get in my winter food before the roads get bad.”<sup>160</sup> She continued to complain about her inability to get the men to begin the stable until the end of August, when she was able to inform Thomas that “the carpenters are progressing finally with our stable. [And] they say it is going to be the most convenient one they ever seen [sic].”<sup>161</sup> She was also hampered by her lack of knowledge concerning how the stable was to be paid for as well as set up. She admitted her ignorance and asked Thomas what “arrangements ...for covering the stable” he had made.<sup>162</sup> After an unsuccessful attempt to get materials from the local saw mill for the stable, Netta allowed her frustration to spill over into a letter to Thomas, complaining that she “long[ed] so much for your return when you can take part of the responsibility off my shoulders; every day the burden is heavier, you know my situation - I cannot go out and see to business as I used to, and our business seems to be in such an unsettled state.”<sup>163</sup>

While Netta felt confident in voicing her concerns and opinions, sometimes forcefully, to Thomas, she did not have the same self-assurance in dealing with those who worked for her. As time went on, her struggle to have the stable constructed continued. The men who performed the construction overruled her opinion and directions regarding the placement of the structure. She wanted the ends of the building to face the road; however, when she made her wishes known, they were ignored by the workers. Her only recourse was to complain to

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<sup>160</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>161</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 30 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>162</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 September 1863. OHS.

<sup>163</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 September 1863. OHS. The “situation” to which Netta referred was that she was six months pregnant with thier third child.

her husband that she felt the men had “made it [the stable] the wrong way, ought not the long side front town and the ends the roads? They thought not and placed it the other way”.<sup>164</sup> The workers disregarded her wishes and completed the work as they saw fit, something that was not likely to have happened had it been Thomas Taylor instead of Netta overseeing the project. When the men finally finished, all she could do was express her relief that the “stable is now completed” and that she was sure that he would “be well pleased with it.”<sup>165</sup>

In addition to her problems with the men building her stable, Netta also felt that she was losing control of her own household. She believed that her hired girl, Bertie, was not fulfilling her duties properly and encouraged her husband to write to Bertie to help remind her of her duties.<sup>166</sup> She found herself lost when Bertie left to visit family members, complaining that “the work comes pretty heavy on me, not being used to doing everything.” She found herself relying on her four-year-old son Miles to “save me a good many steps, he brings my wood, helps me churn and a good many other turns and feels very proud to think he can help me.”<sup>167</sup> Her frustration turned to anger when Bertie failed to return to her duties in a timely manner. She complained that “Bertie has not returned yet, I do not think she is treating me very well; when she left, I was quite helpless; I am troubled with something like falling of the womb, and I am afraid to exert myself or do any heavy work for fear it will cause a miscarriage.”<sup>168</sup> She remained uneasy about her control over the household after Bertie’s return, and the

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<sup>164</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 21 September 1863. OHS.

<sup>165</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 25 October 1863 OHS.

<sup>166</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 July 1863. OHS.

<sup>167</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>168</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 August 1863. OHS.

situation came to a head in October, when she finally confronted her hired girl. The pride she felt in taking charge of the situation is apparent in her letter to her husband, in which she told him that she “gave Bertie a serious talking, told her what she had to depend on, and it had a good effect this time, she has been very particular since.”<sup>169</sup>

Netta Taylor was not the only woman to experience a loss of control over her “help” during the war. However, her situation was unique, in that it was usually Southern white women who complained of such challenges in managing their slaves, not Northern women and their hired workers. Many Confederate women remarked on how the war had changed their relationships with their slaves. Diarist Mary Chesnut called it the “demoralization produced by hopes of freedom” and was hurt when the butler she had taught to read, and with whom she believed she had a close relationship, refused to speak to her and “held himself aloof” from the family he had served for years.<sup>170</sup> Others complained of their slaves “giving a lot of trouble” and “being lazy and disobedient,” and that the “excitement in the air” of the war had “infected them.”<sup>171</sup> Netta Taylor seemed to be complaining of circumstances with her hired girl that were very similar to those expressed by Southern women regarding their slaves.<sup>172</sup> Unlike the slaves, Bertie was more than likely the daughter of one of the neighboring families who,

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<sup>169</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 11 October 1863. OHS.

<sup>170</sup> C. Vann Woodward, ed. *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981). 60.

<sup>171</sup> John Q. Anderson, ed. *Brokenburn; The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868*. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1995). 33.

<sup>172</sup> It is unclear from Netta's letters whether Bertie was of African-American ancestry or the daughter of a white neighbor. She is not listed on the census for 1860 with the Taylors, as others domestics were, and a census search for someone with her name (or one similar) was unsuccessful. Based on anecdotal information in Netta's letters it seems to this author that Bertie was a teenage daughter from one of the local families.



in addition to wages, also received schooling and music lessons, and, most importantly, was free to leave at any time. In spite of their conflicts, Bertie stayed with Netta throughout the war and apparently had a warm relationship overall with Netta and her children.

Netta's greatest challenges were not her dealings with her husband's businesses or even the Confederate raid on her town, but dealing with the day-to-day work of running a household and caring for family members on her own. Most Civil War memoirs, and scholarship, emphasize what was unique, exciting, or tragic about the war, yet most Americans did not share those experiences. The vast majority of Americans were never near a battlefield or experienced anything newsworthy during the war; in fact, many Northerners saw little change in their day-to-day lives. The experience for a great number of those left behind while their husbands, brothers, and fathers went to war was monotony, the never-ending round of work that varied little from day to day. This was the reality for many Civil War era women, and this was the challenge Netta Taylor faced. Within the repetitiveness of day-to-day life without her husband incidents that previously would have been considered part of everyday life were magnified and took on new meanings of exaggerated importance and drama.

Throughout 1863, Netta continued to beg Thomas to return home to his family and argued that the "thought of a little more honor and a few more dollars [should not] supplant home, wife, and children." She suggested that he was "led on by the wild infatuation" of military life. She was tired of being ignored and

“laughed at” every time she brought the subject up.<sup>173</sup> When direct pleas for him to come home failed, she used their children, her health, and other strategies to get him to consider leaving the army.

Her letters nearly always mentioned their two children, Miles and Tommy. As time went by, Netta began not only including messages from the children to their father, but also her own thoughts on what the lengthy separation meant for the children. She asked Thomas to write more frequently, as the children were “much interested in your letters” and that “Tommie [sic] has taken a good many cries because you stay so long.”<sup>174</sup> She also wanted Thomas to know that the children “love you dearly and talk of you everyday” and that they were “always laying something away for Pa when he comes home.”<sup>175</sup> As proof that the boys missed their father, Netta offered an account of their youngest son Tommy, having “looked up at your [Thomas’s] picture and said, ‘come down here Pa and take your little son on your knee;’” again, she asked for him to please return home to his family soon.<sup>176</sup>

A probable explanation for Netta’s increased requests that Thomas return home from the army was the fact that she was in poor health (real or imagined) and pregnant with their third child. Illness and death for the mother and/or child during childbirth were common in women of childbearing age. Just a few months earlier, Netta had witnessed her own sister’s death soon after giving birth. During the nineteenth-century, there had been medical advancements in

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<sup>173</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 29 January 1863. OHS.

<sup>174</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 12 July 1863. OHS.

<sup>175</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 1 November 1863. OHS.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

childbirth, including the acceptance of male doctors at delivery; however, it was still common for childbirth to result in the death of either mother, child, or both. Statistics for white women who died in childbirth in 1850 in Ohio show that 199 women (or 1.5%) died as a result of childbirth and/or complications associated with childbirth.<sup>177</sup> As the time for Netta's confinement drew near, her husband remained with the army in the Deep South. Estranged from many of her family members, her sense of fear, isolation, and nervousness increased, as did her pleas for her husband to return home.

Her husband seemed to doubt her failing health, a fact she acknowledged when writing that she had been "quite unwell" due to "trouble and anxiety of the mind," because she had not received any letters from him that would "relieve an anxious wife." While he might have believed she was "writing this for affect," she was not, and begged him to resign, because if he did not, she and the children would "never see you again," and she would "never know one hour's peace while you are absent."<sup>178</sup> When he still refused to resign, she acknowledged that she would bear it for "our children's and country's sake," but asked him to realize her position. He was "surrounded by circumstances" designed to "draw your mind from home," while she was left behind and could "look in no direction but...[to] see something to call you to mind."<sup>179</sup>

Her loneliness increased following the death of her sister, Ann, and she reached out to her husband for comfort. When his letters did not appear

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<sup>177</sup> See Sally G. McMillen. *Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infant Rearing*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

<sup>178</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 1 February 1863. OHS.

<sup>179</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 July 1863. OHS.

frequently enough, she complained of being “deprived of the blessed privilege” of hearing from him and urged him to write soon, as she had “imagined everything” that could have happened to him to prevent his writing.<sup>180</sup> She shut herself off from Georgetown society following Ann’s death, remarking that she “visit[ed] but little and have few visitors,” and that she wanted to escape the “tattling, and quarreling, and backbiting” and had no more “desire to mingle in society.”<sup>181</sup> She also felt that, “with the exception of my dear husband and children,” she was alone in the world. Her friends had deserted her in her time of need and had revealed themselves to be “only friends as far as their own personal interest was concerned; as long as we can grant them favors all is well, but take care if you ask any in return.”<sup>182</sup> She especially felt the abandonment by her friends as she prepared her farm for winter and dealt with her approaching confinement. When Netta approached her friends for help, she reported that all she received was a “smile, and [they] say there will be some way provided.” She told Thomas that if she “could take my little family with me, I would pray that way might be heaven ward. At times, whether right or wrong, I [envy]...my friends their quiet rest in the churchyard.”<sup>183</sup>

For Netta Taylor the year 1863 was especially trying. Morgan’s Raid into Ohio brought the war literally to her doorstep, and she found herself struggling to not only protect her family but also deal with the loneliness and monotony of everyday life without her husband. However, 1863 ended on a positive note for

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<sup>180</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 10 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>181</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 August 1863. OHS.

<sup>182</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, September 10, 1863. OHS.

<sup>183</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, November 22, 1863. OHS.

both the Union war effort and the Taylors as well. In Netta's final surviving letter, written in 1863, she informed her husband that on December 15 she was "presented with another son, of which I have no doubt you will feel very proud."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, December 22, 1863. OHS.

## CHAPTER 3

1864

“Come home, my dear, and cure me”

By the midpoint of the war military enlistment in the North had slowed greatly. Those who were likely to enlist out of patriotic fervor were already in the ranks and realities of the war, and increased economic opportunities made military service desirable to only a small minority of eligible men. In an attempt to fill the ranks the United States resorted to a military draft with the Enrollment Act of 1863. Provost marshals were sent to each congressional district to enroll all male citizens and, immigrants who had applied for citizenship, between the ages of twenty and forty-five.<sup>185</sup> These enrollment figures would be the basis of the manpower quotas for each district. Each district had a set number of days to fill their quotas with volunteers, to permit the men to avoid the disgrace of being drafted. If their quotas remained unmet, a lottery was held to draft the men needed to meet the quotas. In May of 1864, the draft came to Georgetown, Ohio.

As for why the draft came so late to Georgetown, there are several possible explanations. One explanation is that, since it was such a small community, the number of men already enlisted in the Union Army allowed the area to meet its quotas for 1863. It was not until 1864 that Georgetown fell short

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<sup>185</sup> For a discussion of the Enrollment Act, see James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). 600-601.

in supplying men to the war effort. Another possibility has to do with the provost marshals who were employed to run the draft. Many of the draft officers avoided heavily Butternut areas, such as Georgetown, for as long as possible. Even when the draft officers did go into such unwelcoming communities, they often failed to get an accurate count of men who were eligible for the draft.

When the draft finally arrived in Georgetown, Netta Taylor commented that while she had not heard who had been drafted, she did know that “some three or four men of hear [sic] were taken ill suddenly, you understand,” in an attempt to avoid the draft. In spite of threats, the “draft passed off very quietly,” and, of those drafted, “the Union men are all going, but the Butternuts are not. The Butternuts club here had a meeting and made up money for Alfred Jacobs to pay a substitute.”<sup>186</sup>

What Taylor referred to as the “Butternuts Club” was actually the Pleasant Township Draft Association, one of many “insurance” clubs that sprang up in response to the draft. For a fee, which varied from club to club, men could purchase “insurance” against the draft. If the policy-holder was drafted, he could receive a payment from his policy in order to pay a substitute to take his place; however, by paying a substitute, the draftee was only excused from the immediate draft, not from any future drafts. The Pleasant Township Draft Association assisted “each other to procure a Substitute for a member of said Company who may be drafted under the present call for 300,000 men.”<sup>187</sup> Enrollment in the company was open to any man in Pleasant Township who

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<sup>186</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 May 1864. OHS.

<sup>187</sup> *The Brown County News*, Wednesday, February 1, 1865.

could pay the membership dues of \$100. Upon receipt of their membership dues if they were drafted, members were eligible to “receive such sum of money, as the sum total subscribed will amount to when divided by the number of drafted men belonging to the Company: provided, however, that no one member shall in any event receive a larger amount of money than one thousand dollars.”<sup>188</sup>

Those who wished to join the Association were to call at Marshall and White’s law office – the office of Taylor’s brother, Chilton White.

In spite of vocal opposition to the draft, and Union soldiers, by Butternut citizens of Georgetown, Unionists still found ways to offer support to those serving the Union cause. One such example of that support occurred on February 7, 1864, when many of the women of Georgetown gathered informally to provide aid and comfort to a returning Union regiment. Once news of the soldiers’ pending arrival reached Georgetown, local women began preparing a dinner and arranging quarters for them to stay overnight. The courthouse was chosen as a building that was large enough to accommodate the number of soldiers expected. However, when news of the chosen location for the dinner was announced, local Butternuts gathered in opposition. According to reports, the Butternuts were “rampant...[that] they should not have the court house, that they might quarter at the Fair Grounds they were used to laying out and it would not hurt them.” The situation escalated when some of the “Old Soldiers that are home thought otherwise.” They forced the Butternuts to give up the keys to the court-house and “invited the soldiers up.” The women served dinner and a breakfast the following morning, and Taylor considered the outcome a victory,

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<sup>188</sup> *The Brown County News*, Wednesday. February 1, 1865.



remarking that “these Butternuts have never done anything towards feeding and clothing the soldiers in the field, and we do not expect them to do it when they come home, but we can show them that we are willing to do both.”<sup>189</sup> In addition to such spontaneous aid and support offered to soldiers, Union townspeople also took part in community and national celebrations of victory and Thanksgiving.

Much has been made of the idea of separate spheres and the domestic ideal that handicapped women throughout the mid-1800s. According to the ideal, women were to be concerned only with domestic matters and submissive to the will of their husbands and fathers.<sup>190</sup> This ideology proved to be problematic during the war as more and more women, out of necessity, stepped into the public sphere. In addition to the belief that women should not participate in business affairs, the reality was that, in most cases, women had little knowledge concerning their husbands’ business dealings or even of the household finances. That lack of knowledge made it difficult for women to confidently step into the role of family financier. It should also be noted that it was not just the male members of society who helped to enforce this real or imagined ideal; women played a role in its acceptance as well.

Netta Taylor considered herself to be a product of this domestic ideal. Even as late as 1864, although she had been fairly successful in running the family farm and finances, Netta still longed for her husband’s return so that she could retreat back to her domestic duties and leave business and financial cares to her husband. She had no desire to use her husband’s absence as a

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<sup>189</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 8 February 1864. OHS.

<sup>190</sup> For a discussion of the ideals of domesticity see Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966), 151-174.

springboard to expand her own opportunities and/or obligations. She did not want to participate in the wartime discourse on the proper place for women; instead, she yearned to return to her prewar life of home and children and to allow her husband to care for the more “public” responsibilities, such as the family’s financial state.

This ignorance concerning the basics of the family’s finances greatly hampered many women’s attempts to carry on in the absence of their husbands. While she took pride in her successes and in her newly acquired business knowledge, Netta was never comfortable conducting business for her husband. Unlike many women in similar situations who found themselves enjoying their newfound liberties and who had a difficult time relinquishing their new responsibilities, Netta had no desire to expand her horizons beyond the domestic realm. As 1864 came to a close with no sign that Thomas would return to his family anytime soon, Netta began to withdraw from the public realm. She would reply to Thomas’s inquiries about financial matters simply by saying that she did not have time to take care of such things in addition to her domestic duties. She also detailed conflicts she had with neighbors. When the neighboring woolen mill began dumping dye lots into the stream that ran through Elmwood Cottage, her response was that it was not her place to challenge them and that Thomas would have to take care of it when he returned.

While some women used the war as an opportunity to expand their roles and opportunities, Netta resented the war’s intrusion in her family’s life. She viewed the war as having disrupted traditional familial roles and believed that it

corrupted her husband's satisfaction with their pre-war lives. Instead of wanting to remain at home providing for his family, Thomas chose to go hundreds of miles away in search of honor and martial glory. As the war progressed, he chose military life over returning to his family multiple times, causing additional strain in his relationship with his wife with each refusal.

Adding to her frustration with her husband and in managing the family finances, Netta's husband not only left a farm for her to manage but also owned a half interest in a local drug store. Her attempts at overseeing her husband's interest in the store proved to be more of a problem for her than overseeing the farm. Complicating matters was the fact that she did not trust the co-owner of the store, and she begged her husband to tell her "something about the Drug Store business. What arrangements [have] you made...I want to know my rights."<sup>191</sup> Tensions escalated between Netta and her husband's partner, George Reeves, when Reeves refused to settle several of Taylor's accounts out of the store profits. When detailing the tensions to her husband, Netta wrote that she thought he should sell his interest in the store, because "I do not like the way George has treated me, nor do I think he pays you proper respect." She also questioned their exact business arrangement, since she believed that they were partners, and if they were then why did "he [Reeves] get his living and can settle his personal accounts with men that owe in the store, why does he not allow you the same privilege...several persons have gone to him with small bills and

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<sup>191</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 July 1863. OHS.

wished him to settle with them, in every instance he has got angry and almost insulted them.”<sup>192</sup>

The impasse between Reeves and Netta Taylor continued until September of 1864, when Netta reported to her husband that she had been “trying to investigate the Drug Store business” and found that “Reeves has already sold your interest,” it seems without Thomas Taylor’s consent.<sup>193</sup> Without the oversight of his partner, Reeves became deeply indebted to the city and “resorted to that plan [selling Taylor’s interest in the drug store] to save himself.”<sup>194</sup> She wrote that Reeves did make an offer of \$800 to the Taylors as a settlement of the affair. Netta complained to her husband that “Reeves did not act the fair thing altogether, but for the sake of friendship we will look over it.”<sup>195</sup> She also had her brother, Carr, recently returned from the war, look into the matter, as she was getting nowhere in her “investigation.” Once her brother became involved in the situation, Netta found that information was more forthcoming. Armed with the financial figures from her brother, Netta reported that she had received “four hundred, \$329.51 he will give his note for and pay as soon as he can make collections.”<sup>196</sup> While her brother advised her that “it is the best we can do under the circumstances,” she did not feel “satisfaction and, with your permission, will leave the business as it is until you come home.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 20 March 1864. OHS.

<sup>193</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 September 1864. OHS.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 28 September 1864. OHS.

As demonstrated in this example, many women like Netta were at a disadvantage when trying to oversee the business affairs of their absent husbands. The Taylors, and families like them, were a product of the Market Revolution of the 1830s. During that revolution the production of goods for a market economy began to replace home production and subsistence farming. As a result, household production declined as it became cheaper and less time-consuming to purchase ready-made goods. With the decline of the household as the center of production more men found themselves employed in work outside the home. Women found the value of their household labor in decline due both to the rise of ready-made goods and the movement of production from the home to factories. Part of the transformation of the Market Revolution for middle class families was the idea of separate spheres. The husband/father was responsible for going out into the world and earning a living through the masculine pursuit of business. The result of men going out into the world left the mother/wife in charge of the domestic sphere of the household and caring for the children. The job of women was to make the home a haven from the troubles of the outside world, a sanctuary to which men could return to at the end of a busy day to relax and forget about the cares of the business world.<sup>198</sup>

One factor that did not change in these middle-class homes was the idea that even though the home was the female sphere, it was still under the ultimate control of the husband or father. Therefore, many, if not all, of the financial decisions for the home were the realm of the husband. He was in charge of

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<sup>198</sup> For more information on the Market Revolution see, Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

dispensing money to pay bills, buy groceries and other household necessities, and provide “pocket money” for their wives to purchase small luxury items. A result of that patriarchal dependence was that when the male provider of the household was no longer there to see to the day-to-day financial outlays of the home, many women found themselves unaware of not only what was owed and to whom but even how much money their provider brought into the household. When women attempted to investigate, as Netta tried to do with the drug store, they were not only met with indifference from the other male partners but also hampered by a lack of basic knowledge about how the business was run. This made it extremely difficult for women to try and oversee their families’ financial interests in the absence of a male protector.

The ineffectiveness of women in many financial dealings becomes apparent when one compares the information Netta Taylor was able to uncover about her husband’s business with the information made available to her brother about those same affairs when he became involved as her husband’s surrogate. This was one of the reasons that many men going off to war - Thomas Taylor included - appointed male surrogates to handle the financial obligations of their families while they were away. The failure of Taylor’s surrogates, and the problems faced by Netta herself when she attempted to resolve business matters, show the vulnerability of women in a society which encouraged their dependence on male protectors. When those protectors left or proved to be inappropriate choices in looking out for the welfare of their female dependents, many women found themselves having to rely upon their own abilities to try and

preserve the economic well-being of their families. Many women experienced mixed results in undertaking these new roles.

In addition to being up against significant obstacles making ends meet for her family, Netta also dealt with being undermined in her efforts to economize by her own husband. Thomas Taylor seemed to have little concern for his wife's lack of funds and wrote often of purchasing gifts and other unnecessary, (in Netta's opinion), items, when the family was in need of money for food and other necessities.<sup>199</sup> Her frustration with her husband's free-spending ways spilled over into angry letters to him in which she chides him for his "extravagance" in ordering a large number of photographs "at such a high price. You might have waited until the debts were cleared and the property repaired." She was hurt by the fact that "when I ask for anything (and I do not ask for anything I do not really need) it is always 'wait'. If you had laid it out in sugar and coffee or calico...and sent it by your family, it would have been so acceptable and we would have saved by it, but I must wait".<sup>200</sup> She also resented being questioned as to how she settled the accounts and spent the money, telling him that she had receipts from everything she had paid and they were "all here to show you when you come, you can see then whether I have spent it foolishly or extravagantly in my outlays."<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> While Netta continually complained of a lack of funds for necessary items, there is no evidence that the family was ever without necessities or even without money for small luxuries. The family was in debt, and Netta did face challenges in hiring workers for the farm, but her hurt feelings and frustration seem to arise more from a sense that her husband was enjoying himself without the responsibilities of family while she was left behind to deal with the day-to-day routine.

<sup>200</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 6 November 1864. OHS.

<sup>201</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 May 1865. OHS.

However, in spite of her anger at her husband's inability to save money, she was just as guilty as he in many respects. While she chided her husband for spending money so freely in one letter, in the next letter she wrote that she had paid off many of their accounts and ordered new furniture from the city [Cincinnati]. Her spending was deemed inappropriate by many of her neighbors, as she told her husband, writing that "some of the good people are very much distressed about my extravagance, but I do not pay them any attention."<sup>202</sup> She also continued to employ a hired girl throughout the war to do much of the heavy housework, allowing Netta more time to care for her children and to oversee the farm, a luxury unavailable to many soldiers' wives.

In an attempt to offset some of their debts, Netta rented out part of her farmhouse to a Mrs. Young and her children, which was both a blessing and a hardship to Netta and her family. The rent that the Youngs paid allowed Netta a small but guaranteed income, and they also provided companionship in the absence of Thomas Taylor and playmates for the Taylor boys. However, there were also problems with having renters as well. Netta complained to her husband that the Youngs had "badly smoked" the dining room wall-paper, and "indeed the paper is ruined" and would "have to be papered again;" the expense made it "not pay to rent."<sup>203</sup> The children also "could not agree, and it made it very unpleasant for both families," and she was very "relieved to have all the house and my little family to themselves" when the renters left in 1865.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 January 1862. OHS.

<sup>203</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 June 1865. OHS.

<sup>204</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 18 June 1865. OHS.



Having spent several years navigating her way through the family's financial matters and managing the farm, Netta found herself gaining confidence in her role as head of the family in Thomas's absence. However, she was never completely comfortable in that role. She eagerly awaited Thomas's return, when he would take those responsibilities from her and allow her to return to the domestic sphere in which she felt more comfortable. In an effort to speed up her husband's return, she began using her letters to lobby to that end, as she had at the beginning of the war. Her outspokenness on the topic led to hurt feelings on both sides. Thomas wrote that he was "saddened very much" when she wrote in opposition to him reenlisting at the end of his enlistment.<sup>205</sup> She responded that she felt betrayed by her husband who had "assured me...that you had no intention of re-enlisting, that you intended to come home," only to find out that he was not only encouraging his men to re-enlist but was planning to do so himself.<sup>206</sup> Netta could not understand why he did not want to return to his family. She "suppose[d] [that] all...I may say or do will have no weight with my husband's future plans" and wrote that she was also "sad and disheartened."<sup>207</sup> In spite of her disappointment, she hoped to smooth over Thomas's hurt feelings by reassuring him that when he did come home, "be it sooner or later," he could be assured that she would meet him with "a welcome warm and sincere." Even though she may "write and talk plain, yet I am not estranged, the same warm

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<sup>205</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 15 March 1864, OHS.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

deep love still exists,” and she would promise him “one of my sweetest kisses and happiest smiles” upon his homecoming.<sup>208</sup>

Netta continued to plead her case for Thomas to return home as soon as possible throughout the spring and summer of 1864. On May 15th she wrote that Thomas’s three year enlistment would expire in a month, and she asked him whether, if he was “spared,” he would “be true to your promise and come home to us,” because there was “such a fearful gloom hanging over” her that she could not “expect or overcome it.”<sup>209</sup> In an effort to bolster her argument for him to return home instead of reenlisting, she wrote about a dream she had had,

I dreamt [page torn] few nights since that the young ladies of our town presented you with a flag. I asked them why they had shown such partiality if there were not others as deserving as you. They said no, that you were the first to raise it when the call was made for volunteers, that you had done your duty faithfully thus far and had pledged yourself to hold out firm to the last. When they unfurled it I thought the stripes looked very dull but the field piece was beautiful, the stars were so brilliant, you accepted it with much feeling and made them a fine little speech.<sup>210</sup>

By recounting her dream to Thomas, she tried to reassure him that his service and patriotism were not unnoticed by the community and there would be no shame in returning to his family, as he had done his duty to his country. She also promised him that, when he came home, “how tenderly I will nurse you, for, without you, earth has no charms; my life has been a blank since you have been in the service.”<sup>211</sup>

Her patience was tested when she found out that, instead of returning home at the end of his three-year enlistment, Thomas was to remain in the

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<sup>208</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 15 March 1864, OHS.

<sup>209</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 15 May 1864, OHS.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 June 1864, OHS.

service for an additional three months. She was angry about the “grand imposition to keep you over your time so long,” and believed it was unfair to the men who “expected to come home when that time expired” and “too hard to think they must stay two or three months longer.” Netta felt that it was “discouraging” not only to the men in uniform but to their friends and family as well. She argued that “they may have escaped these three years,” but they did not know what “these few months will bring us,” and that they must “hope for the best and hope that God in his infinite mercy will still protect and save.”<sup>212</sup>

Unlike Netta, Thomas’s anger over his situation did not last long. He had spent 1864 advancing his position in the Union Army. Thomas took part in the Battle of Resaca, Georgia, following which he obtained a staff appointment to “Division Picket Officer.” That appointment placed him in charge of the security of the camp, and he became an “unofficial” staff member to Brigadier General Morgan Smith. Thomas enjoyed many perks in being associated with the staff of a Brigadier General, including the fact that he found himself with a brigade of soldiers under his command. Throughout the summer of 1864, Thomas took part in the Atlanta Campaign. Upon the fall of Atlanta, he made a halfhearted attempt to appease Netta and offered his resignation.<sup>213</sup> In September, he returned from leave in Georgetown and discovered that his resignation had been refused. He was ordered to remain with his regiment through the end of the current

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<sup>212</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 26 June 1864, OHS.

<sup>213</sup> It can be inferred from Thomas’ writings that he was well aware that his resignation would be refused before he offered it. He had no real intention of resigning: instead, his resignation was handled in such a way that he could show Netta that he had attempted to honor her wishes and return home, without any real threat that he would actually have to leave the service.

campaign. In an effort to soften the blow he was appointed Acting Judicial Advocate to Hazen's Division.

Working in Thomas's favor to remain with the army was the War Department's implementation of what they referred to as the "Veteran Volunteer." In response to the potential loss of hundreds of regiments as their enlistments expired, as well as the mounting casualty lists, the War Department searched for a way to encourage experienced soldiers to re-enlist. The solution that they reached was the creation of the "Veteran Volunteer." These were the men who had originally responded to Lincoln's call for volunteers to serve a three-year enlistment and whose enlistments would expire by the end of 1864. In June of 1863, the War Department authorized a \$400 bounty for those original volunteers who would agree to serve either another three-year enlistment or enlist for the duration of the war. The \$400 bounty was to be paid in installments and was guaranteed even if the soldier did not survive the enlistment. In the case of the Veteran Volunteer's death in battle, the remaining money due would be paid to his heirs.

In addition to the bounty, the men received a thirty-day leave, any back pay or bounty payments due to them from their original enlistment, and a month's advance pay. There were also incentives if the majority of the regiment re-enlisted. If at least three-fourths of the regiment re-enlisted, they received designation as a "Veteran Volunteer Regiment." They were granted leave as a group, and awarded a special chevron of red and blue braid that was to be worn

on their sleeves.<sup>214</sup> In spite of the incentives, most of the 658,000 eligible men chose not to “veteranize” and left the service at the end of their enlistment period. Only 136,000 men remained to answer the call to become “Veteran Volunteers,” among that number was Thomas Taylor.<sup>215</sup>

The news regarding veteran regiments was hard for Netta to accept and she attacked her husband for what she felt was his untruthfulness regarding his return home. She called the news that he was not returning home a “death blow” and questioned what he meant when he wrote that he could not leave the service “without resigning.” She did not understand why, when other men were returning home at the end of their enlistments, Thomas remained with his regiment. She reminded him that he had written her “that he could not hold a position in a veterans’ organization without being re-mustered and re-commissioned and that you would not be re-mustered, you would be coming home. Are you a veteran? Have you been deceiving me all this time, and now wish me to believe that you cannot get out of this service”?<sup>216</sup> After three years of running the household on her own and dealing with the monotony and worry of day-to-day life without her husband Netta was losing patience with the situation. While she had urged Thomas to return home throughout his period of enlistment by August of 1864, she had had enough and issued Thomas an ultimatum. While she “appreciate[d] your labors and sacrifices,” it was time for him to return to his family. She knew that he could “get out of the service if you wish... [and] I expect you to do your

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<sup>214</sup> For more on “Veteran Volunteers” and “Veteran Volunteer Regiments” see D. Reid Ross. *Lincoln’s Veteran Volunteers Win the War: The Hudson Valley’s Ross Brothers and the Union’s Fight for Emancipation*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008).

<sup>215</sup> Ross, 30.

<sup>216</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 14 August 1864, OHS.

utmost to get out.” She told him that she would not write until she heard from him and warned him that “if you do not think enough of us to come to us now, it will make very little difference if you hear from us or not...I cannot give you up or wait longer.” As an added incentive to her ultimatum, Netta reminded him that he also had three small children at home, and when they found out their father was not returning home as promised, “they set up a cry like their hearts would break.” She also informed him that her own health was not good and that she was “too weak to write anymore.” She urged him to “come home, my dear, and cure me. I believe your [illegible] would do me more good than all the medicines in the world.”

When she received a letter from Thomas, Netta backed away from her ultimatum, writing that she had read his explanation “very carefully and understand fully why you cannot come home to us.” She also asked for his forgiveness for any “high remark I may have made on the subject...for I did not then understand things as I do now.”<sup>217</sup> She instead focused her anger on the government, arguing that it was very unfair and that she “would not have believed that the government or Administration would treat its brave and gallant soldiers so meanly, had not the thing come right home to me in your case.”<sup>218</sup> Thomas convinced Netta that he was “almost driven to desperation,” and his inability to resign honorably was “an outrage too great for human nature to bear.”<sup>219</sup> His desperation was so great that he considered reaching out to Netta’s estranged brother, Chilton White. He sent a letter for Netta to deliver to Chilton in

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<sup>217</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 Sept. 1864. OHS.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

hopes that he would be able to use his political connections in order to obtain Thomas's discharge.

Based upon Thomas's writings, the political situation within his regiment was the cause of his unhappiness, not his continued time in the service. Thomas had been lobbying for a promotion, which seemed likely; based on the numbers of men leaving the regiment upon the end of their enlistment period. However, the commanding officer Major General John Logan, refused to sign off on the promotion wanting Taylor to remain in his current position. In Thomas's eyes, the refusal to promote him was an insult and caused him to write angrily that he was not a free soldier but an "American slave of Anglo-Saxon descent. Abraham Lincoln is my master and John A. Logan the man with the lash, standing o'er us."<sup>220</sup>

Netta, in spite of her desire for Thomas to return home, refused to reach out to her brother. She stated that she would not deliver the letter when she received it. Instead, she offered "a little advice" for Thomas to consider. She urged him to "be cautious how you act...do not ask me to put these orders in the hands of Chilt." She warned him that her brother would use the letter for his own gain, that it would be "grand capital for him" and that he would "exult" over the fact that "Tom Taylor...would not listen to us...[but] he is glad to come to us for aid and assistance."<sup>221</sup> Netta told Thomas that he "enjoy[ed] an enviable reputation" and turning to Chilton for help "would ruin you forever." Chilton was "not popular and never will be again," and he would "delight to drag you down

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<sup>220</sup> Thomas Taylor to Netta Taylor, 17 August 1864. OHS.

<sup>221</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 September 1864. OHS.

with him.” She also urged him to “remember how he [Chilton] has treated you and your family...and let me beg of you to ask no favors at his hands.”<sup>222</sup> She did not want Thomas to give himself over “body and soul” to Chilton, and she believed that once he thought calmly about the situation he would “rejoice that you sent these documents to me first and be glad they went no further.”<sup>223</sup>

Once Thomas had a chance to think about what he had asked Netta to do, he immediately replied to her letter, thanking her for her advice concerning asking Chilton for assistance and agreeing that it would be “impolitic to place it [the letters] in his hands.” Instead, Thomas, who had just taken part in the Atlanta Campaign and witnessed the fall of that Confederate city, again offered his resignation. Upon its refusal, Thomas was granted a thirty day leave to return to his family. From September 24 until October 23, 1864, Thomas was reunited with his family in Georgetown. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October he reported to Cincinnati to begin the journey to rejoin his regiment in Georgia. On October 31<sup>st</sup> after a series of travel delays Thomas rejoined his regiment at Cave Springs, Georgia near the Georgia-Alabama border.

On December 26, one of Netta’s worst fears were realized when she received word that her husband had been wounded. In early December, 1864, General William Tecumseh Sherman marched toward Savannah, Georgia. His cavalry commander, Brigadier General Judson Kilpatrick, had surveyed the area and recommended that the Confederate Fort McAllister needed to be taken in order to open supply lines for the Union soldiers and enable them to take

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<sup>222</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 September 1864, OHS.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.



Savannah. On December 12, the order came to Taylor's regiment that they had been selected to storm Fort McAllister. The following day, Thomas, and the other men of his brigade stormed the fort, and, after a fairly quick fight the fort was in Union hands. During the attack, Thomas was wounded in his right hand, resulting in the amputation of his index finger.

Netta apparently received the news of Thomas's injury through a newspaper article that stated: "Maj. Taylor...and his command engaged a squad of rebels...the Maj. decided to cage the birds by shutting the door on them, but in doing so had two fingers shot off." She immediately began a letter to her husband in an attempt to discover the truth of the account. While she was "deeply grieved" over his "sad misfortune" she found it more unsettling; her thoughts were full of "trouble and anxiety" and wonder over whether or not the "report [was] true in every respect."<sup>224</sup> Communication with men in the field was, at best, slow and unreliable and became more difficult if those men were on the front lines. As a result, letters were delayed, sometimes for weeks or months, and rumors flew wildly as to which regiments were where and who had been injured. Lists of men killed and wounded were published in local newspapers across the country, but they were often incomplete or contained misinformation concerning casualties. As a result, those who remained at home were left to worry and wonder as to the accuracy of reports until they heard directly from their loved one or one of his comrades as to the reality of the situation. Even though Thomas Taylor was listed as being "severely wounded" Netta gave thanks to God that his wounds were "no worse" and encouraged him to "be of good

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<sup>224</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 27 December 1864. OHS.

cheer...and see if you cannot get home to us once more, perhaps they will now let you resign, now that you are crippled.”<sup>225</sup>

With his wounding, Thomas Taylor became one of the thousands of men who suffered battle wounds and amputations. Taylor was fortunate, as there was anesthesia at the field hospital to be used in such amputations.<sup>226</sup> He was also lucky in that, while there was a high mortality rate associated with amputations, the fact that he only had to have a finger removed aided in a relatively quick recovery.<sup>227</sup>

On January 2, 1865 Netta received the following note written by her husband’s friend, Sgt. Bonner:

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<sup>225</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 27 December 1864, OHS. Sometime after reading the newspaper account of Thomas’s wounding written on December 26<sup>th</sup> and receiving a letter on January 4, 1865 from a friend of her husband describing his wound Netta apparently received a telegram from the War Department offering more details concerning Thomas’s condition.

<sup>226</sup> According to popular tradition, anesthesia was rarely used in field hospital settings, and letters and diaries are filled with accounts of screaming soldiers being held down while surgeons did their work. However, recent scholarship suggests that this is only part of the story. Union records show that around 80,000 surgical procedures were performed using some type of anesthesia, usually ether or the more popular chloroform. One researcher has suggested that during the Civil War patients were only given anesthesia “until they were insensitive to pain.” At that level the patients would “remain in a state of excitement or delirium [in which]...they might moan or shout and, usually, thrash about, but were not conscious and had no memory of the operative procedure or their behavior. Several men had to assist surgeons by holding patients on the operating table during surgery to control these spontaneous agitated movements.” Since many operations were performed outside to take advantage of sunlight many people could observe and report that operations were being done without any anesthetic. See, Alfred Jay Bollet, M.D. *Civil War Medicine: Challenges and Triumphs*. (Tuscon, Arizona: Galen Press, 2002) 78-79.

<sup>227</sup> Based on medical data from the Union Army roughly 7,902 amputations of hands and/or fingers occurred during the war with a 2.9% fatality rate this gave the patient considerably better odds for a full recovery than, for example, an amputation near the hip joint which had a 83.3% fatality rate. See, Bollett, 154.

Dear Madame,

My friend Maj. T. Taylor has requested me to write you a note describing the nature of his wound. On the 13<sup>th</sup> [illegible] our division was ordered to take Fort McAllister by assault. The 47<sup>th</sup> on the extreme left that is on the river bank about 4 o'clock PM. When the tide went down we moved upon the fort and took it after a fight of a few minutes. After our regiment had entered the fort the major charged across to capture the garrison, when he was opposite the magazine he was shot, the ball took off the index finger of the right hand. Shortly afterwards I placed him under chloroform and removed all of the injured portion of his hand, he is now doing well and will I think have a good hand except the finger mentioned.

The Major is in fine spirits and expects soon to return home. He is very justly proud of his regiment, two thirds were drafted men and had never been under fire, but all behaved nobly and the old flag of the 47<sup>th</sup> Regt. OVI was the first to float over the fort, which is one of the strongest that I have yet seen.

Your Obt. Servant  
S.P. Bonner  
Sergeant 47<sup>th</sup> OVI<sup>228</sup>

To Netta, Thomas's wounding was divine intervention. It was not serious enough to be life threatening (although with the medical knowledge at the time, it could have been), but it left him disabled enough to be eligible for a medical discharge from the army and to finally return home to his family, with the military honor he wanted so much. She reassured him that his transition home would be easy and that the "one great thought of my life is my dear wounded husband." She also reiterated that she was incredibly proud of him and his service, especially now that he had "endured so much for Home, Country, and God."<sup>229</sup> To Netta, it seemed that she would finally get her wish for Thomas's return home.

After waiting anxiously for word as to Thomas's actual condition, Netta was relieved to hear the actual details. Even though she felt "sad" as to his loss, she

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<sup>228</sup> Sergeant S.P. Bonner to Netta Taylor, 15 December 1864. OHS.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

was “thankful that it [was] no worse.” Even though “some may think it trifling” in relation to the suffering throughout the nation, she reminded him that since it was his “dear hand and that you are the sufferer, it grieves me deeply.”<sup>230</sup>

Encouraged by news that he was “expected soon to return home,” she reminded Thomas again of his obligation to his family and encouraged him to “settle up your business with the army, and...come to stay. I never want to see you leave again for the field of battle. I hope the storming of that Fort will be your last engagement of the war.”<sup>231</sup> Unfortunately Netta was to be disappointed once again.

For Netta Taylor, 1864 had been a tumultuous year. The draft had come to Georgetown and created local drama, but, for the most part, domestic problems occupied her time. She continued to struggle with executing her husband’s wishes concerning their financial liabilities, including the loss of their ownership stake in the drug store. Netta’s struggles seem to have been less related to her capability to oversee such operations and more directly tied to a desire to return to her pre-war life, in which her concerns were the home and children, not overseeing business transactions. As her domestic duties increased with her expanding family and her continued feelings of isolation from her community and friends continued, she again focused her attention on trying to convince Thomas to leave the army and return home to save her from the reality of day-to-day life. She took the news that her husband was remaining with the veteran regiment

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<sup>230</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 5 January 1865. OHS.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

badly and lashed out at him in anger for forsaking his family. Although she quickly apologized, she remained a vocal force in the attempt to bring him home.

As the year came to a close, it seemed as though Netta's wish for her husband's return would be granted when he suffered a wound during the taking of Fort McAllister. With Thomas eligible for a medical discharge, it appeared that the war would finally be over for the Taylor family. However, Thomas Taylor did not share his wife's desire for home and hearth. He still yearned for military glory that would erase the negative memories of his departure from Georgetown in 1861. Thomas did not wish to return home until he had achieved his goal of restored honor in the eyes of his family and neighbors.

## CHAPTER 4

1865

“In my heart is a void that none but you can fill, “

For the Taylors, the beginning of 1865 seemed to be a return to their pre-war lives. Thomas came back to Georgetown in January on medical leave to recover following the amputation of his finger. He seemed to be a candidate for medical discharge from the military, and Netta was overjoyed that she would finally have her family reunited and out of harm's way. Once again, however, Thomas's desire for military recognition interfered with Netta's dreams of domestic bliss, and Netta found herself alone with the children while Thomas chased his fortune.

Netta at least took comfort in the fact that her husband's active military career was over. When his leave expired, Thomas travelled to Cincinnati in order to be approved by a medical board for an extension of medical leave. In Cincinnati, Thomas had to wait for orders from the Secretary of War, since all other means of extending leaves had been abolished. To Thomas's excitement, his medical leave was not extended, nor was he ordered to return to the field; instead, he was to utilize his skills as an attorney and report to Washington DC to serve on a general court-martial. Thomas was overjoyed at this new assignment. Netta, however, was heartbroken. If his leave was not extended, Thomas had

promised that he would offer his resignation and return to Georgetown; yet, he willingly ignored his promises to her and accepted his new assignment, hopeful that he could still make a name for himself in service to his country.

Netta was especially hurt by the obvious joy that Thomas exhibited as he prepared to leave his family once again. She attempted to explain her disappointment to Thomas, writing that she could not “feel about this separation as you do.” While Thomas offered up thanks to God because it was “agreeable to you,” Netta believed that God had nothing to do with it. Since the position was “disagreeable” to her, she “excuse[d] him [God] entirely.” She did not see how a loving God could “desires [sic] us to be separated four or five of the best years of our lives, in order that you should make a few hundred dollars.”<sup>232</sup> She longed for the “good old days, when a man could live with his family and make a living,” not this new “fashionable” way of life in which the husband would “live in one place and the wife and children in another.” Still she supposed she “must put up with it until such a time as you see proper to return to us.”<sup>233</sup>

These words soon led to an argument via letters with her husband. While disagreements between the couple in their wartime correspondence were nothing new, Netta seemed to have finally reached her breaking point with the outwardly careless way that Thomas treated her feelings and desire for him to return to his family. That incident marked yet another instance in which Thomas promised her that he would end his military career while, at the same time,

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<sup>232</sup> By taking the position in Washington D.C. Taylor would draw a salary of \$280 a month which would place him in the top economic tier of Georgetown men.

<sup>233</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 27 February 1865. OHS.

unbeknownst to Netta, he was actively searching for the next opportunity for advancement.

Thomas reproached Netta for her disapproval of his new position, which only put Netta on the defensive. She attempted to explain her reaction by placing the responsibility on Thomas, stating that “what led me to write in the manner I did concerning this separation was your own act the night you returned home.” She could not bear that he was “overjoyed with the thought of going to Washington” and the fact that the “order pleased you better than a discharge.” It was especially hurtful in light of the fact that he had “only been with your family for one short week and left us without one regret.” Furthermore while her “heart was almost breaking” and she could “scarcely keep the tears back,” he refused to offer her comfort or the illusion that yet another separation would be hard for him as well. Instead all he could talk about was “the good times you are expected to have [page torn]...the waltzing lessons you would have to take, etc.” This lack of empathy from her husband sent Netta into a period of depression, during which “for two weeks I could not keep out of bed,” but finally “rallied at last, and thank God, to-day it was no more.”<sup>234</sup>

Further adding to the tension between the couple was the apparent lack of letters between them. Even with Thomas’s new post in Washington D.C. the mail service was, at best, unreliable. Netta informed him several times of his letters to her being diverted to Georgetown, Kentucky, instead of coming to her in Ohio. She also tried to explain, in the midst of his pleas for more letters from her, that, in spite of his not thinking of “the many things my hands have to do” she still

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<sup>234</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 12 March 1865. OHS.



managed to write to him “every Sunday and twice through the week.”<sup>235</sup> Her assertions of faithfulness in writing fell on deaf ears, as Thomas sent off a “very severe” letter admonishing Netta for her failure at her wifely duty of writing him frequent letters. Netta felt blindsided by his letter, telling him that she had been so excited to have received a letter from her “dear husband” and was looking forward to the words of “comfort and cheer” that it would contain. Instead, she found herself “almost overwhelmed with grief.” Netta tried to assure him that she had written him several times every week and told him that their hired girl could offer “proof” that she had seen Netta write the letters. This would continue to be a pattern between Thomas and Netta throughout the remainder of his service.

When Thomas did not receive letters, or as many letters as he thought he should, he sent off angry letters to Netta accusing her of not being a faithful wife and failing in her duties to him. In response, Netta was hurt and offered “proof” that she had been faithful in her writing. She also defended herself by reminding Thomas of the delays in mail delivery and by comparing her responsibilities to the more abundant free time that he had available to write. Netta tried to soothe his hurt feelings by apologizing and offering her sincere “regret [that] you do not receive my letters and that you allow yourself to become so despondent.” She reassured him that if “something were to happen” that she could not write, she would have someone get word to him immediately. She also took the opportunity to gently chide him, telling him that “you ought to make some allowance for me. I have not the same opportunity to write that you have.” She reminded him that he had “nothing to deter you, while I have hundreds of things” and that she got

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<sup>235</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 19 March 1865 and 22 March 1865. OHS.

“almost discouraged...when I sit down to write, this child will want something then the babe must be taken up, or playthings got for him to keep him quiet. I scarcely ever write that I do not have to jump up a half dozen times before I finish.”<sup>236</sup> She reminded Thomas that this was a situation that he had brought upon himself by remaining in the army. Netta acknowledged his loneliness and that her “heart really aches for you, it grieves me to think we must be so widely separated from each other and that you have to sacrifice so much to make a living for us.” However, she also admonished him to “make up your mind to come home,” because she knew that they “would both be happier” as soon as that happened.<sup>237</sup>

These arguments through their letters signified deeper problems in the relationship between Netta and Thomas. After years of listening to Thomas promise to leave the army and return home, Netta was finally convinced that he had no intention of doing so. It was, for Netta, extremely disappointing and hurtful that Thomas continually chose the army and possible glory over home and family. She was failing at the societal belief that one of the duties of a wife was to make the home a domestic haven, a place to which the husband would gratefully, and willingly, return to as a sanctuary from the problems of the world. Thomas consciously chose his career over his wife and children, and Netta’s fears that family was becoming less and less important to Thomas than they had been prior to the war seemed to be coming true.

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<sup>236</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 May 1865. OHS.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

Thomas acknowledged Netta's disappointment with his refusal to return home but also chastised her for not understanding his desire to return home with honor. He reminded her that, as his wife, she should support his endeavors at earning a living to support his family and ensure them a comfortable future. What he did not acknowledge in his letters to Netta was that, in addition to his work, Thomas was enjoying himself in Washington. He had access to entertainments and people that did not exist in sleepy Georgetown, Ohio, and he was taking full advantage of his social opportunities. Perhaps out of guilt for choosing a more exciting lifestyle than was available at home, he insisted that Netta write to him frequently and became angry when letters did not arrive in what he felt was a timely manner.

Netta tried once again to use the misunderstanding about the missing letters to lobby for Thomas's return home. She begged him to return home so that she could see him "morning, noon, and night, then if any misunderstanding should arise we could sit down and talk it over and become reconciled."<sup>238</sup> She also warned him that "this every-day trouble is wearing my life away. I feel it and know it, you know to what I am predisposed. I do not say this to frighten or excite your sympathy but as earnest sober thought."<sup>239</sup> Her "predisposition" was Netta's trump card, her last, and best chance to convince Thomas to return home. Nothing else she had tried, her children, her feelings of loneliness, or her lack of knowledge about the family's financial situation, had been able to tear Thomas away from his search for military glory and recognition. She hoped that the

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<sup>238</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 22 March 1865, OHS.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

possibility that her own life could be in danger might awaken her husband to the reality that he was needed at home more than in Washington.

The condition that she was “predisposed” to was consumption, or tuberculosis. The disease had already claimed the lives of several of her siblings, and she feared that her brother Carr was showing early signs of the disease.<sup>240</sup> Netta’s attempt to manipulate Thomas’s concern for her to achieve her goal failed. In response to a letter from Thomas, a chastised Netta backed away from her self-diagnosis of consumption. In her response to Thomas, Netta stated that she experienced “regret” in “having aroused your fears in my behalf,” but that, “at the time I wrote you I was serious in my conclusions.” She reminded him that she had “a cough all winter [and] suffered greatly with that dull heavy aching in my side and acute pains in my breast and lungs.” However, she had “consulted with Carr” who managed to “dispel my fears” by telling her that her health problems did not originate in her lungs, but in her “liver, and the sharp pains are more like pleurisy.” She blamed it on having been so “exposed this winter and spring...and losing so much rest” that it was no “wonder that I do not feel well.” She promised that she would “endeavor to take good care of myself...so that when you return we will be fully prepared to enjoy life with you and in a huge concession stated that she had “no objections to your remaining in Washington this summer.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Evidence suggests that tuberculosis was the cause of death for many of Netta’s siblings, including: her sisters Ann (d. 1863) and Mary (d. 1864) as well as her brothers Leonard (d. 1862) and eventually Carr who died in 1871.

<sup>241</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 2 April 1865, OHS. There is an argument made by some historians that many of Nineteenth-century women’s ailments were ways of gaining attention from family members.

Even though Netta had reluctantly consented to Thomas remaining in Washington for the remainder of the summer, that did not mean that she stopped asking him to return home. She was “alarmed...considerably in regards to your health,” and would “feel very anxious about you until you return home.” She told him that he was “laboring too hard” and his “mind [was] overtaxed” because he had “too much to study and think about.” She reminded him of times when it would have been in his best interest to have taken her advice and “prevailed” on him to come home where he could “comfort and cheer us and I am vain enough to believe that we can do the same for you.” She closed by telling him to “write me and let me know when you can come.”<sup>242</sup>

Netta would, however, continue to be disappointed. Her remaining letters are filled with references to his returning home. She begged him, “do not accept of any position that may be offered you, however flattering, we cannot go there to live, you **must** come to us, and I hope you will hasten the time as far as lies in your power.”<sup>243</sup> Two days later, she wrote to remind him that her “life has been very monotonous for the last few years, and you need not wonder if at times I tire of it...I hope you will be home soon to cheer and enliven the scene, for I must admit that at times I am very desponding.”<sup>244</sup> In her next letter she counseled him “not [to] try to remain on Court Marshall duty any longer than you can be mustered out. When I hear others talking about their friends coming, I cannot bear the thought that you will not be among them.”<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 18 May 1865. OHS.

<sup>243</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 26 May 1865. OHS.

<sup>244</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 28 May 1865. OHS.

<sup>245</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 30 May 1865. OHS.

In spite of his continued promises to leave the army, Thomas enjoyed his time in Washington. He was in a position of authority and was coming to the attention of his superiors. He took advantage of the Washington social scene, and his diaries contain frequent references to dinners, dances, and games of cribbage. In June of 1865, he made plans for a short trip to Georgetown with his mother, who he felt would be company for Netta. While Netta “rejoiced” at the news of his homecoming, she thought that it was for a brief time “almost drowns the pleasure.” She believed that “we never meet but to part.” She also firmly believed that “if it was your desire to stay that you could” and that you “could get out of the service, if you wished.” She refused to accompany him on military business to Louisville telling him that if he “must go to Louisville, you will have to forgo the pleasure of having your family with you, for I could not think of taking my children there...and to stay here without you would be a living death.” She could not “become reconciled to a longer separation. I have suffered so much, do not as a ‘little longer.’ My very breath seems to grow shorter and shorter when I think of it, you will doubtless think that your mother will be company, but I tell you all the world is no company when you are absent. In my heart is a void that none but you can fill.”<sup>246</sup>

Netta was just beginning to realize that Thomas had no intention of returning to Georgetown until he had made a success of himself in the military. He was plagued by memories of how the townspeople had laughed at and humiliated him and his small band of volunteers when he had left in 1861, and that fueled his desire to prove himself to them before he returned home. He

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<sup>246</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 June 1865, OHS.

actively lobbied for a promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, which Netta vocally opposed. She attempted to convince him that he did not “want that position” and told him to “get out of the service as soon as you can.”<sup>247</sup> In fact, Thomas had already obtained a promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on June 16, 1865, a promotion that Netta learned of, not from her husband, but from reading about it in a local newspaper. She did not attempt to hide her hurt and disappointment when she wrote Thomas, telling him that she had seen “a notice of your promotion to Lieut. Col. in the *Commercial* and dear, it struck like a dagger to my heart or death knell to all happiness for three more, long, weary years. Oh why did you ask it, or why accept? Are you not tired enough to quit, don’t you owe your family a duty, as well as your country, but my words can affect nothing, so I will be silent.”<sup>248</sup>

What was especially frustrating to Netta was the fact that the war was quickly coming to a close. In March 1865, Union forces, under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant, broke through Confederate defenses at Petersburg, Virginia, forcing the remnants of General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia to fall back toward the Confederate capitol of Richmond. On April 1, Union troops attacked the right of Lee’s lines and decimated Confederate defenders at Five Forks. The next day Grant issued orders to attack the entire Confederate line, which drove the Confederates back to their last line of defenses. That evening, Lee, and what remained of his army, set fire to the public buildings of Richmond. They retreated westward, with the hope of

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<sup>247</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 18 June 1865. OHS.

<sup>248</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 June 1865. OHS.

resupplying and joining forces with other Confederate troops under the command of General Joseph Johnston, still in the field. With Lee's retreat, Richmond was left defenseless. Confederate government officials quickly evacuated the city, and, on April 3 Union forces took control of Richmond.

The fall of Richmond was reason to celebrate for the pro-Union citizens of Georgetown. Even though the main Confederate Army remained in the field, the fall of the Confederate capitol city was a powerful symbol of the war's end. Netta was excited to receive letters from Thomas "filled with rejoicing over the fall of Richmond." For a brief moment she wished that she was in Washington with him to see "the Capitol all ablaze," and agreed that everyone should "rejoice in the goodness and providence of God, who thus hath led us and will lead us onward to the speedy end of this great struggle."<sup>249</sup> She contrasted the joy in Thomas's depictions of the celebration in Washington with the near failure of the Georgetown festivities. Her disgust for her neighbors was clear when she stated that "our people think it too much trouble to celebrate any occasion properly." Very few people participated in the grand illumination of the town. She remarked that "the Court House looked very pretty," but took pride in the fact that "a great many said our place was the prettiest picture of all." Netta had taken great care to place candles in the windows "arranged in diamonds" and had "two circles and a diamond prepared for the yard," but was unable to light them due to the wind. She also arranged to have two flags "one a yard and a half long, the other two yards," placed on "each chimney [where] they showed nicely from town." To

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<sup>249</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 9 April 1865. OHS.



complete the celebration, her boys “beat their drums all day” and took part in a church service that featured a “loyal sermon.”<sup>250</sup>

As she was detailing the Georgetown celebration over the fall of Richmond, Netta was unaware that the war that had separated her and Thomas for four years was coming to an end in Virginia. Union forces pressured General Lee’s retreating army and he finally surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, on April 9.<sup>251</sup> While there was still a Confederate Army in the field under the command of General Johnston, the war was, for all purposes, over both militarily and in the perception of Netta and her neighbors. In contrast to the more elaborate, if haphazard, celebration of the fall of Richmond, the reaction in Georgetown to Lee’s surrender was more of relief and weariness. Netta wrote that it was a day of “thanksgiving and prayer, all business is suspended, and is it as quiet as the “holy Sabbath” of the Lord.” As part of the celebration she also attended services at the local Methodist church and mentioned that, later in the evening, “there will be speaking in the Court House.” In spite of the low-key reaction, she asserted that the people of Georgetown were “very enthusiastic over the late news.”<sup>252</sup>

Georgetown’s celebration of the end of the war was short-lived, as the news arrived that President Lincoln had been assassinated. On the evening of April 14, 1865, President Lincoln and his wife attended a performance of the

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> At the time of Lee’s surrender, the Army of Northern Virginia numbered 28,231. See, Chris M. Calkins. *The Appomattox Campaign: March 29-April 9, 1865*. (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Books, 1997), 200. And William Marvel, *Lee’s Last Retreat: The Flight to Appomattox*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 203.

<sup>252</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 14 April 1865, OHS.

play, *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theater in Washington D.C. During the play, the famous actor John Wilkes Booth slipped into the Presidential Box, put his pistol to the back of the president's head, and pulled the trigger. He then slashed the Lincolns' companion, Major Henry Rathbone, before jumping over the side of the box onto the stage. From the stage, he shouted "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" before limping away.<sup>253</sup> In the confusion that followed, the assassin evaded capture as all attention was focused on the Presidential Box. The president was carried across the street to a house owned by William Peterson, where he was laid diagonally across a first floor bed. There, doctors, Lincoln's son Robert, and members of his cabinet kept vigil until 7:22 a.m., when President Abraham Lincoln was pronounced dead.<sup>254</sup>

When word reached Georgetown, Netta was "sad and troubled over the dreadful news of the assassination of President Lincoln and Sec. Seward" and was frightened that, instead of peace, "our troubles have but just begun."<sup>255</sup> In addition to her sadness over the death of the president, Netta was also deeply concerned for Thomas's safety, as gossip swirled concerning what was happening in Washington D.C. She warned him that "those villains are mean enough to take the life of any man wearing a suit of blue." She believed that the

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<sup>253</sup> *Sic semper tyrannis!* ("Thus always to tyrants!") was the state motto of Virginia.

<sup>254</sup> Catherine Clinton. *Mrs. Lincoln: A Life*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009). 244-247. David Herbert Donald. *Lincoln*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995). 594-599. Michael Kauffman. *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies*. (New York: Random House, 2004). 226-242.

<sup>255</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 April 1865. OHS. Rumors concerning the assassination spread rapidly. Netta was incorrect in reporting the death of Sec. Seward. John Wilkes Booth's plan called for the assassination of several government leaders in addition to the president, including Sec. of State William Seward. Seward was attacked and seriously injured. While he would return to work in October 1865 he never fully recovered from his wounds. He died in 1872. Attacks planned on Vice-President Andrew Johnson and other cabinet members were never carried out. For more on the assassination plans and aftermath see: Kauffman, *American Brutus*.

assassination was “planned in Richmond before the surrender of Lee.” She also expressed distrust for the South, writing that, “while we [the North] were ready to take them to our bosoms, willing to agree to almost anything for peace, they were planning how to destroy us.”<sup>256</sup> She believed, however, that the death of the president had brought the community together, and that, while “a feeling of sadness pervaded the whole community, [and] all look despaired” the people were united in mourning.

In describing Georgetown’s response to the death of President Lincoln, Netta informed Thomas that:

All business was suspended, the houses and stores draped in mourning, and no one could think or speak of anything but the nation’s calamity. At twelve the bells commenced tolling and continued until three. We draped our flags and lowered them and tied crepe on the door knob. The death of our President at this time is the greatest stroke that could befall a nation, but let us all bow submissively to his mysterious Providence. We shall perhaps hereafter see if we cannot know why God has permitted this to be. I hope your predictions of a speedier peace may be realized, God knows we have more need of it than ever.<sup>257</sup>

Thomas was also saddened by the death of the president, writing Netta that April 14 was the “gloomiest which it has been the fate of our nation to experience.” That “our President...[was] cut down by the dastardly hand of an assassin. To say that the nation mourns is too mild – it shrieks with anguish. Our best defender is gone.”<sup>258</sup> With those words, he completed a transformation four years in the making – Thomas now considered himself a Republican. In doing so, he renounced his life-long political affiliation with the Democratic Party, a party that he had come to identify with not supporting the war effort and, by extension,

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<sup>256</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 April 1865, OHS.

<sup>257</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 April 1865, OHS.

<sup>258</sup> Thomas Taylor to Netta Taylor, 15 April 1865, OHS.

the preservation of the Union. He had been moving away from the Democrats throughout the war, increasingly identifying them as Copperheads. With the end of the war and the preservation of the Union, he considered the break complete. Unfortunately for Thomas and Netta, this new political allegiance would have serious repercussions for them when Thomas finally returned to Georgetown.

While it would still be several months before Thomas would return to his family for good, he and Netta seemed to have finally come to an understanding about his service. With his promotion to Lieut. Colonel and several praise-filled commendations from his fellow officers, Thomas finally seemed content with the wartime honors he had achieved. He began planning how he could translate his military recognition into advancement in peacetime society, as well as planning his return to his family. His work at the General Court Martial provided a significant income, and he sent larger amounts of money home for Netta to settle debts and make improvements on their property.

Netta used the money to launch her return to the domestic sphere. She spent freely on plants to improve her flower garden, wallpaper and rugs for the house, and paid for a shopping trip with her mother to Cincinnati. With the greater selection of goods in the city, she hoped to buy “a set of cushioned chairs, [a] rocking chair and small sofa and blinds for [the] parlor, a work stand and bedstead and mattress, a set of dishes and some table linens.”<sup>259</sup> She also contracted workmen to “repair the roof...and make the doors,” with the goal of having a welcoming, cozy house to receive Thomas home.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 26 May 1865, OHS.

<sup>260</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 26 May 1865, OHS.

By throwing herself into the redecorating of her home, Netta continued to withdraw from acting on Thomas's behalf in financial matters. After settling one of Thomas's debts, she reminded him that caring for such matters "is very trying to my sensitive nature to have to visit law offices and the bank attending to business I know so little about. I have neglected such things from day to day trying to summon up courage to go. But, for your sake I have laid all such feelings aside and done the best I could."<sup>261</sup> She seemed to have forgotten that she had been capably overseeing the family's financial matters for the majority of the war. Instead, she once again tried to appeal to Thomas's role as the head of the family and encouraged him to quickly return home to take over his duties. She also outlined the difficulties she was having with a neighboring business that was dumping dye water into their stream, but refused to do anything about it in Thomas's absence. She told him that she did not want to "bring an action against them," but would wait until Thomas returned home and he could "fight it out with them."<sup>262</sup>

Her accounts of expenditures and lack of discussion concerning their debts concerned Thomas enough that he asked for an accounting. She told him that she "regret[ted] exceedingly that your good temper and spirits have been so ruffled at my negligence in answering your questions." Netta assured him that it was not her "desire to keep you in the dark or hide anything from you" and reminded him that she had paid their outstanding accounts.<sup>263</sup> In order to dispel any concerns he had, she let him know that he would be "satisfied with the

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<sup>261</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 7 May 1865, OHS.

<sup>262</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 4 May 1865, OHS.

<sup>263</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 14 May 1865, OHS.

manner I have settled our business. I had them [creditors] make out their bills, giving every item and when I paid, made them give me receipts in full." She carefully saved every receipt so that he could see "whether I have spent it foolishly or extravagantly in my outlays."<sup>264</sup> Her explanation seemed to satisfy Thomas, and he continued to save his greatest concern and expressions of displeasure, not for the way in which Netta was handling his business, but for when her letters did not arrive frequently enough.

Once he was stationed in Washington, Thomas seemed to rely upon letters from Netta more than ever. To him, their letters were the ties that bound him to family and community, and, most importantly, they reaffirmed the bonds of love between Netta and himself. The letters between the couple, while always loving, and sometimes passionate, became more romantic in the last few months of Thomas's service.<sup>265</sup> Thomas frequently referred to Netta as his "angel." This led her to playfully protest that he should not "think me so divine, or call me angel," because she was afraid that "when you come to live with me from day to day, you will see so many imperfections you will be sadly disappointed." She also felt that his "praises often shame me when I think how negligent I am in cultivating the finer feelings of the mind and heart."<sup>266</sup> When Thomas complained of only receiving two letters from her and expressed his concern for her health, Netta responded that he should not allow himself "to become so

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> For men and women of Thomas and Netta's generation romantic love was seen as being an important component of marriage. For more on this idea see: Karen Lystra. *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>266</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 April 1865,. OHS.

troubled.” She made sure that he was informed of her “health and to how I look. I will not attempt a description for fear of not doing justice to your ‘adorable better half.’” Instead, she assured him that not only had she written, but she had sent “a photograph of the identical person herself, and you can draw your own conclusions as to how she looks.”<sup>267</sup> She teased him with the revelation that she had spent the last evening “with you in my dreams all night. How I enjoyed your company. How happy I have felt today. Oh, my dear, how my heart yearns to be with you.”<sup>268</sup> She playfully warned him that he had “better make up your mind to come home soon my dear, you need me to smooth you down...if you were near me I could, perhaps, find time once in awhile to...give you a passing kiss.”<sup>269</sup> She longed for his kisses and hoped that he had not lost his “ability to kiss, for there is nothing I like better, and shall extract a great many. You know my failing, I never was satisfied.”<sup>270</sup>

Netta was very pleased when Thomas wrote comparing her favorably to the Washington socialites he had observed. That gave her a great deal of pleasure, and she wrote Thomas that his words made her “unexpectedly happy...to know that my husband is this mindful of plain, unsophisticated me when surrounded by the gay and fashionable.” She offered up thanks to God that she had been given “such a husband” and prayed that God would help her to become “a dutiful, loving, kind and obedient wife.”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 23 April 1865, OHS.

<sup>268</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 28 April 1865, OHS.

<sup>269</sup><sup>269</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 May 1865, OHS.

<sup>270</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 18 June 1865, OHS.

<sup>271</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, July 31, 1865. OHS.

In her final surviving letter, Netta reiterated her position on Thomas's quest for recognition. She reassured him that she did not mean for him to "banish all thoughts of early wealth or advancement and to live but for me. I trust I am not so selfish. There are other higher and holier things to live for. All I ask is to share your "bed and board" while you are securing these things to yourself." Netta realized that Georgetown would not hold many opportunities for Thomas after the war and agreed that she would give up her home and family ties in order to be with him. "Come, let us go," she wrote, signing it, "most affectionately your devoted wife."<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid.



## AFTERWORD

Netta would not have to wait much longer to see her family reunited. Thomas spent July of 1865 on regimental business throughout Ohio and Kentucky. Finally, in August of 1865, Netta Taylor's war ended when Thomas was mustered out of the service. The final act of his military career came a month later when on September 4, Thomas received a colonel's commission from Ohio Governor John Brough. Six days later, Thomas achieved the goal of his military service, when he was brevetted a brigadier general dating from March 13, 1865, in recognition of his brave and honorable service. While it was an honorary promotion, it enabled him to be addressed as "General" for the remainder of his life and allowed him to return to Georgetown an honored hero, quite a change in status from the manner in which he had marched off to war years earlier.

The final months of the war brought, in Netta's words, "joy and sorrow."<sup>273</sup> The beginning had been marked by frustration and the fear that Thomas valued advancing his career more than reuniting with his family. The highs of the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox were countered by the low point of President Lincoln's assassination. After spending years battling boredom, worry, and fear, Netta willingly relinquished her wartime responsibilities and began to prepare for a return to traditional family life. In addition to the return of her husband, 1865 also marked the beginning of re-establishing a relationship with

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<sup>273</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 16 April 1865, OHS.

her brother Chilton and his family. At the end of July 1865, Netta had her first friendly conversation with her brother and his wife in “over two years.”<sup>274</sup> Netta was pleased with the improved relations between herself and her brother but she was overjoyed when, in August of 1865, Thomas finally returned home.

The Taylors spent several years attempting to rebuild their pre-war lives in Georgetown. Thomas could not get past the way in which his honor had been insulted by the townspeople when he had marched to war years ago. In spite of his return with the rank of brigadier general, he was unable to regain his pre-war status in Georgetown society. His new political allegiance to the Republican Party also hindered his return to prominence. While Ohio was a Republican state, Georgetown, and much of Southwestern Ohio, remained strongly Democratic. Following his return home, Thomas was elected justice of the peace, a dramatic demotion for the man who had been the prosecuting attorney prior to the war. He refused to accept a nomination by the governor to become a district judge in 1866. With the help of Carr White and Carr's friend, General Ulysses S. Grant, Thomas was appointed the assistant assessor of internal revenue for the Sixth District of Ohio instead.

While he appreciated the increased income provided by his new position, Thomas was frustrated that his political career was going nowhere in Georgetown. By 1867, Thomas was through with Georgetown and finally carried out his promise to leave the town that had humiliated him back in 1861. Thomas

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<sup>274</sup> Netta Taylor to Thomas Taylor, 26 July 1865, OHS. While there is no doubt that tensions existed between the two families because of the war, it seems that their dispute over money owed on Elmwood Cottage also played a significant role in their estrangement. The property dispute was finally settled on April 3, 1865 when the deed to Elmwood Cottage was signed over to Netta, giving her sole ownership of the family property.

left Ohio in April of 1867 for Edina, Missouri. Netta was left behind once again to sell Elmwood Cottage and followed with the children when the property was sold.

Edina, Missouri, was not the best place for Taylor to attempt to find success. It was a very rural area, more rural than Georgetown, and even more Southern in its sympathies. A former Union general was looked upon with suspicion by the townspeople. Undeterred, Thomas began a weekly newspaper called *The Sentinel* and, when he could not make a significant profit from it, worked a variety of government jobs to supplement his family's income. The Taylors struggled in Edina until 1874, when Thomas, blaming failing health, moved the family once again – this time to Hutchinson, Kansas.

In Kansas, Thomas found a measure of the success he craved. His Republican affiliation and Union military service were looked upon favorably, and he returned to practicing law and local politics. He was elected to the Kansas legislature in 1874, where he served two terms; from there, he was elected to the state senate, served as president of the State Board of Charities, and director of the Kansas State Historical Society, and was a member of the State Horticultural Society. He was appointed a brigadier general in the state militia and charged with protecting Kansas from raids by Native Americans. In 1887, Taylor returned to the Kansas House of Representatives and campaigned, successfully, to allow women the right to vote in municipal elections – perhaps influenced by his relationship with Netta.

Thomas retired from politics following his last term in the Kansas House to concentrate on his law practice and raise cattle on his 1,120 acre ranch.

With his family now grown to include eight children, Thomas accepted the position of general counsel for the St. Louis, Watkins, and Gulf Railroad and moved his family once again; this time to Lake Charles, Louisiana. The job offered him financial stability and the chance to live near family members, this time his brother Ziba, and his family.<sup>275</sup> In Louisiana, Thomas worked for the railroad and on a variety of community projects. He kept out of politics and found himself accepted by most of the community's social leaders. In January of 1908 Thomas and Netta celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary, but within a month Thomas Taylor died of the "grippe," leaving Netta alone once more.

It is unclear what Netta thought of their post-war lives; no writings of hers from the post-war era survived. What can be determined is that she retreated to the domestic sphere following the war. The Taylors added five children to their family and significantly increased their landholdings which would have added to Netta's responsibilities. Following Thomas's death, Netta left Louisiana and lived for a time with her daughter, before returning to Kansas, where she lived with her son Carr and his family until her death on September 29, 1913. She was buried beside her "darling husband" at Arlington National Cemetery.

As for her other family members, Carr B. White remained in Georgetown. He returned to his medical practice and was active in veterans' issues. He died in 1871 as a result of tuberculosis. The local GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) Hall was named the Carr B. White branch in his honor. Carr is buried near the

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<sup>275</sup> Ziba Taylor, Thomas's brother, had lived with Thomas and Netta in Hutchinson before his death in 1881. Ziba had been a Confederate blockade runner during the Civil War. The Taylors joined Thomas' cousin – also named Tom Taylor - a former Confederate soldier, in Louisiana and the Louisiana-based Taylors smoothed the way for Thomas and his family to be accepted into Louisiana society.

rest of the White family at a small cemetery near the county fairgrounds. Chilton also remained in Georgetown for the remainder of his life. As a result of his support of the Copperheads during the war, his career as a national politician ended, but he remained active in local politics, serving as a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention in 1873. He also ran an unsuccessful campaign for Secretary of State in 1896. Chilton died on December 7, 1900 and was buried in Confidence Cemetery in Georgetown, Ohio.

## CONCLUSION

August 1865 marked the end of Netta Taylor's war. Her husband was home to stay and she seemed to transition easily into her pre-war roles of wife and mother. Unlike many women who had used the war as a means to claim a larger, more public role for themselves, or to embark upon new roles that were opened to women, Netta never desired to move beyond her domestic sphere. Much recent scholarship has drawn attention to the fact that the "separate spheres" that defined men and women were not so separate after all, that there was a considerable amount of overlap. While this was true for many men and women, Netta Taylor did not fit within that mold. She was content in her domestic role and very uncomfortable stepping outside of it, even though she was successful in many of her endeavors. She saw the war as a threat to much that she held dear, and it had the potential to destroy her family: her husband might not return, or he could have been so severely injured that their home life would never be the same. It also damaged relationships with other family members, particularly with her brother Chilton, and that threatened her sense of security of belonging to a family.

Netta Taylor fits firmly within the model proposed by historian Carol Berkin. When discussing Julia Dent Grant, Berkin refers to the way in which the war was

“personalized in order to be recognized.”<sup>276</sup> This meant that, for women like Netta and Julia Grant, the war was defined by their own experiences and those of the people around them, rather than by the national political debate or military campaigns. By withdrawing into their domestic roles as wives and mothers they made sense of the upheaval around them caused by the war. They created and maintained a sense of “normal” roles while their families were being turned upside down. In order to maintain that sense of security and self, it was vitally important for Netta to not only keep her domestic roles as wife and mother as her primary objective, but also return her husband to his role as head of the household at home away from the battlefield.

Netta struggled throughout the war years trying to maintain a sense of domestic security for herself and her children. She never understood Thomas’s desire for military honors, and the majority of the tension between the couple derived from the fact that they had different wartime aspirations. He wanted military glory: she desired a return to their pre-war roles, with Thomas as the provider (at home with his family) and she as simply a wife and mother. She attempted to use the domestic imagery of home, children and a loving wife to entice Thomas away from his military aspirations and was hurt when he rejected those pleas.

Netta’s letters offer a reveling look not only into this tension between the domestic and public sphere but also a look into the everyday life of a soldier’s wife on the Northern home front. While there were as many different home front experiences as there were women, several universal themes emerge through

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<sup>276</sup> Carol Berkin. *Civil War Wives*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009) 200.

Netta's writings that can be applied to women across the Northern (and Southern) home fronts. For those women, the initial excitement over the war, with all of the patriotic speeches, flag presentations, and parades of new recruits in their uniforms quickly gave way to a less appealing existence. The pageantry of the early days of the war evolved into a less exciting reality. Women such as Netta spent the majority of their time waiting and worrying. They waited for letters from their loved ones and reassurance of their safety. They waited for news reports of military engagements (which were often false), and they waited for casualty lists, hoping that they did not see a familiar name. Most of all, they waited for the day when their families would be reunited. In addition to fear over the safe return of their family members, the women also feared that, after having gone to war, the domestic lives they had previously enjoyed would no longer appeal to their husbands. For these women life took on the monotonous routine of waiting, worrying, and fearing for the safety of their loved ones.

These women were also suddenly thrust into the "public" realm in ways that they had not been before the war. Many women, including Netta, found themselves dealing with financial obligations that had previously been handled by their husbands. Like Netta, they assumed control over their husband's accounts, attempted to oversee the family businesses, and farms, and paid and collected debts, with varying results. While Netta struggled in the early days of the war to understand her family's financial situation, she grew into the role and managed to perform it successfully throughout Thomas's absence. There was tension, however, between her ability to make decisions concerning financial issues,



Thomas's desire to maintain a level of control over the family's financial situation, and Netta's wish to retreat from her new role in favor of the more familiar and comfortable domestic role as a wife and mother with no other outside obligations.

While the monotonous reality of the war years and the fear and frustration of taking on unfamiliar roles were relatively universal experiences throughout the war, Netta's writings also illuminated a very specific wartime experience; that of a Union supporter in a strongly pro-Southern region. While many women relied on traditional support networks, such as family and community, Netta found herself isolated from many family and friends due to their differing views of the war. The often overused idea of the "divided family" was an unfortunate reality for Netta; without those support networks she found herself increasingly isolated and lonely, with only the letters between herself and Thomas to provide the reassurance and support she desperately desired.

Netta's personal isolation from her community allowed her to be an observer and reporter of the Copperhead sentiments of her neighbors. She offered a unique look into the political tension of the community between the Southern and Union supporters. Those political divisions, which often simmered just underneath the surface, exploded into the community with Morgan's Raid when neighbors had a chance to act on their frustrations.

Margaret Antoinette Taylor was not a hero of the Civil War in the traditional sense. She never saw battle or served the war effort in any organized way. She was not a leader of any organization, and she did not even want to take advantage of the new opportunities the war created for women, desiring instead

a return to her pre-war domesticity. She was probably more typical of the thousands of women left behind. She cared for her family, took responsibility for her husband's business and farm, and wrote hundreds of letters to her soldier husband, keeping him connected to the bonds of family and community.

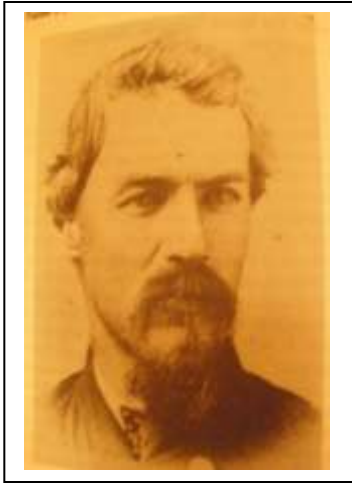
Some may ask, then, "why Netta Taylor? What can this rather ordinary woman tell us about the Civil War experience?" The Civil War was not just military engagements and the experiences of politicians, military leaders, and others in positions of influence. The Civil War did not take place in a vacuum, and the war effort could not have been maintained without those on the home front. These mostly unknown people provided support networks for soldiers in the field and kept farms and businesses functioning in their absence. Netta Taylor provides a face and a set of experiences that help to illuminate some of those unknown people and their trials on the home front. She also sheds light on the "ordinary," middle-class, rural, white, female experience which was far more common than the experiences of female soldiers, spies, and aid workers, although they have garnered more attention due to the "glamour" associated with their experiences. In addition, she offers insight into the divided home front and border experience.

Netta Taylor was just a small piece of the larger puzzle of the American Civil War. One cannot have a complete picture of the wartime experience without including as many different people as possible: politicians, soldiers, merchants, slaves, housewives, and others all experienced the war differently. There is no one "official" wartime experience; however, if one were to take a

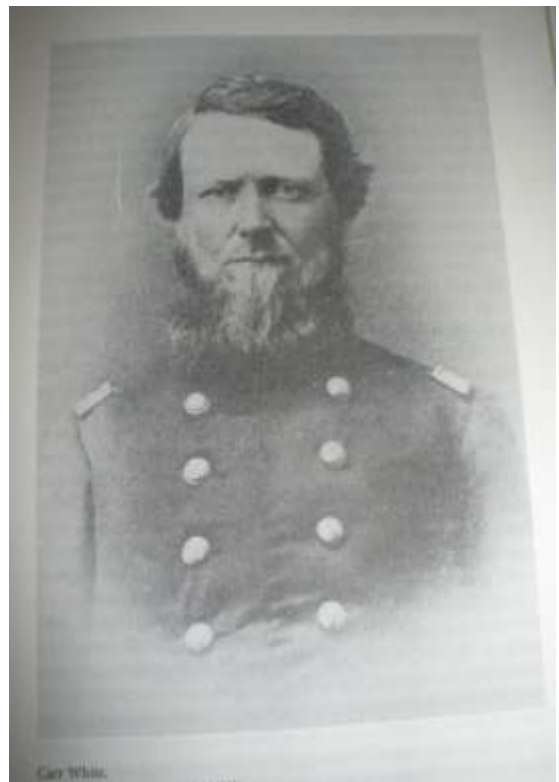
look at all of the varying experiences a more complete picture of the war years will emerge. This then, is “why Netta Taylor.” Netta’s wartime experiences are one more piece of the puzzle that was the Northern home front during the American Civil War. She offers the viewpoint of a white, middle-class woman who found herself, and her family, caught up in the tragedy of the war. The goal, then, of this dissertation has been to add to the scholarship concerning the Civil War home front, as well as that of United States women’s history of the nineteenth-century, specifically the dialogue between the “public” and “private” spheres of female influence. While not specifically concerned with gender or feminist studies, several aspects of those disciplines can also be found throughout the experiences of Netta Taylor and offer a starting point for further inquiry.

## Illustrations

There are no pictures of Netta Taylor that have been located at this time. However, several pictures of her family members and locations important to her have survived.



Photograph to the left: Thomas Thompson Taylor during the Civil War  
Photograph to the right: Carr B. White  
Photograph above: Chilton Allen White





Elmwood Cottage – before the home was destroyed by fire in 2008



Map of Georgetown, Ohio c. 1863. Elmwood Cottage is located 2 blocks behind the courthouse. Carr White and his family lived in a row house on the corner of Apple and Cherry Streets. George Marshall (and Netta's sister Ann) lived adjacent to the courthouse (labeled Marshall on the map). Chilton White and his family lived south of the courthouse, not pictured on the map.



George Marshall, husband of Netta's sister Ann, in a postwar picture



Home of Chilton White – 2010



Carr White's home and office was located in the building with the green awnings – photo taken in 2010



Brown County Courthouse  
the town square in Georgetown  
built in 1852. Thomas Taylor tried  
cases here as the Brown  
County prosecutor– photo from  
2010.



School in Georgetown where  
Netta's father, John D. White  
taught. Now known as the  
Ulysses S. Grant School after  
White's most famous pupil  
– now operated by the  
Ohio Historical Society as a  
Museum

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