They Fought the War Together:
Southeastern Ohio’s Soldiers and Their Families During the Civil War

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by

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It has been said ‘Bring up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it’ you believe this and you still hope of your son; but remember you sent him to the army a mere boy- a child almost his education incomplete and without any fixed principles and in the army his education is finished and Oh! how it is finished! Pray again fond mother pray for peace that the corrupting influence of war may cease. It is your only hope. These young men after this course of training are to return to society, may in fact to form society to control it to a great degree. So you shudder at the thought.1
-Andrew Jones, Co. D, 76th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Journal entry February 10, 1865

Introduction

This dissertation examines the relationship between the soldiers of southeastern Ohio and their families during the Civil War. It began as a question of soldier motivation, but morphed into a much larger and more complicated journey to discover the connection between the soldiers and the home front. For many thousands who never left their southeastern Ohio homes, the Civil War was a sacrificial and excruciatingly painful time. They watched their loved ones leave, never to return. They saw some return battered and bruised, some unable to work or function again. The central thesis of this dissertation is that the soldiers and their families fought the war together. Despite the complications on the home front, the difficulties at war, and the horrific suffering for everyone involved, through constant correspondence and involvement in the war effort, the soldiers and civilians of southeastern Ohio struggled to fight the Civil War.

These citizen soldiers of southeastern Ohio were largely farmers, laborers, and miners who joined the war effort for many reasons. However, by deconstructing their understanding of the war and by viewing them in relationship with their communities and

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1 Andrew Jones, Co. D, 76th Ohio, journal entry, Washington County, Ohio, February 10, 1865, no location given, Washington County Historical Society, Box 505, Marietta, Ohio.
families, a clearer picture emerges as to who these men were as soldiers and as Americans. While some historians have focused solely on the importance of the home front, this research shows that the home front and the battle front worked in unison. The reciprocal relationship between the two actually contributed to Union success. This dissertation builds on the point made by the Civil War historian Peter J. Parish, who said, “One key to the nature and the strength of the sustaining motivation of the Northern people may be found in the links between home front and battlefront.”

One of the persistent images of the Civil War in the American historical mind is that of the fratricidal conflict or “brother against brother” war. That image is preserved in Amy Murrell Taylor’s book *The Divided Family in Civil War America*. Taylor ably develops her argument using several important documents of divided families, which she achieved by scouring the nation’s archives for these truly exceptional cases. However, the divided families were variations from the norm in Civil War America. More often than not Civil War families were powerfully united in common cause. The ongoing storyline of divided families continues to muddle historians’ understanding of the realities of the Civil War. By focusing on the connected nature of the family, both in terms of soldiers who fought side by side with their kin, as well as those who utilized letters to stay connected with family, it is evident that soldiers and their family members fought the war together, not divided. Taylor’s focus on the exceptional cases in the border states provides one subset of the story, but this dissertation reveals the far more

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common case of unified families fighting for their definitions of American national identity.²

The southeastern corner of Ohio provided the perfect conditions to conduct such a study. Southeastern Ohio was a rural region in the north that reflected many different attitudes regarding the Civil War. This dissertation defines southeastern Ohio as the seventeen counties in the southern and easternmost quadrant of the state of Ohio (See Map 2). The population of the region according to the 1860 census was 393,212 representing approximately 16.8 percent of the state’s total population.³ The lifeblood of the region was coal mining and various forms of agriculture. Historian Richard Duncan’s research on peace sentiment in southeastern Ohio during the Civil War uses the same seventeen counties to mark the region, which for his study provides a cohesive whole.⁴

By using these seventeen counties, a better understanding of the experiences of southeastern Ohio during the Civil War emerges, including interactions with the Confederacy, fears of border attacks, and providing soldiers for the Union army. This rural region in southeastern Ohio bordered slave states, suffered the losses of a Confederate raid, and supported their soldiers amid internal turmoil on the home front.

³ Census used online at http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-11.pdf. The total population represented here is the total of the counties for this study, including white, free black, and Indian population statistics.
There are primarily two schools of historiography that this dissertation addresses, namely northern regional studies and common Union soldier studies. This dissertation meshes those ideas together, asserting that they essentially cannot function separately. People on the home front relied upon the service of their soldiers. The combination of these schools gives a better overall depiction of the Civil War. It shows how civilians and soldiers endured the conflict psychologically and at times physically. Most importantly, fusing the two historiographies provides a rich depiction of the realities of the war as it separated communities and ironically also drew them together. Gary Gallagher writes in his book *The Union War*, “...all studies of common soldiers are to a significant degree impressionistic.” Rather than argue with that sentiment, this dissertation embraces that reality, hoping to create the distinct impression of Civil War soldiers from a particular region. The regional context allows readers to connect with the past in a meaningful way through getting to know some of the primary characters and families in the study, while also providing helpful generalizations to historians’ overall understanding of the North during the Civil War through the major themes that emerge in the soldier-family relationships such as shared fears, suffering, and even faith.

Of course this is not the first attempt to better understand the relationship between soldiers and their families. Reid Mitchell’s *Vacant Chair* is a study that sought to answer many of the questions presented here. In that book, Mitchell writes, “images of home and the family—shaped the ways in which northern soldiers experienced the Civil War.”

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This dissertation adds to that analysis, showing more of the specific ways in which the home and family were reciprocally related to the soldiers. In other words, while Mitchell focused primarily on the relationship between the family and the soldier, this study also examines the relationship with the soldier back to the home front. Also, this study diverges from Mitchell’s foundation by also utilizing letters as the point of interaction between the two, rather than focusing on soldier absenteeism as the most important part of the story. Mitchell’s understanding of the “vacant chair” as a metaphor of the family relationship to the soldier at war is, however, worth consideration, and factors into some of the important questions that continue to influence the analysis here. In an effort to build on Mitchell’s work, this dissertation utilizes a regional approach to establish connection points that are broader than Mitchell’s analysis reveals.

throughout the North.”

Glatthaar emphasizes the need for more scholarship on northern communities. There are several existing studies that focus on southern communities such as Jonathan Sarris’ community study of northern Georgia, *A Separate Civil War.*

Similarly Brian Steel Wills, Martin Crawford, and John Inscoe’s coauthored monograph with Gordon McKinney are all examples of recent southern community studies. This dissertation, which focuses on southeastern Ohio, is a part of the new wave of scholarship that examines a northern community during the Civil War. Rather than the focus on all Union common soldiers, as Sheehan-Dean, or on regions in the Confederacy, as Wills, Crawford, and Inscoe, this focus on a rural northern region provides a lens into the complexity of the political, theological, and relational realities of Civil War Americans.

One of the pioneering examinations of common Union soldiers as fighting men is Gerald Linderman’s *Embattled Courage.* Linderman examines specifically the combat experience of Civil War soldiers. He includes several interesting perspectives about the cultural forces that produced the men of Civil War armies. He writes, “Every war begins as one war and becomes two, that watched by civilians and that fought by soldiers.” It is this two-sided war that this dissertation investigates, with special focus on the intersection of those two war narratives. While historians have certainly added to

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9 Jonathan Dean Sarris. *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South.* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006).
Linderman’s work and expanded upon it, his fundamental shift in the direction of Civil 
War studies is well worth an examination.

In addition to the soldiers and their experience, this dissertation also considers the 
life of civilians during the war. Several important essay collections consider individual 
contexts of the northern civilian war, but there remain no comprehensive examinations on 
the subject. Of the edited collections, there are Joan Cashin’s *The War Was You and Me: 
Civilians in the American Civil War* and Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller’s *An 
Uncommon Time: The Civil War and the Northern Home Front.* Cimbala argues that historians have been slow to address the wartime impact on northern communities 
because it was “less traumatic and visible than what southerners experienced.” It was, 
nonetheless, an experience worth studying and understanding. This dissertation speaks to 
that historiography by showing the integration of soldier and civilian in fighting the war. 
Though they may not have all shouldered muskets, the citizens of southeastern Ohio 
fought in support of their soldiers throughout the war.

In 1990, Daniel E. Sutherland cited Walt Whitman’s famous line that the “real 
war” would never get into the books and issued a challenge to historians to discover that 
unwritten war. Sutherland wrote, “The type of local history needed to capture Whitman’s 
‘real war’ must be more comprehensive, more exhaustive, and more lively than any local

13 Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller, *An Uncommon Time: The Civil War and the Northern Home Front*, 
Despite the urging of Sutherland two decades ago, most Civil War scholarship regarding ordinary Americans continues to fall in either a home front study or an isolated military account. This disconnect is obvious with regional or community studies such as Sarris and J. Matthew Gallman writing about local events, but not about the soldiers from the region. Likewise, there are military and regimental histories that do not examine the events of the home front such as Richard Baumgartner’s *Buckeye Blood: Ohio at Gettysburg* and Jim Leeke’s edited volume, *A Hundred Days to Richmond: Ohio’s “Hundred Days” Men in the Civil War.*

There are a few studies that begin to quench both Glatthaar and Sutherland’s intellectual thirst. Robert M. Sandow’s book *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians* looks at the lumber region of Pennsylvania and demonstrates how the war directly influenced the communities there. Edmund Raus Jr.’s work *Banners South: A Northern Community at War* is a narrative about the connection between the soldiers and their homes of Cortland, New York, during the war. Raus focuses more on the soldiers themselves and loses sight of the valuable insight of the home front. Though these studies are closer to Sutherland’s ideal than most, they still lack the concentrated connection between the soldiers and the home front that this dissertation provides.

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James M. McPherson’s *For Cause and Comrades* and Chandra Manning’s *What This Cruel War Was Over* both address the time-tested question of soldier motivation. This dissertation contributes to that discussion as by arguing that an inextricable connection between the home and battle fronts motivated and sustained the soldiers. Where McPherson emphasizes the patriotism of the Union and the small unit cohesion of the regimental structure, the research for this study showed that many of the soldiers fought to survive and make it home. Manning’s persuasively argued that the Civil War, for the soldiers, was about slavery. This research supports that argument to a limited extent with soldiers often not commenting on the issue. However, some soldiers and often those at home wrote about slavery as a contributing factor in the cause of the war. These two books provided a guiding course for this research regarding the political and cultural factors in the correspondence between soldiers and their families.\(^\text{17}\)

What makes this regional study unique is that it balances the effective qualities of a regimental history or individual soldier study with those of a statewide or national study. For example, Nicole Etcheson provides a fine microhistory in her book *A Generation at War: The Civil War Era in a Northern Community* about the complicated local conflict in Putnam County, Indiana. Her approach contrasts nicely with the broad sweeping generalizations presented in other books on the northern home front, namely Joan Cashin’s *The War Was You and Me*. The regional study format takes advantage of

the best of both worlds, allowing for relatable characters throughout the narrative, while also allowing a breadth of analysis more tangible than a microhistory.\(^{18}\)

In an attempt to understand the underlying questions of localism and community during the Civil War, this relies on the correspondence of common soldiers and their families. The research consisted of over one thousand letters, mostly housed in archives in southeastern Ohio. Correspondence collections including letters to and from soldiers were extremely helpful. Some collections only had the letters from the soldiers.\(^{19}\) To provide a useful set of source material, this study relies upon a regional sampling. Limiting the letters to only soldiers from southeastern Ohio provided a substantive sample for analysis that was not overwhelming or too small. The size of the sample provided the depth necessary to get to know some families very well, but yet it was not so myopic as to highlight a few exceptional families. Taking these families’ stories together, having a shared home region, helped to create a sense of cohesion between the families and soldiers, even if they did not fight side by side throughout the war itself.

In terms of methodology, this study is a qualitative examination of the thoughts and concerns of soldiers and their families. Following the driving question of this

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\(^{19}\) Another study that utilized a similar base of familial correspondence was Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievens eds., *Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1996).
dissertation regarding the connection between soldiers and their home communities, these letters provided useful information about their relationship. In an effort to solidify the analysis of the letters, this study utilized the methodology of historian Miriam Dobson, who provides a model for historians of 19th century letters. Dobson reminds scholars to focus on the intersection of public and private that took place in letters as well as their tendency to lend insight into the identity of the correspondents. Dobson writes, “Letters often seem to suggest that family or local ties are at least as important in shaping an individual’s self as collective forms such as nationalism or ethnicity.”20 This methodology suits this project because soldiers and families were forced to communicate via letters. Oftentimes those letters were preserved for posterity by extended families. The letters, like a window, allow the historian to peer into the intimate spaces of families. It is the hope of this study that what comes of this historical voyeurism is an honest reflection of those intimate moments shared between husbands and wives, fathers and children, and between brothers. These letters, sometimes couched in the seemingly-stilted language of the nineteenth century, utilized a comfortable formula that allowed for the researcher to observe patterns of normalcy as well as signs of distress. In the majority of Civil War correspondence, there was a significant amount of distress expressed between soldiers and their families. This dissertation is the qualitative assessment of those important themes and moments as they teased themselves out over numerous pages of personal family correspondence.

The letters utilized in this study offer a way to examine family dynamics over the emotionally difficult distance of war. There is an emerging historiography of homesickness, or “nostalgia” as surgeons and doctors knew it during the war. Frances Clarke’s article in the *Journal of Social History* on “nostalgia” and its conditions in the Civil War North provide context for an understanding of the soldiers. Clarke’s attention to the emotional conditions of manliness strikes deeply into the analysis presented in this dissertation. Clarke emphasizes an important point for the structure and overall argument of this project. She writes, “While it is patently obvious that soldiers in later wars similarly missed their families and considered how their actions would be interpreted on the homefront, it is equally clear that thoughts of home mobilized men in this war in a way that would become inconceivable at a later date.”

David Anderson more recently emphasized the nineteenth century conventions of masculinity in his essay on homesickness during the conflict. Anderson echoes many of Clarke’s contentions and misses the importance of home as a motivator for soldiers, instead putting soldiers in the context of masculinity rather than in their real relationships with loved ones at home.

Lorien Foote’s recent book *The Gentlemen and the Roughs* adeptly considers northern conceptions of honor through the lens of the Union army. Her book speaks directly into the conversation that emerges from this dissertation as many of the soldiers from southeastern Ohio fought for honor, whether it was personal, familial, or national and

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Foote shows that honor was not a distinctly southern behavior. At the core of this dissertation is a concern for the human agency in these soldiers as they struggled to cope with the realities of the war. In some instances home gave them a purpose for fighting, a manifestation of patriotism in the flesh, but at other times the ache of distance from loved ones proved extraordinarily painful. As George C. Rable points out in an essay in Cashin’s edited collection, the letters that bridged the gap between home and battle fronts were both a blessing and a curse for the soldiers. The mixed feelings they created were what historian Susan J. Matt termed a, “double edged sword.”

To supplement the letters from home, which were often more scarce due to soldiers’ inability to preserve the letters for posterity, this study includes local newspapers. Almost every county in southeastern Ohio had a newspaper and several had two competing papers. The arguments and debates in those papers form a crucial backbone to the “home front sentiment” throughout this dissertation. Though some may argue that newspapers were not always indicative of the larger opinions of the people, taken together the successful (i.e. those that stayed in business) newspapers provide a glimpse into the most important issues to the people of southeastern Ohio.

Newspapers were also important to soldiers, too. They often requested newspapers to be sent to them. Soldiers passed newspapers around, commenting on the stories and articles in letters home. Soldiers used newspapers to keep track of the

conditions at home in addition to their friends and family members in other military units across the nation. Newspapers chronicled both the local news that soldiers desired as well as the national headlines that determined their political and military direction.

Sometimes soldiers did not appreciate what newspaper editors published. For example, a group of angry soldiers destroyed the offices of the *Jackson Valley Express* because the editor’s sentiments were deemed politically unacceptable to the soldiers. Occasionally the battle front reached the home front. This action not only affirmed the seriousness of the war, but it gave credence to the power of the press in nineteenth century America.

The dissertation is organized into six thematic chapters that focus on the distinctive points of interaction between soldiers and their home front associates. These chapters explore the events and reactions to events as experienced by both the soldiers as well as those at home. Historians have written extensively about the “hard war” of Union forces upon the Confederacy, but there were also numerous ways in which southeastern Ohioans felt the brutality of war. Historians have understood the effect of the home front in numerous studies, however, this examination shows how a specific region sustained its soldiers at war. This study, which integrates home and battle fronts is extremely important as it remains understated in Civil War historiography. Though the soldiers marched, fought, bled, and died, they could not have done so without the support of those at home who worked in factories, labored in fields, and maintained society in the soldiers’ absence. To understand the ultimate victory of the Union army, students of the

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25 For more on the hard hand of war, see Mark Grimsley’s *Hard Hand of War* and Charles Royster’s *The Destructive War*. There is very little scholarship on the influence of the war on northern civilians, but recent collections have emerged such as Matthew Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front*. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1994) and Judith Giesberg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
Civil War must understand the total involvement of the people in the Union. Randall M. Miller writes that soldiers and civilians filled different roles in the same war, not separate wars. This dissertation serves to confirm and advance that claim.26

The first chapter argues that early war patriotism was contested and changed over the course of the war, but ultimately the overwhelming support of those at home contributed to Union success. The burst of enthusiasm at the beginning of the war showed evidence of a populace moved to action. However, there were some who, even in the early days of the war realized that the cost of the conflict would be unbearable. Patriotism remained a somewhat dynamic ideology as the cost of the war and the status of the war effort caused opinions on the war itself to wax and wane. Though most citizens remained supportive throughout the hostilities, there were some whose opinions changed amidst the carnage. The chapter shows the home front as a battleground in its own right, but ultimately more people at home were with the soldiers than against them.

Chapter two presents a detailed discussion on the theme “Wars and Rumors of War,” which is a reference to a biblical apocalyptic prophecy. The chapter explores the extensive volume of war correspondence in which soldiers and civilians discussed the war itself, political ramifications, and the military actions of the armies. Often they were

correct, but they also, self-admittedly, spread rumors about the condition of soldiers, results of battles, and most often speculated about where they expected to go.

The third chapter argues that hardships on the home front explain how soldiers and their families fought the war together. Although sacrificing goods or having to work harder to bring in the crops did not equate to dying in battle, without the home front sacrifices the soldiers would not have been able to do their work. The hardships on the home front exhibited exactly how the war influenced the lives of people in southeastern Ohio. One of their hardships as the chapter details was when Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan attacked the region, producing both fear and physical damage. The raid was perhaps the most terrifying part of the war for the civilians in southeastern Ohio and their letters evidenced that fear. The chapter advances the claim that the soldiers and civilians fought the war as a unified front, even if the soldiers were physically apart from their families in time of need.

The fourth chapter posits that the infighting on the home front between Unionists and peace Democrats, known derisively as “Copperheads,” was fundamental to defining the effect of the war on the civilians of southeastern Ohio. When soldiers left southeastern Ohio to fight for the Union, the war divided the region politically, causing some in the region to campaign and vote for peace in the 1864 presidential election. The peace advocates decided that the war was not worth the cost and deemed it prudent to allow the Confederacy to leave the Union. This tension caused violence in southeastern Ohio and vitriolic rhetoric throughout the duration of the war, showing finally and significantly the effect of the war on the civilian population.
Chapter five explores the community ties that bound the companies and regiments together. The Civil War utilized local enlistment, often sending groups of a hundred men from the same county off to war together. When soldiers went to fight, they went with friends and relatives. These community ties helped to sustain the soldiers through rough circumstances in the military. The connection allowed for a free flow of information, news, and rumors that kept the relationship between the home and battle fronts strong throughout the war. The chapter connects morality and religion to the home community as a primary influence on soldiers. From the comforting words of a father, to the direct quotes of their Heavenly Father, soldiers relied upon the civilizing force of faith to sustain them in their ordeal by fire. There was a tangible connection between the home community’s values and the ways in which soldiers conducted themselves in the military.

The sixth and final chapter reflects upon the suffering and death of the war on the soldiers. The chapter shows how the soldiers leaned on the support of those at home as a coping mechanism for disease and death of their comrades in arms. Utilizing the evidence of numerous soldier letters, the chapter focuses on the overall cost of war, including the loss of life that hurt both the soldiers and civilians. The experience of grieving was one of many shared hardships as a result of the war and further evidence that the soldiers and civilians fought the war together.

Taken as a whole this dissertation explains the reciprocal relationship between soldiers and their families in southeastern Ohio. Soldiers frankly could not have fought the Civil War without the supporting cast of those at home, providing physical and emotional sustenance throughout the four years of war. Likewise, the civilians could not
have held together the Union without the willing service of the volunteer soldiers.

However, with every battle, death, and moment of terror in the war, northerners shared the burden, whether in uniform or not. This conclusion emerges out of close qualitative assessment of the major themes that emerge from extensive primary sources, namely letters that were the lifeline between soldiers and their families.

The argument of family unity in the Civil War does not fit popular myth, but it is supported in primary source research. While Amy Murrell Taylor’s analysis in *The Divided Family in Civil War America* uses the “divided family” as a metaphor of the nation itself split over the political problems that led to civil war, citing everyone from President Abraham Lincoln to common people on the streets, this analysis on the unity of northern families does not have such a quaint metaphor. Instead, it reveals a more traditional narrative that is less prevalent in contemporary historiography. Civil War families, by and large, were not divided. Northern families in northern states held pro-Union sympathies and their families fought collectively to support one another in the effort to preserve the Union. Perhaps the story in the border states is different, but for the sake of understanding southeastern Ohio and the relationship between the soldiers and their families, it is evident that they fought the war together. As Taylor writes, “For some, pressures emanating from the homefront proved to be a drag on military progress; for others, families helped explain how and why men took up arms and fought the way they did. The war was not fought solely on the battlefield but also penetrated – and depended on – the most intimate facets of life.”

That statement proves accurate through

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the research presented here, namely that the majority of soldiers depended on those “intimate facets of life” in the personage of their families. While soldiers were fighting Confederates in various regions within the South, families in southeastern Ohio fought, both literally and figuratively, against southern sympathizers within the ranks of the North. Soldiers and their families shared in the sufferings, physical and emotional, of the Civil War. To understand them apart from one another does a disservice to both the home front and the battle front.
Chapter 1

War Fever is On: The Fight to Define Patriotism

The news of the Confederate forces firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor in April 1861 arrived with a mixed reception in southeastern Ohio. Some Ohioans had family or friends across the river in Virginia or Kentucky and were less than enthusiastic about the prospect of war with the Confederate States of America. However, many others saw the coming war as an opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism and finally settle the seemingly endless sectional discord that had bedeviled the nation for many years. Pro-war citizens in southeastern Ohio expected a quick and decisive war in which the superior forces of the Union army would demolish the ragtag militia of the upstart Southern republic. Many northerners expected no real changes in their government regarding slavery, states’ rights, or any major political issue. Following President Abraham Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion, men from southeastern Ohio eagerly enlisted. The three-month enlistment commitment was thought by many to be ample time to destroy the rebellion and make it home to a hero’s welcome. Early war patriotism exhibited both the unpreparedness and naiveté of the northern people at the outbreak of the Civil War. Central to understanding the relationship between the home front and battle front in Civil War southeastern Ohio, it is important to view the home front itself as a battleground from the beginning of the war. As soldiers eagerly went off to war, their supporters at home began defending the soldiers
politically and supporting them physically. From the commencement of the hostilities the home and battle fronts fought the war together.

There were a variety of attitudes about what constituted patriotism in southeastern Ohio during the Civil War. For many, patriotism meant fighting for the Union through military service or in the case of those unable to enlist, to support the armed forces in their efforts to suppress the rebellion. For others, patriotism meant protesting the war and emphasizing the democratic rights of southern citizens. This chapter reveals that there were multiple ways to define patriotism, including obvious service in the military or even tangential support such as darning socks or planting corn. Soldiers and their supporters defined patriotism based on their efforts to win the war, but others defined patriotism by providing opposition to the war. Most of those who articulated their perspectives on patriotism defined it in political and military terms.¹

The American Civil War was a local war. Historian Peter J. Parish explains that local self-government was the “essence” of American democracy and the Union protected it.² In an effort to preserve that Union, the United States government utilized state militias that in turn relied upon counties to provide volunteers for service. In addition to localized enlistment, the war mobilized communities not just for sending men off to war, but as the soldiers’ support system as well. Home communities provided financial support, material assistance through soldiers’ aid societies, and emotional

support through a cadre of letters. Because of the local connection, the conflict influenced the home and battle fronts. The two fronts fought the war together through collective sacrifice and hope toward a successful outcome of the war. Parish defines the three primary areas of home front contribution as recruitment of citizen armies, network of voluntary bodies, and propaganda campaigns to support the Union cause. To define it in slightly different terms, historian Reid Mitchell explains, “Northerners perceived loyalty to the Union not to be simply a matter of ideology, but a matter of regional identity.”3 The reality of that regional identity, in this case southeastern Ohio, drastically influenced the way in which these soldiers fought and understood their Civil War experience.4

When the war began, soldiers from southeastern Ohio offered several reasons for enlisting. Some were abolitionists, who explicitly wanted to fight a war to end slavery. Others did not care much for slavery, but established a priority of saving the Union. Most soldiers described their reasons for serving in the language of “the right thing to do” or “duty,” “honor,” and “country.” It is evident through the local enlistment of southeastern Ohio, the early war patriotism, and the rhetoric that the people at home as well as the soldiers expressed in letters, newspapers, and their personal writing that the people of southeastern Ohio did not agree fully on the definition of patriotism, but many supported the Union by fighting or by sustaining the soldiers. This early war allegiance

4 Chapter five’s coverage of the connection between home and battle fronts explores this at length. With regard to the connection between ideology and personal service, see Randall C. Jimerson, The Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). Parish, “Partisanship,” 156. Mitchell, Civil War Soldiers, 16.
was the bedrock of how the people in southeastern Ohio fought the war together with their soldiers. Phillip Shaw Paludan defined the early war excitement as “unalloyed” patriotism. Paludan emphasized the importance of legal rhetoric, explaining that in addition to duty, northerners understood their service as necessary to preserve the laws of the land. He writes, “Thousands had written, millions had read, that the war was a struggle to preserve the rule of law, the constitutional Union. People listened eagerly to the legal rhetoric.”

To the majority of Americans, the war was a spectacle. It was an adventure. It was an opportunity to defeat the South, with youthful and determined soldiers. The editor of the *Lancaster Gazette* excitedly described early war conditions when he wrote, “Every town and hamlet in the North is in a blade of excitement. The tap of drums, the clash of swords, the blast of bugles and the roar of cannon everywhere heard are but indicative of the deep determination of the northern people to maintain their government at every cost.” The bellicose imagery had not yet come to life. Before the bullets began to fly and soldiers bled on battlefields, it was easy for local excitement. As the war

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commenced, it became more difficult for Americans to sustain their patriotic excitement for the conflict.⁶

The initial Union effort to recruit troops brought out men from all walks of life. The early war governor of Ohio, William Dennison Jr., called for volunteers and men responded by joining their country’s war effort. The *Jackson Standard*, a newspaper located in the relatively small county seat of Jackson, Ohio, put the voluntarism in perspective, stating that “The very existence of the Nation is now at stake and the patriotism of the people is fully aroused. Rebellion will be fully crushed out at the point of the bayonet, at the mouth of the cannon, at whatever cost.”⁷ Though initially written in terms of financial cost, the message continued, “The North will furnish one million of men if necessary, to sustain the government.”⁸ The Union army placed more than one million soldiers into the field during the war. The editor implied a direct connection between the voluntarism of southeastern Ohio’s men with the success of the war effort and the preservation of the Union. The editor argued that in order for the nation to stay together these men had to volunteer. There was an element of “necessity” to this particular definition of patriotism. The editor of the *Perry County Weekly*, a newspaper published in the town of New Lexington, explained the importance of voluntarism this way: “The war fever is on and men are daily offering their personal services to their

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⁸ Ibid.
country, all around us, who will never disgrace the men that tramped the soil to a bloody
mire in former conflicts for our country’s independence and integrity.”9 The editor
provided further evidence that people, beyond the soldiers themselves, viewed military
service as patriotic.10

An editorial in the Perry County Weekly on May 8, 1861, conveyed the early war
enthusiasm of the citizens of southeastern Ohio. In writing about the Perry Guards, a
local company of 115 men departing for the war, the editor described, “Then came the
whistle, then the bell, and the train moved, and amid the shouts and waving of adieus, the
hundred and odd men, whose stay among us had rendered their faces all familiar, left us
to do their duty to their country, wherever they may be called.”11 For the volunteers, less
evidence remains. Some of the three-month enlistees expected to win the war and tell
their exploits in person. They did not realize that the war would last four years, leaving
behind hundreds of thousands dead and wounded.

After enlisting, soldiers had a few days to gather themselves before leaving for the
front. The dramatic departure of a group of men from the same community in April 1861
resulted in a tearful and heart wrenching experience for everyone. The Lancaster Gazette
detailed one such event thusly: “The company was formed into line on Broadway and
was escorted to the depot by an immense throng of citizens, led by the Lancaster Brass

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9 “Volunteer meeting at Straitsville,” Perry County Weekly, New Lexington, Ohio, April 24, 1861, OHS
Microfilm Collection Roll 34901. The population of New Lexington in the 1860 census was 812.
10 Mitchell discusses patriotism and service throughout. Mitchell, Vacant Chair, 26-30.
11 “Off to the Wars,” Perry County Weekly, New Lexington, Ohio, May 8, 1861, OHS Microfilm
Collection Roll 34901.
Band. The scene at the depot was affecting. The time for parting had arrived.”\textsuperscript{12} After their formal sending off from the band and citizenry, the real difficult work of seeing off family began. “Husbands, brothers, sons and ‘sweethearts’ must leave, perhaps never to return. At about 5 o’clock after a great many fond ‘farewells,’ the signal ‘all aboard’ was given, and the train was soon in the distance. Three cheers for Old Fairfield. She has done nobly.”\textsuperscript{13} The mere act of raising and sending off the soldiers meant that the community had “done nobly” before the men fired a single shot. This perspective on patriotism pervaded the mentalities of many local communities. They expected their men to represent communities well without grasping the complications of nineteenth century warfare.

The Civil War was communal because it involved the work, sacrifice, and contributions of ordinary people who defined patriotism in different ways, as evidenced in Lancaster.\textsuperscript{14} The town in south central Ohio was in Fairfield County. It was most noted for being the boyhood home of the famous Sherman family, where Senator John Sherman and Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman came of age. The people of Lancaster, viewed it as a localized war. Their newspaper continued to “follow” their own soldiers throughout the war, publishing letters written by them and giving accounts of the battles that were of local importance. The localized connection was important to both soldiers and civilians. The soldiers begged to know about local news in Lancaster and

\textsuperscript{12} “Excitement in Lancaster” \textit{Lancaster Gazette}, Lancaster, Ohio, April 18, 1861, OHS Microfilm Collection Roll 26705.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Lancaster’s population in the 1860 census was 4303. http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-11.pdf
Fairfield County, while the civilians remained in constant buzz about “war news” regarding where the armies were and what they were doing. Historian William Blair, writing about the Civil War in Pennsylvania, explains, “The locality did not serve the interest of the nation, but the nation-state had to represent, protect, and nurture the interests of the locality.” Soldiers found themselves in that balance point between localism and nationalism. Both forces proved important in motivating the soldiers and the connection between home and battle fronts proved integral in creating the cohesion necessary to sustain the war.

Following the first major land battle in Manassas, Virginia, Union officials realized the importance of mobilizing more troops to stop the rebels. Communities across the northern states continued forming companies and regiments of soldiers. Some were excited to participate in this great adventure. Others were afraid they would miss all the “fun” of the war and would return home without having the experience of combat. The patriotic ardor of communal experience compelled young men to fight for the Union alongside their neighbors, friends, and family members.

Soldiers were astonished by the spectacle of war and military life. They wrote home to their friends and family members expressing sheer excitement about seeing thousands of fellow soldiers clad in blue, marching, and drilling. There was an explicit connection between the martial air of the military and the honor of loved ones at home. Soldiers saw that link between the two and used it as motivation. In October 1861,

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Captain James Barker of the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry wrote to his Aunt Charlotte telling her, “You ought to have heard our boys cheer our old flag when it was unfurled to the breeze.”

That flag represented the honor not just of the men who carried it, but also of the women who fashioned it for them on the home front. It was a symbol of a community at war. The pride that welled in the hearts of the soldiers poured forth in their cheers that cool October day. After years of fighting these men realized even more the true significance of that banner.

Soldiers carried an uneasy enthusiasm into battle along with the home-sewn regimental colors. Samuel H. Putnam, a member of the 1st Ohio Cavalry, wrote to his friend and future wife, Abbie Mixer of Unionville, Ohio, about this eagerness among the soldiers in July 1861. “On the fourth of July morning our company received orders to be ready to march,” he said, “at a moment’s notice to where the dispatch did not say but it was from Col Steadman at Parkersburg.” The urgency of the cause was evident. Putnam added that “it made quite a sensation in town but every member of the company was ready by noon to go as a happier lot of boys you never saw. to think that they was going to have a chance to fight the Seceshers.”

Putnam was from the bustling commercial hub of Marietta, Ohio. Although the river town had seen its busier days a few decades earlier, quite a bit of the Ohio River trade traffic passed by from Pittsburgh.

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16 Captain James G. Barker, 36th OVI, to his Aunt Charlotte, Washington County, Ohio, October 27, 1861, written from Summerville, VA, Washington County Historical Society, Box 500, Marietta, Ohio.
17 Samuel H. Putnam, 1st Ohio Cavalry, to Miss Abbie Mixer, Unionville, Washington County, Ohio, July 14, 1861, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio, Samuel H. Putnam Collection.
18 Ibid.
to Cincinnati and places further south. Like a great adventure, it seemed an enormous opportunity for these young men to go off and fight the rebels. Also noteworthy was Putnam’s use of the term “Seceshers.” He vilified them for their actions of seceding from the Union, rather than writing of them as redeemable countrymen. They became his enemy. Putnam’s choice of the phrase “a happier lot of boys you never saw” conveyed a sense of giddiness at the opportunity to fight. Perhaps they had not yet fully grasped the possibility that this adventure meant killing other Americans. He continued, “But about dusk another dispatch came from the Col saying that our services would not be needed just now, which made the whole company feel terribly downcast...” Putnam and his comrades felt disappointed in not fighting the rebels. Not having the opportunity to go to war changed the mood of the entire company. Obviously, in the early war, the soldiers were eager to fight and win the war for the Union.

Not all the patriotic sentiments expressed by the soldiers were completely genuine. Cyrenius F. Stacy of Washington County, wrote to his friend in the late summer of 1862 with a somewhat joking or mocking tone. He said, “The war spirit is getting pretty high here. The young men are enlisting and the old ones are shelling out the dimes. We can again hear the fife and drum and everyone is putting on a martial air.” Stacy’s tone seemed, on the surface, to applaud the war spirit of his home county, but upon further reflection it was a bit more critical. Though his tone was a mixture of

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19 Marietta’s population in the 1860 census was 4323. [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-11.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-11.pdf)

20 Ibid.

21 Cyrenius F. Stacy to Gustavus A. Wood, Rainbow, Washington County, Ohio, August 17, 1862, Washington County Historical Society, Box 500, Marietta, Ohio.
serious and sarcastic, he used the phrase, “everyone is putting on the martial air,” as if it was not a genuine movement, but rather a facade. Even the term “martial” connoted that the people were not genuinely inspired to fight against the rebels. It was, by Stacy’s telling, a bit more like people caught up in a fad. Excitement for the war was not borne out of a desire to fight against slavery or to put down the rebellion, but rather to fulfill a great adventure. He added, with a similar sense of facetious pleasure, “We will soon have two regiments in Marietta, and all the rest of us are ready to go as soon as we are drafted and cannot help it.”

It was as if Stacy knew something about the lack of genuine patriotic fervor in Marietta. His prediction of the necessity of a draft in northern regions, including southeastern Ohio, was accurate, if a bit callous. His nonchalance in mentioning “and cannot help it” blatantly expressed the unwillingness of some of the men in the region to fight for the Union. Though any assumptions about motive would be misplaced, it was clear that Stacy and whomever he considered the “rest of us” were less than enthusiastic about the possibility of serving in the Union army.

Stacy’s comment that the “young men are enlisting” and the “old ones are shelling out the dimes” revealed a sense of frustration about the causes and realities of the war. If not a class critique, it was certainly an age critique. Stacy apparently found frustration that those most vocal about the need for war were unable or unwilling to fight it themselves. The above assessment of his sentiments regarding the coming draft was

22 Ibid.
based in the reality that the Confederacy had already instituted conscription in the spring of 1862. Stacy’s criticism pointed out the reality that the men who saw the need for the war were not the ones fighting it. Related to the jaded sense of service, Gary Gallagher reflects in *The Union War*, “Many U.S. soldiers, it is important to keep in mind, acted from motives unrelated to unionist or any other ideology, including an indeterminate number of poor men who enlisted primarily for financial reasons.”

The story of southeastern Ohio’s war was more complicated than the simplistic narrative of rising up to meet the southern foe. For Cyrenius F. Stacy, the war meant an unwilling sacrifice of his time and perhaps his life for a cause that, although not explicit here, he did not support. It was this inherent lack of unanimity, which complicated the Civil War efforts in both the North and the South. In particular, this sense of connection between the home front and the battle front could be either supportive or destructive regarding the life and supplication of the soldiers. With antiwar sentiments, such as Stacy’s, even if thinly veiled, revealed the lack of cohesion between the basic support system in southeastern Ohio. Stacy’s perspective gained much more momentum later in the war, particularly through the virulent speeches of gubernatorial candidate and proud antiwar Democrat Copperhead, Clement Vallandigham. Though at times northerners fought the war together, at times they also fought against one another in the villages, towns, and cities across the region.

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25 There were some Ohioans who fought for the Confederacy, but there were no references to those men found at all in this research. None of the families, letters, or newspapers wrote of Ohio men fighting for the Confederacy. Probably no more than a few thousand men from Ohio joined the Confederacy. Seven men from Ohio reached the rank of general in the Confederate army.
Stacy was not alone in his critical attitude regarding the war. *The Democratic Union* of Somerset, Ohio, maintained an antiwar position throughout much of the conflict. Their sentiments, even early in the war, explained that not all people in southeastern Ohio followed the patriotic excitement conveyed by some writers. In April 1861, the editor of *The Democratic Union* wrote, “We believe in repelling the invasion of our soil by any foreign or home-made element.” At this point, most Americans probably agreed with the editor’s views. However, he turned this basic American right of common defense, and turned it into blame for the war. He wrote, “We believe the secessionists have done wrong in seceding from the Union; we believe the Abolitionists have done a great wrong in causing them to secede.”

The editor was not in favor of the war, but he blamed everyone rather than just one side of the debate. This complicated the notion of enthusiastic patriotic support for the war. The editorial, written the month the war began, showed that there were seeds of discontent even as the first battles began. Peter J. Parish explains that one of the major reasons for the Republican and Democratic dispute over slavery within the northern political climate was because of inherent differences in the two parties’ attitudes toward reform. According to Parish, “Building on the reform movements of the preceding generation, the Republicans espoused the cause of human betterment, and, in the process, linked the idea of the Union to the cause of such betterment.”

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26 “Our Position,” *The Democratic Union*, Somerset, Perry County, Ohio, April 25, 1861, OHS Microfilm Collection, 34807, 34808.
Blaming abolitionists for the Civil War continued throughout the course of the hostilities. Northern Democrats tended to blame abolitionist Republicans for stirring the pot of discontent. In particular, proslavery southerners perceived the election of Abraham Lincoln, who had built a national reputation on his love for the Union as a direct attack on their beloved way of life. Northern Democrats, many of whom did not have a definitive stance on slavery, saw Lincoln’s election as a spark in the tinderbox of sectional discontent. In an effort to quell the abolitionist firebrands across northern communities, Democratic citizens and editors thrust blame upon abolitionists as backward or miscegenistic, hoping to convert the fence-riding moderates to vote in favor of peace, rather than a war for “black” rights.28

Abolitionists in southeastern Ohio responded to the accusations that they caused the war by largely ignoring the Democratic presses altogether. While some editors exchanged venomous comments between papers, many put their focus toward winning the war. For much of the conflict, abolitionists were unsure of the ultimate outcome of the war and continued to press their agenda to free the slaves. Another critique of the war’s purposes and accusation of abolitionist wrongdoing came from the Iron Valley Express. In an appropriately named article, “What are we fighting for!” the editor wrote, “The Union-loving citizens of the North say that we are fighting for the preservation of the Union, the enforcement of the Laws and the suppression of rebellion; but, the leading

28 Several articles articulate these sentiments, including “Our Position,” The Democratic Union, Somerset, Perry County, Ohio, April 25, 1861, OHS Microfilm Collection, 34807, 34808 and “What a Soldier Thinks About It,” The Portsmouth Times, Portsmouth, Scioto County, Ohio, March 14, 1863, Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm Collection, Portsmouth, Ohio.
republican newspapers and politicians say for the extermination of slavery!" The article’s author seemed to be legitimately asking “what are we fighting for?” In a rare moment in which a 19th century editor was not promoting an agenda, the author posited an actual question about the purposes of the war.

In a similar vein of political commentary, Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. of Marietta described to his son the effect of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, the document that legally freed the slaves living in the rebellious states of the Union. He wrote, “I think it is an awfully critical time for our country since the President’s proclamation in regard to slaves: it stirs up the ultra Vallandigam proslavery democracy--- will stop, or greatly retard volunteering...” Stone Sr. wrote of the “Vallandigham proslavery democracy,” referring to notorious Ohio Democratic Clement Vallandigham who was known for his efforts against the Republican war effort, especially in his bid for governor in the 1863 election. Stone, Sr. connoted that the change in focus regarding slavery and abolition would have a tangible effect in the patriotic service of the men. The uncertainty and inconsistency to the answer of the war’s purpose was part of why it continued for four years. Because people in southeastern Ohio and across the nation did not have a clear definition of patriotism and the direction of their country, they fought brutally over it.

While some believed that serving in the armed forces to save the Union was patriotic, others thought it to be the complete opposite. The editor of The Democratic

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29 “What are we fighting for!” Iron Valley Express, Jackson, Ohio, July 11, 1861, OHS Microfilm Collection Roll 8759.
30 Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. to Capt. Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., October 1, 1862, written from Marietta, Ohio (Washington County), Benjamin F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
31 For more on the popular reaction to the Emancipation, see Randall C. Jimerson, The Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 45-46.
Union wrote in January 1863, “This thing of obeying fanatical dictators in their unconstitutional and mad schemes upon the theory that doing so is patriotism, is a humbug, and ought to have been played out long ago.”

The editor here had some frustrations about the predominant definition of patriotism, hoping to challenge it for his readers and his community. The editorial continued, “Let Lincoln and his fanatical clan if they will act upon the theory that the murder of brothers in war for the freedom of the negro is ‘patriotism;’ –let the blood and the terrible retribution that is sure to come, fall upon their heads.” This final connotation, the blood and sacrifice of war, was a powerful rhetorical, visual, and communicative tool, intent on making those in favor of Lincoln think deeply about their support of him and his party.

Central to the editor’s definition of “patriotism” was the sacrifice of “brothers in war.” If their sacrifice was not for a worthy cause, then it was not truly patriotic. For others, however, this was exactly what justified patriotic behavior. Throughout the war, citizens continued to question whether the end goal of preserving the Union was worth the sacrifice of lives. For many, that calculation changed over time. What was acceptable in the early stages of the war eventually became unacceptable. Whether it was a loss in their own family or a collection of losses throughout the community, sometimes the tangible loss of loved ones resulted in a change of heart regarding the greater purpose

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32 “What now?” The Democratic Union, Somerset, Perry County, Ohio, January 8, 1863, OHS Microfilm Collection, 34807, 34808.

33 Ibid.
of the war. As Reid Mitchell writes, the dehumanization of military service could be offset by the gratitude of one’s country.34

There was a sense among some residents of southeastern Ohio that patriotism was about more than just fighting for one’s country. Patriotism was an attitude, supported with actions, towards the preservation of the nation rather than the self. James Harper, the editor of the Gallipolis Journal in Gallipolis, Ohio, (Gallia County) wrote about this in the fall of 1861. Gallipolis was a quintessential river town, along the Ohio River, providing a picturesque backdrop to an uncertain border.35 The editorial asserted, “While our noble volunteers are absent using bullets, let us not fail to do our part with ballots. The force and power of the one is physical, the other, moral.” Patriotism was as much political as it was military or sacrificial.

Elaborating on the definition of patriotism, the Gallipolis Journal editorial continued, “The South admit being deceived, in the number of their friends in the North, at the inception of this rebellion. Let us show by our unanimous vote for [Republican gubernatorial candidate David] Tod and those on the ticket, that they have gained none since.”36 Harper referred to the popular sentiment, particularly in southeastern Ohio, that there were “southern sympathizers” throughout the north, who had friends and family members in the south and wanted the Confederacy to succeed. In the summer of 1863, this was one of the preeminent arguments why Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan

35 The population of Gallipolis in 1860 was 3428. [link to census data]
36 No headline, Gallipolis Journal, September 26, 1861, OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648 and 17649.
came into Ohio because he thought he would receive aid from the locals. The editorial continued, under the assumption that the people of southeastern Ohio would vote for the war supportive Republican ticket, “The moral effect of this upon them will be tremendous. They will find that even the 200,000 in Ohio who were once opposed to coercing them, are now in the field against them.”\textsuperscript{37} This editorial implies a powerful sentiment that the voting public, by choosing a war supporting governor David Tod, under a loose definition of patriotism, were effectively “now in the field” fighting the rebels in their own way. This empowered those who were unable to physically fight and provided a simultaneous blow to the Confederacy (allegedly) and encouragement to the Union soldiers sacrificing so much for so many. Support for the war meant more than waving flags or saying prayers; it meant electing the right leaders to help ensure that the soldiers had the supplies and direction they needed to win the war. Adam I. P. Smith, a historian, writes about the political world on the northern home front. He explains that wartime activism through soldiers’ aid and voting contributed to an effort to create cohesion on the home front in support of the war.\textsuperscript{38}

The appeal for political involvement was not restricted to the war supporters. The editor of the \textit{Perry County Weekly}, an ardently antiwar newspaper, wrote, “But the great mass of the northern people chose to exercise their own judgment, independent of southern dictation, and the nigger-drivers appealed from ballots to bullets.”\textsuperscript{39} Since the

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{39} No headline, \textit{Perry County Weekly}, April 25, 1862, OHS Microfilm Roll 34901.
abolitionists won the election, they forced the “nigger-drivers,” or southern slave owners, away from politics and toward war. This editorial clearly placed the blame for the war on the abolitionists, who were responsible for provoking southern slaveholders into a war to protect their “property.”

The *Gallipolis Journal* elaborated on the importance of direct military participation in Gallia County. The newspaper said, “Let old Gallia at least do her duty. Let us see how many traitors we have amongst us, and in what townships their nests are located.”\(^{40}\) There was an increasing obsession throughout the war about the number of “traitors” who were living in southeastern Ohio. Much like the variety of definitions of patriotism, there were conflicting definitions of treason as well. The editor Harper elaborated, “The enemy are on the verge of attacking, or being attacked at all points. Longer resistance is scarcely possible. Our troops are done retreating. They are completely organized and equipped. Success is certain.”\(^{41}\) With supreme confidence in the Union forces, especially those from their home region, the editor emphasized support rather than the awful treason that some embraced. He explained, “To encourage them, and discourage the enemy we wish to present our ballot boxes an entire united front. You have assumed the position of Home Guards. The defense of your families and firesides is left in your hands.”\(^{42}\) The final line of personal responsibility left readers with a sense that home defense meant much more than wielding a rifle to fend off the rebel armies.

True patriotism, according to this particular editor, embodied not only standing in defense

\(^{40}\) No headline, *Gallipolis Journal*, September 26, 1861, OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648 and 17649.
\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Ibid.
with the rifle in hand, but also dropping a ballot in support of the pro-war Republican ticket. He explicitly made the civilians of Gallia County participants in the war. This was not merely empty rhetoric on the pages of a bombastic sheet. These words resonated with the people who sacrificed their lives, their families, and their fortunes on preserving the Union.

One of the most interesting points about this article from the *Gallipolis Journal* was its local argument. The editor called on the people of his own community to be active and supportive of the Union. He argued that their own men were fighting the war so it was, for the sake of patriotism and duty, necessary for the people at home to vote a certain way. Localism was a central component of the Civil War. Though soldiers met people from all over the country while in the army, it was their connection to local communities that supported and at times, hindered their ability to fight the war. While the local connection sometimes provided men with added incentive to fight, it also made them want to go home.

Patriotism had special duties and responsibilities on the home front as well. The editor of the *Gallipolis Journal* explained a unique form of patriotism to the people of Gallia County. He wrote that the farmers should plant and grow everything they could for the war effort. He said, “Men may fight without money, they cannot, without bread. You must furnish the stuff of life and in doing so, are contributing as much to the success of the Union cause as though you were actually in the field.”

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at home, perhaps unwilling or financially unable to fight the war because of family concerns, this article encouraged their routine activity as an act of patriotism. He continued, “Money is plenty in the country. Wealth is rolling upon you. You may be heavily taxed, but you will have the means to pay.”

Though many of the subscribers were probably poor, the editor’s comment brought perspective to the financial burdens of the war. The reality was that the war spurred industrial and agricultural productivity, which brought prosperity to many northern communities. The editor encouraged his readers, “Go to work with a will. The season is short. Lose not a day, and when you have planted all you intended, just plant one acre more.”

The soldiers needed the surplus, therefore it was a patriotic duty to cultivate the extra crops for the good of the country. As historian Frances Clarke explains, “To be an ideal Northern patriot during this war was to sacrifice self-interest in order to uphold the democratic republican system, either by suffering on behalf of the nation or by tending to those who suffered.”

Thousands of Union soldiers were farmers themselves before the war. However, this article emphasized the importance of what farmers do, which was to feed the nation. Earlier in the editorial, the writer explained that the army needed the food not only for themselves, but also to provide relief for the unwilling residents of the South, namely

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44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
poor whites and “contrabands,” the popular name for captured slaves. The sacrifices of farmers, planting that “one acre more” was one way in which they could contribute to the war effort. The editor of the Gallipolis Journal seemed interested in getting everyone in the county invested in the war effort. His definition of patriotism was broad, but in all circumstances was connected to the war effort. Rather than a bombastic pro-war message, ill defined, the editor provided direction for the people. They needed to work toward ending the war so that their friends, family, and neighbors could return from the killing fields and preserve the nation.

Women’s participation in the war effort was also patriotic. The river city of Portsmouth, in Scioto County, provided a location for contributions to the war effort in the form of volunteer soldiers, supplies, and women’s efforts. In an article appropriately titled “We’re All a Knitting” in The Portsmouth Times, the article encouraged women to continue making clothes and supplies for the soldiers. The editor wrote that the women, “...have no idea how warm a pair of socks feel to the soldier when he knows they were knit by the swift fingers, made swifter by the willing heart, of ‘the girl he left behind him.” The quote directly made the connection between home front support and the war effort in a clear expression of patriotism. For the women reading or hearing this particular passage, the message was obvious; by continuing their work for the soldiers, they might help win the war. The article continued, “We believe that the feet kept warm by the workmanship of their hands will never disgrace their fair donors by

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48 Portsmouth was the second largest city in southeastern Ohio according to the 1860 census with 6968 people. [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-11.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-11.pdf)
49 “We’re All a Knitting,” The Portsmouth Times, Lawrence County, Ohio, November 30, 1861, Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm Collection, Portsmouth, Ohio.
turning back, and will never come to a double-quick except it be toward the enemy.”

Again the editor’s communication explicitly connected the efforts of supportive women at home with the military might and bravery of the men on the battlefield. The implication was that without the support of the women at home, the men would not be able to do the courageous work of the soldier. Historian Jeanie Attie explains, “While men who volunteered for the army would be paid for their services, women’s patriotic devotion was only measurable by manual labor and the free donation of homemade goods.” As Attie asserts, though, the work of women ought to be given more consideration for its importance to the war effort.

Soldiers’ aid societies were one of the primary ways in which northern women contributed to the overall war effort and thereby provided patriotic support. Annie Leah Dean, a seemingly proud member of the Amesville, Ohio, branch of the Ladies Soldiers Aid Society, described their work thusly:

In the fall of 1862 some of the ladies of Amesville, and vicinity feeling desirous to cast in their mite for our country’s defense in the hour of her peril began to cast about in their minds to find what would do the most good and finding that the laws of the land and their own feelings prevented their entering into the struggle now going on but knowing that to comfort and cheer was their legitimate sphere they concluded that they could render the most efficient service by working for those who are so nobly standing as a living wall between ‘Their loved homes, and war’s desolation,’ and seeing that it would be unwise to rely upon the spasmodic efforts of a community as put forth in times of excitement as that would soon become wearsome and not be a steady good, so they determined to form an

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50 Ibid.
association to be called the Ladies Soldier’s Aid Society of Amesville Ohio and to send their contributions to the Cincinnati Branch U.S. Sanitary Commission.52

A closer analysis of Dean’s description of the Soldiers Aid Society reveals several important points. First, she wrote of a desire to “do the most good.” Second, she mentioned the “legitimate sphere,” admitting that for the gender conventions of their time, the women could not volunteer to fight. Third, she noted the limitations of “the spasmodic efforts of a community” that would, essentially, wear everyone out. The purpose of the organization, then, was to give women an opportunity to be of consistent and sustained service toward the nation. She noted their position as a living wall between loved ones and war’s desolation. Though she never used the term patriotism, it was evident that these various roles of the Soldiers Aid Society were ways in which she, and her fellow women, could contribute to the war effort and the ultimate survival of the Union. Explaining, almost preemptively, why they did what they did, Dean wrote later in the same report, “...all have a personal interest in this as there are but few who have not friends away in an enemies country and liable to fall a victim to the missiles of their foes or the ravages of disease.”53

In terms of supplies, clothes were some of the most important for the common soldier. From reliable shoes to well-fit shirts, soldiers were concerned with comfort as

52 “Secretary’s Report of Ladies Soldiers Aid Society, Amesville, Ohio,” September 16, 1862-June 15, 1863, Amesville (Athens County), Ohio, Annie Leah Dean Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 1681.
53 Ibid. None of these sources wrote specifically about how they reacted to women who did not contribute, but it was very clear that contributions were patriotic. Any attempt to understand their reactions to the other women would be speculation. For more on women’s involvement, see Giesberg, Army at Home, 9-11. See also, Nina Silber, Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
they marched and fought. In some instances, clothes from home were an answer to prayer and request. Some family members knew their soldiers so well they could make a shirt on a moment’s notice and have it off in the next mailing. For more elaborate projects, soldiers gave family members specific instructions where to have particular clothes made or purchased. Private George Wolfe of Ross County, gave specific instructions for the making of his clothes. He wrote a series of letters home to his parents requesting how they should handle his clothes, sending some to him and getting some in return. He wrote regarding his mother making him shirts, “If she wants to make me some more white shirts let her get whatever material she needs and draw on you for the necessary funds. She might also buy me some white handkerchiefs if she can get good ones- I would like to have them longer than the ones I have.”54 His preferences were evident and his family provided the much-needed support to ensure that he could acquire the clothes he deemed were necessary. Similar to Wolfe, Ferdinand Cowee requested rather abruptly, “I wish some of you women would knit me a pair of woolen gloves and send to me by mail, and when I am payed off I will well pay you for your trouble.”55 What he lacked in charm or persuasion, he made up for with his willingness to make the service economically profitable. Captain James Barker needed more shirts, but added a detail for his Aunt Charlotte to make the shirts “large around the neck” because due to sweating on the march, the shirts inevitably shrunk. He added “Would like to know how

54 George Wolfe, 149th Ohio National Guard, to parents in Chillicothe, Ross County, Ohio, May 22, 1864, written from Fort Marshall in Baltimore, Maryland, George Wolfe Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
55 Ferdinand P. Cowee, 36th OVI, to Julia M. Sprgue, Washington County, Ohio, September 3, 1862, written from the mouth of Antietam Creek, F.P. Cowee Collection, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.
to keep a shirt from shrinking." These details showed how, in even the most mundane everyday activities, soldiers and civilians fought the war together.

In addition to the requirements of home front support, one of the most important aspects of fighting the war came through the enlistment of soldiers from the region. In the summer of 1862 the Gallipolis Journal contained a series of articles encouraging men to join the ranks of the then-forming Ohio regiments. One article implored the “Young men of Gallia county, listen to the voice of your bleeding country. Leave your present occupations about Gauley to Secession sympathizers who will not, and ‘contrabands’ who dare not enter the army.” Just in the beginning of this tirade, it was obvious that the editor cast scathing judgment upon those who refused to serve their country. He continued, “Several of your friends are now striving to raise companies of volunteers. Send in your names promptly.” Quick action was necessary in this time of great need. The editor did not want these men to wait around and contemplate the reality of fighting, or possibly dying, for the Union. He emphasized the reputation of the state and the region when he wrote, “Save our noble State the disgrace of a draft. Show to our sister counties that ‘old Gallia’ is ready for the post of danger.” In an era of honor, even in the North, the local reputation of ‘old Gallia’ must have resonated with some readers, who wanted to make sure that their community was not the laughing stock of the region.

56 Captain James G. Barker, 36th OVI, to Aunt Charlotte, Washington County, Ohio, August 4, 1863, written from camp near University Place, Tennessee, Correspondence of Captain James G. Barker, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.
57 For more on the role of women in supporting the war effort, see Attie, Patriotic Toil, 1-5.
58 No headline, Gallipolis Journal, July 24, 1862, OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648 and 17649.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
The editor, James Harper, explained the immediacy of the situation and the reality of their border location by stating, “The enemy is at your doors. Already in a sister State they have polluted free soil. It is quite as likely your county may have to take its turn.”

Writing of the Confederate presence in Kentucky, the editor emphasized the impending danger. He repeated the localized argument, imploring his readers, “Are you willing to see your own firesides destroyed, and sa[i]d you absent as ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’ for others? It cannot be. Then turn your steps homeward. Fill up the ranks of our Gallia companies. Honor the State, the country, and yourselves.” Harper did not want his community to enjoy the benefits of freedom gained by the sacrifices of others. The final line, which made honor the central reason to fight, delineated the implications of the struggle at the personal, state, and national level.

The editor mentioned the “disgrace of a draft” here in the context of rallying Gallia County’s men. The draft became a difficult institution for southeastern Ohio because the people who chose not to go to war by the summer of 1863 were less than willing, even if forced. However, the sentiments expressed in this article point to the proximity of the enemy as well as the impending need for local men to serve. The final line encouraged men to serve on behalf of state, country, and self. This was more than honor or fighting for some loosely defined “cause.” For these men, according to this editor, their reason to fight had also to do with their local identity and self-preservation.

The *Gallipolis Journal* was not alone in rallying the men of southeastern Ohio for war. To the north in Vinton County, the *McArthur Journal* wrote similar rallying

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
messages in an effort to gain more recruits for the Ohio regiments. One such challenge, in the summer of 1861, read, “Here, in Vinton County, let us commence---let companies at once be organized in each and every neighborhood---let those companies be thoroughly drilled and ready, at a moment’s notice...” Like the editor of the *Gallipolis Journal*, this writer stressed the importance of immediacy. In the early war, the quick strike and ultimately speedy victory was an imperative. The editorial explained the purpose of the voluntarism, “…to go to the defense of our borders and to the defense of the Union men of Kentucky and Tennessee, that are now about to be trodden under foot by the iron heal of despotism. **Awake! AROUSE! BE UP AND DOING!**”63 This editor used colorful rhetoric in explaining the situation and encouraging action. Rather than the defense of Ohio, as other articles accentuated, this particular editor called on sympathy for the Unionists in the Kentucky and Tennessee. This was an intriguing point that the editor did not mention defending Ohio’s borders itself, despite the proximity of Confederate raiders in Kentucky and western Virginia. It was the patriotic and right action, according to this editor, for the men of Vinton County to serve for the common defense of the nation, even if that meant in Kentucky or Tennessee.

One of the frustrations of the pro-war parties in Ohio was the rising sentiment against the war. William McKnight, a soldier in the 7th Ohio Cavalry reacted to his wife’s comments about someone trying to take advantage of the family in his absence. He explained, “Is that all Boasted Patriotism amounts is to. To take the advantage of an

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The absent soldier would be the height of meanness." The context of the comment was that a neighbor was over charging Samaria McKnight, William’s wife, for some work being done on their family farm. His was upset that someone would do this while he sacrificed for his country. His rhetorical question about “Boasted Patriotism” showed that he was clearly offended by the man attempting to make what was to him too much profit from a soldier’s family. Patriotism in this instance for William McKnight meant that others should have been willing to contribute to the families and the welfare of the military men as their service was for everyone else.  

The editor of the McArthur Journal explained in the fall of 1861, “...while thousands of our honest men are out in the ‘tented field,’ enlisting in the work of putting down a rebellion which has for its object the overthrow of our free Government, we have at home men who in their ‘heart of hearts,’ are praying for the defeat of the friends of the Union.” Whether sympathetic due to family ties with the south or political affiliations against slavery or Republican government, there were evidently residents of southeastern Ohio who sympathized with the South. There were two different connotations expressed in this quotation that must be further examined. First, the editor wrote that the objective of the rebellion was the “overthrow of our free Government,” which misunderstood the purpose of the Confederacy, at best. Southern states wanted to split away from the Union, not alter it in terms of its Constitution or its system of government. Secondly, the

64 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), June 15, 1863, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 100.  
65 For an extensive discussion on the patriotic role of women’s work, see Silber, Daughters of the Union.  
author accused citizens of “praying” for the failure of the Union forces, which considered a religious element to the antiwar advocates. It was a leap of logic and a drastic measure to accuse non-supporters of the war of praying against the Union army. Though some may have been violently opposed to Union victory, many hoped to stay out of the fight not due to political expediency, but in the interest of self-preservation. To accuse antiwar advocates of praying against Union victory was rash and unfounded.

Although the tone was a bit difficult to understand, the main point of the article was to emphasize that there were some people living in Vinton County who wished the Confederacy would win the war. However, the editor wanted to contrast these home front enemies of the government with the brave soldiers off fighting the war. Though the desired effect of the article was not clear, it emphasized the key point that dissension was evident in southeastern Ohio, even to the people living there in the fall of 1861. Antiwar sentiment did not develop and grow over time due to the costs of the war. There were people who resisted the war from its very inception and others converted to it throughout the war. Their disputes with the administration intensified as the federal government further encroached on their lives through increased taxes and, much worse, conscription.

Despite the disunity present in the region of southeastern Ohio, some people still hoped to see the people join together in a unified effort. For example, the editor of the Lancaster Gazette explained, “The spirit of patriotism and war is abroad in our midst. The hatchet of partisan warfare is buried and the sword of the Union drawn forth in the country’s defense. But one sentiment—‘our country’—prevails, and men of all parties
are ready and willing to rally to its support.” While this was an idealistic dream, it did not develop in reality. Despite putting forth thousands to fight for the Union, the people of southeastern Ohio never really established the collective sentiment of “our country” that the editor of the Lancaster Gazette intended.

The “early war” sentiments carried well into the fall of 1862, when after the Battle of Antietam, President Abraham Lincoln declared his intention to deal with the institution of slavery in the South. Though it was not his jurisdiction to eliminate slavery (without Congressional approval) in the loyal states, it was possible to strike a blow at the insubordinate states regarding slaves who ran by the thousands into the lines of the Union army. The document that theoretically freed the slaves in the rebellious states was the Emancipation Proclamation. It officially became policy on January 1, 1863. Upon its implementation, many northerners saw the purpose of the war shifting from a war about the preservation of the Union to one about the destruction of slavery. Though the document did not have the desired effect of emancipation, it did have the seemingly undesired effect of upsetting northern Democrats.

Union soldiers, including those from southeastern Ohio, were troubled and frustrated by the Emancipation Proclamation and how it, according to some estimations, altered the war aims for the Union army. One soldier explained in the Portsmouth Times, writing about a generic Union soldier, “He has left his home and family through patriotic motives, expecting to maintain or assist his family with the wages he was to receive from

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67 “Excitement in Lancaster” Lancaster Gazette, Lancaster, Ohio, April 18, 1861, OHS Microfilm Collection Roll 26705.
68 This was a tumultuous situation for soldiers and officers, attempting to accommodate these war refugees who were happily manumitted by the Union army.
the Government he volunteered to uphold, but the wages are not forthcoming at the stated periods, and we have waited six months to be paid and have not got it yet.” This soldier wrote that patriotism was a direct motivation for the soldiers. He also showed how the lack of proper governmental support turned some soldiers away from that patriotism. Lack of being paid was not acceptable for soldiers, many of whom left subsistence lives as farmers or laborers.

Though soldiers received support from their own small communities of influence in friends and family, in the spring of 1863 the Union members of the Ohio Senate sent out their candid support for the soldiers. The *Lancaster Gazette* reserved its front page for the lengthy message from the legislators in support of their soldiers. They wrote:

> In behalf of the loyal people of Ohio we respond to your patriotic and thrilling appeals. Men who have dedicated their lives to their country, and above their devotion by toils and sacrifices, have the right to address us, reposing is peace and prosperity at our quiet homes. Ohio owes you a debt of gratitude which money cannot discharge nor words express. You have achieved by your gallant deeds a distinction which will brightly mark the page of history, and impart to the annals of the State and imperishable lustre; and you may be measured that our loyal people gratefully appreciate their obligation to your valor and patriotism.

The last word of this excerpt was most important because it summarized all of the listed sacrifice, a payment that “money cannot discharge nor words express” with the simple word “patriotism.” Though different people expressed patriotism in different ways, for the legislators of Ohio, particularly the Union members, the service of the men fighting for Ohio and the Union really were patriots. Though others may have argued that

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69 “A Soldier’s Letter,” *Portsmouth Times*, Portsmouth, Lawrence County, Ohio, March 21, 1863, Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm Collection, Portsmouth, Ohio.

70 “Ohio to the Soldiers” *Lancaster Gazette*, Lancaster, Ohio, April 30, 1863, OHS Microfilm Collection Roll 26705.
resisting the war or letting the Confederacy go were patriotic as well, this quotation explicitly proved that some Ohio senators supported the war and the soldiers who fought it. It may be impossible to prove just how many soldiers got a hold of this particular message and it did not appear in every newspaper. However, for those who did see it, the message must have been encouraging. Their state government supported them and their definition of patriotism.

The senators continued in their dispatch, explaining further details on the extent of their support and even more encouragement for the soldiers. They wrote, “We say to you, our brave countrymen, that our wishes, our prayers, our purses, and if need be our blood, shall be given to sustain you in your places of peril. We have no politics, and no party, but the Union and the Constitution.” For soldiers who had received letters and comments on the antiwar sentiment at home, these words must have helped sustain them throughout the war. The message ended with a final blast of encouragement, “Wait and watch and fight a little longer; and the great, triumph for you, for us, and for the world will come. Justice, truth, humanity and the sympathies of the good and true in all lands are with us. And He who guided our fathers through the perils of the Revolution will go before us and be our guard as we advance to the overthrow of the rebellion.” The final patriotic definition for the soldiers receiving this message was that of the “Revolution.” Of course both sides invoked memories of the American Revolution, but this was a formal note of encouragement from the Ohio legislature telling soldiers that, to do their duty, they had to follow God, here defined as just “He” and embrace the memory of “our

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
fathers” as they conquered the “perils” of the Revolution. The layers of patriotic language were numerous and helped to define the “cause” for which the soldiers fought, the civilians supported, and everyone suffered.

The conflicts surrounding patriotism remained an important factor throughout the course of the war. The people of southeastern Ohio questioned which sacrifices were worthwhile and which were not. While some viewed the sacrifices of life and limb necessary to preserve the nation, others disagreed with the war aims that were directly connected to slavery. This national conflict exhibited itself in southeastern Ohio’s newspapers and in the streets.

The realities of war and the sacrifices that people had to make for the sake of patriotism grew over the course of the war. The citizens of southeastern Ohio experienced great hardships of physical damage, emotional damage, and the wounding or loss of loved ones. Coping with these hardships created a tension with the extensive debate over patriotism. The collective adventure of the early war faded quickly when the realities of hardship set in for the people of southeastern Ohio. Dealing with the fight for patriotism in the midst of war was not easy. Soldiers and their home front supporters faced considerable hardships. Examining the sacrifices made by the people of southeastern Ohio shows precisely how they fought the war with their soldiers.
Chapter 2

“Wars and Rumors of War:” Southeastern Ohio’s Correspondence on Combat

Soldiers created, passed, and heard outrageous rumors about their service throughout the Civil War. The soldiers of southeastern Ohio were certainly no exception to this. They often reported the imminent defeat of the Confederacy years prior to the actual event. Soldiers wrote about possible travel plans, forays into horrific firefights, or back home for furloughs. This chapter, which accents both the actual combat the soldiers faced and the rumors of it, shows the uncertainty that these men confronted on a daily basis. The point of exchange of letters was extraordinarily important for both soldiers and civilians. Some of the common threads of those letters were the speculations and rumors of war, which traveled between home and battle fronts in nearly every epistle. Whether passing news to loved ones at home or speculating about an unknown future, wars and rumors of wars were part of the communication between the battle and home fronts during southeastern Ohio’s Civil War.

Combat and the trials of war were central to the soldier’s experience and they wrote home about them. The families and friends on the home front then, shared in the war with their soldiers by reading and discussing these difficulties. Also, soldiers and civilians alike circulated rumors about the war itself. The war became the most important event in their lives and this chapter shows how that took shape. The chapter contributes to historiography by accenting the “rumors of war” aspect. This is extremely prevalent in the writings of soldiers, yet historians have not given rumors much serious scholarly
attention. Historians focus on what happened rather than what the soldiers and their associates thought might happen. The rumors though, humanize and enliven historians’ understanding of the Civil War. The people who fought the war, at home and in the ranks, did not know the outcome. They lived a life of anxiety focused on the conclusion of the war.

Soldiers wrote home about their experiences in combat, their conditions as soldiers, and speculations about the overall situation of the war. Civilians at home wrote back about their experiences of life at home, their conditions as a result of the war, and their own ruminations regarding the outcome of the war. Taken together, these wars and rumors of war portray both the uncertainty of the war itself and reveal the central significance of the war in their lives. Even though not every citizen from southeastern Ohio donned the blue to fight for God and country, they were combatants in the war by virtue of their support for their neighbors. These reports of war and rumors about the war contribute yet another layer to the connection between the two.

When soldiers confronted war, it was foreign to them. They did not understand the preparation for war, life in the camps, the life of a soldier, and certainly not battle. The new and obscure experience of being a soldier elicited numerous responses of surprise and confusion. The following accounts, written by soldiers during the war, give a sense of the way in which they coped with the conditions of war and attempted to express its foreignness and their own anxieties to their friends and families at home that encountered the war in totally different ways.
Though there were thousands of soldiers’ letters reporting home the conditions of war, Ferdinand Cowee, a soldier in the 36th Ohio, wrote a letter to his friend Julia that detailed the effects of the war upon soldiers as men. He explained that “A soldier is not only denied chance and opportunity to improve his mind and I might say physical powers but then there is the essential society of parents, brothers, sisters, and female department without which man will become demoralized, especially when there is so many of the latter thrown together.”\(^1\) His spiritual grounding helped him to cope with his situation and he described, “May God grant the day may soon come when we can return to our homes. How happy I should be. I fear too happy for my own physical good. How many homes would be made a paradise! How many hearts would leap for joy at such glorious news.”\(^2\) His letter was not without hope as he wrote, “You may think from my writing that I am disheartened but I am not. I merely have written so to let you know the condition of those who have gone to war, not but what your own judgment must have told you such in your own meditative moments. No I am not discouraged but on the contrary, I have great hope that this war will come to a close before long, providing our head men do their duty.”\(^3\) This long quotation from Cowee summarized many of the feelings often repeated by soldiers. Though they did not enjoy the soldier’s life, they believed that it was necessary and that ultimately God would see them through it. They

\(^1\) Ferdinand P. Cowee, 36th OVI, to Julia M. Sprgue, Washington County, Ohio, September 3, 1862, written from the mouth of Antietam Creek, F.P. Cowee Collection, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
needed their home friends to be a sustaining force to which they could express their frustrations.

In another example that connected the battle and home fronts, William McKnight of the 7th Ohio Cavalry, described to his wife, “The sound of the Drum is as comon as the ring of the old Anvil and as little noticed but oh what an awful Contrast. The one portends Peace Pleasure Home Happiness and evrything pertaining to the comforts of this world whilst the other portends war with all its accompaing results of Carnage of Bloodshed sighs and tears widows and Orphants misery poverty and destruction... “

Explaining further the details of carnage he witnessed and how it distanced him from home, he wrote, “...even this language to an Ohioan conveys not the least idea of the terrible sufferings of the poor dependants of the Suthern Union soldier who has had to flee his country to escape imediate destruction.”

McKnight related his identity as an Ohioan, connoting a state-based character. More importantly though, McKnight expressed the juxtaposition that in order to preserve peace at home he believed that it was necessary to personally face the carnage of war. This quotation summarized the tension of soldier motivation and purpose that few soldiers articulated as pointedly as McKnight.

At the heart of the war, of course, was the combat that would determine the winner of the contest. Both Union and Confederate forces were arrogant at the beginning of the war, expecting an easy path to victory. In the wake of early fighting such as the

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4 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), May 15, 1863, written near Somerset, Virginia, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 84.

5 Ibid.
Battle of Shiloh, soldiers and leaders realized that the war would last much longer. The fact was that leaders on both sides had comparable training, armies on both sides were similarly armed, and all had an ethic of honor they sought to uphold. They realized that it would not be an easy war. They were fighting their own countrymen and knew it would be brutal. Benjamin Stone, Sr. wrote of their friends the Putnams, regarding the interconnectedness of the north and south, as well as the division that developed between the two. “From what Putnam (son of Douglas) says of the Putnam and Nicholson families, in Tennessee, there exists a very bitter feeling even towards their relatives in the north. It is to be feared, this bitterness, in rebellion generally will continue many long years, after the rebels are forced to submit.” Benjamin Stone, Sr. circulated a rumor to his son and other soldiers from the home front. Though this was not a tactical report, it was indeed the kind of testimony that gave an indication of the attitudes and condition of the enemy. It connected the civilians, in this case the father at home with the combatant, personified here by the son.

Most nineteenth century soldiers had no previous experience with combat before the Civil War. Some saw battle in the Mexican American War, but most had never fired a gun at another human. Combat gave men an opportunity to experience brutality, test their own bravery, and prove their masculinity. The fact that they fought with other men from their communities was extremely important. Their actions on the battlefield would

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7 B.F. Stone Sr., Marietta, Washington County, Ohio written to B.F. Stone Jr., Co. C, 73rd OVI, July 5, 1862, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio. In another letter on October 16, 1862 Stone made a similar comment about the Goddard family, whose relatives in Kentucky were secessionists, but Charley, their friend, was a “true blue Union man.”
follow them home if they survived the war. It was imperative for the soldiers to conduct themselves with honor and bravery. As military historian Earl Hess describes in one of his chapter titles, they were “innocents at war.”

The civilians at home were unable to grasp the realities of combat. This was both a frustration and a blessing. Soldiers did not want their loved ones to have to experience combat. However, it remained a difficult point of communication throughout the war as soldiers attempted to convey what they saw, heard, smelled, and felt. Cynthia Stone, the sister of Benjamin Stone, Jr., attempted to understand the conditions that her brother endured when she wrote, “...so you will soon be in the midst of strife and carnage, it is painful to me to think of it how much worse to be a part of it.” Though she could not fully understand it, she knew that it was something important to share with him. Cynthia expressed that it was “painful” for her to think of him in battle; this expression exemplified the kind of connection between home and battle front that was so significant in southeastern Ohio (and presumably other locations in the rural North) that fighting and sustaining a brutal Civil War required the moral and physical support of those at home.

Reputation in battle was extremely important to the soldiers. When accusations of cowardice or desertion arose amid the chatter of war, soldiers immediately sought to stop all perceived falsehoods and inaccuracies. In the wake of the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863, Benjamin Stone, Jr. wrestled with the reputation of the Army of the Potomac’s Eleventh Corps. The Eleventh Corps faced great derision for their actions

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10 Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle*, 74.
at Chancellorsville because they fled the field when surprise attacked. He wrote in a letter home, dealing with the charge of cowardice, “The curse of the 11th Corps remains upon us. I am more and more convinced as I learn the facts that the defection of the Corps lost us a splendid victory. And that defection was in fact due to cowardly soldiers and in part to poor generalship which did not scout the front and flanks of the position and prevent a surprise.”

He continued, describing their specific role in the conflict, absolving he and his comrades. “At all events whether we can get the facts before the public or not our Brigade had no shoe in the accursed skedaddle. We did everything we were ordered to do and never flinched an inch before any enemy we saw the whole movement.”

Proving themselves in battle was a way in which Civil War soldiers demonstrated their masculinity to one another and to their home communities. For some, fighting in the war proved a rite of passage into manhood. This was one of the reasons why so many young men wanted to go off and fight. In what they perceived to be an “easy” victory, young men believed that they could prove their toughness. Van Brown described facing combat to his mother after he heard a ball “whiz” over his head, “I instinctively ducked my head, feeling sort of shamed I looked around at the Co and saw 2/3 of them ducking their heads, this was the first fire after that there wasn’t a man

12 Ibid.
flinched (excepting 1 or 2 cases not worth mentioning).”

Brown considered his own “flinching” within the context of the other soldiers there. It was a way to prove his masculinity that, although he flinched, he was just like his comrades. The fact that Brown relayed this event to his mother meant that he was not ashamed of it and wanted her to understand that he did his duty. He did not write about combat in gendered terms, but he certainly expressed his conduct under fire as acceptable.

The reality of war, however, was not always testing soldiers’ mettle in battle but rather surviving in camp. In fact, soldiers spent most of their careers marching, waiting, and merely existing. Soldiers often wrote about the minutiae and doldrums, which were a daily part of military life. In a bit of an odd comparison, Captain James Barker told his friend Harriet Dyan that “Soldiering is a bit like women’s work the same thing over day after day.” They described the footsores, the sicknesses, and the hard living that soldiers often endured. It was unclear whether they wanted sympathy or merely hoped that their families could understand what it took to survive in the army.

Although nineteenth century Americans walked and rode horses quite a bit, very few men were prepared for the amount of traveling they had to do in the Union army. William Tall wrote home to his family about the difficulty of travel for soldiers. His

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14 Van Brown, 4th West Virginia, September 23, 1862, written from Point Pleasant, Virginia, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 2, Folder 175, Athens, Ohio.
15 Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army*, (New York: New York University, 2010), 172-173. Foote argues that there was a contested sense of manhood in the Union army based largely on social class. Many of the soldiers in this study were a part of that clash, blurring the line between lower social class in terms of occupation, while still desiring a higher class in terms of gentlemanly conduct. For more on the psychology of proving themselves in battle, see Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 79.
16 Captain James Barker, 36th OVI, to Harriet Dyan, Washington County, Ohio, February 16, 1862, Correspondence of Captain James G. Barker, 36th Ohio National Guard, Co. A, Washington County Historical Society, Box 500, Marietta, Ohio.
letter explained, “I am nearly worn out. Wee have been in the saddle every day this month and when wee did stop to rest, we had to lay in line of battle. Wee marched through mountain paths most of the way. You would think them inaccessible to anything except the goat.”17 Though expressing frustration with the tedious work of soldiering, Tall explained the conditions with a humorous tone regarding the goat paths. For his family at home, knowing about this difficulty probably gave them a greater sense of fighting the war with Tall, though they were not physically present. Van Brown wrote a similar description regarding the equipment and the work of the soldier. He described to his mother, “We will have to march pretty slow as we will have to carry our knapsacks which is a pretty heavy load when a man has all his worldly possessions in it, including arms and equipments, 50 or 60 rounds of cartridges with an ounce ball in each, which in itself makes a pretty good load, also 3 days rations.”18 Referring to a specific march through Kanawha County, Virginia, Van clearly understood the work that stood before him and wanted his family, especially his mother to know about this hardship.

Also commenting on the challenges of soldiering, Benjamin Stone, Jr. wrote to his girlfriend and future wife, Olivia Allston about the difficult conditions of marching. He described a journey the 73rd Ohio took in the spring of 1862, “All this sounds as if our soldier life was ‘always gay,’ but the prospect before us is glory enough. We are under orders to march to Beverly, forth-six miles distant, and thence to Cheat Mountain distant

17 William A. Tall, 2nd West Virginia Cavalry, to his mother and sisters, Gallia County, Ohio, May 21, 1864, written from camp at Bungers Mill, 4 miles west of Louisburg, West Virginia, William A. Tall Collection, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
18 Van Brown, 4th West Virginia, May 4, 1862, written from Camp Piatt, Kanawha County, Virginia, to his mother in Athens County, Ohio. Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 2, Folder 145, Athens, Ohio.
about the same space.” He then, with a similar sarcastic tone, wrote about how they would accomplish the feat. “Now for our ability to perform. We have two hundred sick. We have six two-horse teams—half-starved, sick and balky. The roads are worse than ever before in the memory of the oldest inhabitants. The mud is on an average knee-deep, and getting deeper; the storms of the equinox have just begun and have all the appearance of a ‘protracted meeting.’ On the route, we must bivouack in the mud. O, what a prospect!” In sharing this circumstance with his future wife, Stone found a way to share the pains of the war with her. Although it is impossible to know Allston’s reaction to this report, the mere fact of their sharing its message reveals the intimate connection in the shared suffering of war.

The conditions while away on campaign were often quite difficult for the soldiers. They described a variety of undesirable conditions from sore feet to an inability to sleep. Joseph Hoffhines wrote to his wife about the terrible sleeping arrangements, “…the next night we made some tents with our Blankets but then we had no nothing to cover with and it was so cold that I could not sleep got up at midnight and patiently watched for the morning the next night we had to leave camp at one o’clock and so we got no sleep again.” Night after night of little or no sleep made the men susceptible to diseases. As family members read these types of comments, the people at home felt the hardships of the soldiers and returned encouraging and often sympathetic letters.

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20 Ibid.
21 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Chattanooga, Tennessee, November 1, 1864, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.
In addition to the trials of travel, soldiers had a difficult time adjusting to the food provided by the Union army. Lorenzo Dalrymple, for example, described the soldier’s diet in vivid detail to his mother Sophia in the fall of 1861:

Some time he don’t git enough to eat and other times git more than two men can eat and that aint all they will learn how to steal what ever they can git there hands on if convenient, Some times we git the best quality to eat and other times we git the poorest quality Sometimes we git meat that will crawl off the table as fast as we can put it on the table. Some times we git the best kind of beef and other times we get bones to know like dogs, we git good bakers bread some times and other times we git Sea crackers and they are crackers for certain when we can’t bite them we take and boil them to make them tough and the tare them to pieces and make pills of them and swallow them and when we sleep we roll up in a blanket like an indian with Some Straw to lay on

Dalrymple mixed a bit of accurate description of soldier life with the flair of nineteenth century hyperbole. His comments showed that he had complaints about their food, yet was still able to joke about the conditions. Not only did this passage humanize Dalrymple, it supported the amicable relationship he had with his mother that he could make such jokes and lighthearted comments amidst war. This was a way in which he could share his suffering with his mother without being so negative so as to bring down her morale as well.

George Kidwell also wrote home about the conditions that soldiers experienced. He wrote:

The boys are all well considering the circumstances they live in the food is crackers and coffee and molasses sometimes we have meat well we all live happy as a king we don’t care if it snows our company went out on piquett this morning except Corporal Kidwell and good luck to him he has not been on guard since we left Paducah I am exempt from duty now by being color guard not praising myself

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22 Lorenzo Dalrymple, 56th OVI, to his mother Sophia Dalrymple, Gallia County, Ohio, November 20, 1861, written from Camp Morrow, Portsmouth, Ohio, Dalrymple Family Civil War Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
any but I will say this I am the only one of 8 guards that has been faithful to his flag all the rest will stray away from camp and when the colors are called out I am the only one that is on hand23

Kidwell’s testimony gave himself accolades for his personal conduct. Fittingly, Kidwell’s comments to his father solidified several of the themes of patriotism, masculinity, and service to country, all summarized by this service of standing by his flag. Kidwell acknowledged that his comrades in arms were unwilling to do their part, which strayed a bit from the norm. These men wanted their home communities to be aware of what they went through.24 In many ways, these testimonies helped the people at home to understand the soldier’s plight and why they needed so much support. The commiseration then, helped them fight the war together.

A few months later, Kidwell gave a bit more detail on the life of the soldier. He expressed the difficulty of service, yet also a tacit devotion to home and a desire to be there. He wrote, explaining the connection between his service and his home:

Although it was hard on a mans constitution to march in summer time and carry a knapsach Gun Cartridge Box and Rations all of which will weigh from 60 to 75 lbs I tell Pa I some times wished I was in the old Mill with you last summer when I had to shoulder my old gun and start off sometimes at 2 o’clock at night that was what I used to hate to do but I love the soldiers life for all of that if I could but see my dear Parents once in a while I would be satisfied it goes kind of hard for a boy to be absent from home a year at once the first time he was ever away from his Mama that is the way with me you know.25

Kidwell wrote that he “loved” soldier life if only he could see his parents. This was a remarkably common sentiment. Kidwell’s comments about “time away from

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Mama” expressed a sense of homesickness. Kidwell, like others, emphasized that the true difficulty in soldiering was not the work or service itself, but being away from those he held dear.

The draw home was powerful and irresistible for some soldiers, despite it being unacceptable to those in charge of the Union army. Lorenzo Dalrymple, the soldier whose humorous description of food appeared earlier, explained the complications of service, particularly while the soldiers were so close to home. He wrote to his mother that “some of the boys are getting so lonesome that they break guard and go home and then the Col has to sent somebody after them and the cost and trouble of gitting them comes out of their wages...”26 His solution to the problem was to simply advance into enemy territory. He continued, “...it would be a benefit for some of the boys if they was in an enemys Country they wouldent lose their wages nor perge their oath breaking guard.”27 This situation combined several important factors; the Union army had difficulty mobilizing its forces into meaningful action, soldiers camped near home wanted to be with their loved ones, and the army had a tall task of maintaining discipline within a volunteer force. Pioneering historian Bell I. Wiley writes about this influence of negative home letters on the soldiers. He writes, “Letters bringing any sort of bad news from home were apt to be upsetting, and if they told of want, sickness, neglect or

26 Lorenzo Dalrymple, 56th OVI, to his mother Sophia Dalrymple, Gallia County, Ohio, December 28, 1861, written from Camp Morrow, Portsmouth, Ohio, Dalrymple Family Civil War Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
27 Ibid.
persecution by kinfolk, unfriendliness of neighbors, or indicated a weakening of marital bonds, they might lead to complete demoralization and desertion.”

Soldiers who were off fighting sometimes mocked those who stayed home to fight in the militia units. Lemon Devol a veteran of the 62nd Ohio who went home because of wounds, wrote to his friend Martin while in the hospital in Beaufort, South Carolina. He said, “I hear that the militia were called out, but I suppose they are all at home again before this time, though probably telling their tales of hardship and privation. Oh! Ain’t it funny to be a soldier for a few weeks, just long enough to relish hard tack and salt horse? If I have not made some delightful meals on that, then call me a Tartar. I have been suffering for fried crackers for two or three weeks now.” His mockery dripped from the pages, yet its truth about the life of a soldier was powerful. He was unhappy in the hospital and this letter to his former comrade poked fun at those who complained of their suffering as militia men; a sacrifice that Devol apparently believed was less than that of the volunteer soldier.

Soldiers routinely wrote to explain where they marched to, where they stood guard, and where they fought. These details were meant to inform those at home, but also to provide a record of their actions. These combat narratives were at times accurate. The battle accounts proved, for many soldiers, their sense of honor because it gave evidence of honorable conduct in battle. Some soldiers were surprised of their ability to stand fast in battle. Others wrote with a defensive tone, expressing frustration or anxiety

29 Lemon Devol, 62nd OVI, to friend Martin Andrews, 62nd OVI, August 3, 1863, written from General Hospital Number 3, Beaufort, South Carolina, Lemon Devol Collection, Washington County Historical Society, Box 504, Marietta, Ohio.
regarding their performance. It was obvious though that the soldiers cared about what others thought of them in battle.

Benjamin Stone, Jr. described one conflict in which he participated. He wrote to his father, “For an hour or so the bullets whistled like hail, but nobody flinched. Then they fled, having lost some 10 killed, more wounded and about forty prisoners. We took possession of the town, captured some stores, armes and horses and then returned to New Creek.”

He continued by describing what happened after the skirmish, “On the return, Maj. Long and myself and 16 men went upon a scout. We had some fighting to do among the hills, captured two prisoners and six horses. It was quite a spicy time.”

Stone described this brush with the enemy as “spicy.” The entire communication seemed a bit flippant in the way that he commented on the fighting and the results. Not every battle went down in history as the most important. Soldiers often described these kinds of interactions in their letters home. It was in this shared communication, however, that men like Benjamin Stone, Jr. fought the war along with his aged father, Benjamin Stone, Sr.

Soldiers often had a sense of extremely significant battles and wanted to ensure that the stories of those events made it home. For example, John A. Brown wrote to his wife about the Crater at the Battle of Petersburg, “This is a day never to be forgotten in the history of America. You will hear of the explosion of the magazine at this place

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31 Ibid.
today. It is in vain for me to give you a history, and will not attempt it as you will get an account of it in the paper. I just write a few lines to inform you of my safety.”

Brown understood the battle as being important in “history” and he was correct. The Crater explosion was a unique technological accomplishment in which Union engineers sent soldiers tunneling under the Confederate line and detonated a massive charge. Though the result was not the tactical masterpiece they expected, it was indeed a historic event. He wanted his wife to know that he was a part of the event and that he was safe.

Andrew Jones of the 76th Ohio, had a grasp not only of his personal importance to the war but the larger strategy of the Union army. He explained to his father while in Georgia, “Atlanta the great object of the campaign we have at last taken. It was a point of importance to the cinfederacy. There were four railroads running into it, thus connecting it with the surrounding country and enabling them to supply their army while it was here with ease and facility than they can any other point in this state.”

In addition to Atlanta’s transportation importance, Jones also pointed out the industries there as well: “It contained also large iron manufactories which were engaged in the making of arms and ammunitions of war, besides it was the great depot of supplies for the whole South West. This is now lost to them, and the loss is irreparable.” Jones explained the strategic importance of the capture of Atlanta, which helped his father to understand the overall mission of the army and connected the two as they fought the war together.


33 Andrew Jones, Co. D, 76th Ohio, to parents, Washington County, Ohio, April 5, 1864, written from East Point, Georgia, Washington County Historical Society, Box 505, Marietta, Ohio.

34 Ibid.
John Benedict wrote to his sister Clarissa of Meigs County about the Battle of Chattanooga. He said, “We have had the hardest fought battle ever fought on the continent. We have suffered greatly. I have come out so far without a scratch. Sergt. A.S. Camp had his right arm shot off and is probably a prisoner. Sergt. Blazer was shot dead. There are 10 more of my company missing. I do not know whether they are dead or alive.”

Benedict’s opening salvo of the “hardest fought battle ever fought on the continent” provided some sense of the enormity of the fight in his own mind. There was a sense from the rest of his comment that he felt bewildered, lost, and uncertain. This chaos of combat must have been difficult for his family members to read.

In addition to the many large-scale or famous battles, southeastern Ohio’s soldiers took part in hundreds of skirmishes as well. James Oliver wrote of several stories in and around Summersville, Virginia, where his regiment the 36th Ohio engaged the local secessionists in bitter skirmishes. Many of these conflicts did not significantly alter the outcome of the war, but they represented the staunch resistance of the rebels and the intervention of the Ohio volunteers.

Joseph Hoffhines wrote to his wife about his experience with guerrillas. “We are now in the enemies country and they are prowling around us in Guerrillas Bands. Four day ago fifteen of our men went out on a forageing Expedition and in twelve miles from camp they were captured by a Guerrilla band, nine of them were murdered but the rest got away. Some were shot down some were hung and

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35 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to his sister Clarissa Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, September 21, 1863, written from Chattanooga, Tennessee, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.

36 For more on James Oliver’s experience, see several of his letters between the Winter of 1861 and the Spring of 1862, Civil War Letters of James Oliver, Marietta College Special Collections, Civil War Box 1, Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio.
two had their throats cut our cavalry found them the next day, after the deed was done.”

Fortunately for Hoffhines and his remaining comrades, “one of the Boys of our company made his Escape but they caught the other and cut his throat, this was all that went from Co E two that were killed were of the number that left Columbus with us.”

This harrowing account demonstrated just how difficult the fighting was at times during the Civil War. Soldiers did not always sanitize their reports of war when writing home. It was part of the shared risk of soldier service that both soldiers and their families worried about the possibility of death.

One of the memorable aspects of the Civil War was the emergence of trench warfare. Benjamin Stone, Jr. described it in letters home, showing that not all of the battles were dramatic or romantic, “…with our picks and shovels we dig like dear life (on our side of the fence) a trench, say three feet deep and eight feet wide throwing the dirt over the partition to make solid work.”

He explained for his family, “We pack in the earth tight, go over to the other side after dark and throw up dirt on the outer front until we have an embankment say ten feet thick and five feet high. Then we sit or lie down in our trench or put up our tents in rear of it.”

Stone, Jr. was satisfied with the quality of

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37 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Kingston, Georgia, November 11, 1864, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.

38 Ibid.

39 Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73rd OVI, to Olivia Allston, Washington County, Ohio, August 8, 1864, written from Atlanta, Georgia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, The Civil War Letters of Captain B.F. Stone, Jr. 73rd Regiment, O.V.I. (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2002), 140.

40 Ibid.
his working stating that, “Bullets cannot come through the wall of earth and no ordinary cannon shot will perforate it.”

In addition to these accounts of what happened, soldiers and civilians both loved to speculate about the war. Soldiers wrote about the possible moves their army might make or possible battles they might fight. Civilians wrote about the impending end of the war, prospects of new or different leaders, and often spread rumors about the conduct of soldiers who were in other parts of the war. These “rumors of war” served to increase anxiety for nearly everyone involved, from the soldiers in the field to their loved ones at home. However, these rumors and speculations were a unifying force that allowed the two groups to fight the war together because they communicated about possible troop movements, war strategies, and how the ultimate goal might be reached to win the rebellion and return home. Rumors were so common that Andrew Jones wrote home, after hearing of the fall of Richmond in April 1865. He intoned, “I hope it may prove to be true this time.” These types of reports were so prevalent that soldiers hearing the proverbial cry of “wolf” almost did not believe the end of the war when it finally came. One of these rumors came hesitantly from Van Brown, who in the summer of 1862 announced that the Union army had captured Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. He wrote, “Among the thousand ‘rumors afloat’ is the one that Richmond is ours. We do

41 Ibid.
42 Andrew Jones, Co. D, 76th Ohio, to parents, Washington County, Ohio, April 6, 1865, written from East Point, Georgia, Washington County Historical Society, Box 505, Marietta, Ohio.
not give much credence to this one but hope that it may prove true to the very letter.”

Sadly for Brown and his comrades in arms, the rumor was not true. They had to fight another three years before it became reality.

The most common rumors were speculations of troop movement, either by the enemy or by the Union army. John M. Benedict provided a typical example of this when he wrote to his father Jabez: “It is rumored that we start for Columbus, KY tomorrow, but wherever we go you may be sure we will not be idle for we are in the enemies country now. The rebels are all around us as thick as bees. We won’t be here a week without having a brush with some of them.” This type of speculation happened in nearly every context of the war. Most soldiers probably wrote these because their families and friends cared where they were located. However, it was also pragmatic; for letters to get to soldiers in a timely fashion they had to have both the unit affiliation and the location as near correct as possible to avoid having mail get lost. This information helped friends and family members stay connected with their soldiers. It was often weeks between the time that soldiers and their families made contact, so having the opportunity to speculate on the whereabouts of their soldiers gave those at home a point to ponder.

Some of the rumors that really irritated soldiers were about their conduct in camp. Stories frequently made it home about soldiers participating in an activity deemed immoral or worse, cowardly. A denial of such stories was also common. John A. Brown

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43 Nelson Van Vorhes to sister Almyra Brown (Athens County), July 17, 1862, written from Elk River Bridge, Tennessee, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 2, Folder 159, Athens, Ohio.

44 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to his father Jabez Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, November 10, 1861, written from Camp Holeman, Jefferson County, Kentucky, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.
wrote with frustration, “I must confess that my dander is up a little tonight on account of
the lies that have been sent home.” William McKnight reflected a similar sentiment
with some harsh words for the ladies at home, presumably in McKnight’s mind
responsible for the rumors about their conduct in camp and in battle. He wrote to his
wife, “We have to bear a hard warr but when we know that we are only stigmatised at
home by unprincipaled persons knowing that we do our duty like men and soldiers we
care not. We feel that if the slanderers at home would clear their own skirts they would
find less time to trouble themselves about the soldiers. It is a bad state of things when a
soldier has to defend his character at home and his life abroad one at a time is enough.”

McKnight clearly felt betrayed by the comments, whatever they were. He did not
reveal what they wrote but his reference to a two front war, one against the rebels and one
to defend his character, was evident in other soldiers’ accounts or letters as well. In a
context in which honor mattered so much, this was a debilitating attack from his own
allies and support group at home. Benjamin Stone, Jr. described his reaction to
slanderous rumors in a letter to his girlfriend Ollie, “I keep myself quiet on all such petty
slanders, although if I should ever find one of the originators of any of these disreputable
tales, I am sufficiently unchristianized by my army life to know that I should call him to

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45 First Sergeant John A. Brown, 148th Ohio National Guard, to wife Isa Brown, Belpre, Ohio, (Washington
County), July 30, 1864, written from City Point, Virginia, in Natalie H. Lee ed. Dear Isa, Dear Johna: The
Civil War correspondence of on of Ohio’s Hundred Days’ Men, First Sergeant John A. Brown, 148th Ohio
46 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County),
June 2, 1863, written near Somerset, Virginia, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They
Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio:
Ohio University Press, 2010), 92.
Stone’s polite diction loosely expressed his desire for vengeance. Though not as obvious as some others, he too was frustrated by the slanderous reports. Soldiers did not appreciate reports making it home that accused them of malicious or cowardly conduct when they relied upon the support of those at home to sustain them throughout the war. These rumors were prevalent due to the lack of accuracy and response time in correspondence.

Van Brown wrote about the rumors of constant attacks in western Virginia where he was serving with the 4th West Virginia. He explained, “There has been a constant state of excitement here on the Valley since Cook’s forces left. There has been report after report of Floyd being here, Jenkins there, Heath one place and Loraine another and numerous other real or imaginary Rebel Generals all going to attack some point on the Valley.” The way in which Van wrote about these possible attacks revealed that he was not particularly concerned. It was evident, however, that others made a fuss about these possibilities and Van wanted his mother to know about them. This communication helped to calm her fears; up to this point, everything was okay for Van and his comrades.

Soldiers often used their frustrations of camp life to express dissatisfaction with the government and higher command. For example, John Benedict wrote to his sister about the early war inactivity of the Union army, “There is not much prospect of a battle here soon and I have almost come to the conclusion that the government does not want to

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48 Van Brown, 4th West Virginia, September 10, 1861, written from Camp Piatt, Virginia, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 1, Folder 89, Athens, Ohio.
put down this rebellion. Here we have an army in Kentucky almost large enough to whip the whole south just lying still doing nothing. And the same thing on the Potomac and other places where we have troops.”49 Though he did not understand fully the overall war strategy and complications, for someone sitting in camp in Kentucky in January, it must have seemed like time was wasting away. Soldiers chimed in on topics such as race relations, political parties, official policies, how to run the army, who to elect as president, and many others. This example proved that the men in the ranks shared with their home associates their frustrations with the administration and with the war overall. One of the greatest commonalities between those at war and those at home was their collective aggravation toward the circumstances of war.

Union soldiers came in contact with Confederate soldiers more often than on the battlefield. On many occasions they met one another on picket lines not far apart. They talked, traded newspapers, and exchanged stories about the war. Lemon Devol explained to his former comrade Martin Andrews one such occasion. “Martin, to tell the truth, I am tired of the service, but am still in favor of supporting the same administration to which I first volunteered. No compromise in favor of the South will suit me. Nothing but unconditional surrender and terms decided by the North.”50 Despite its cost, Devol argued, the war was worth fighting. “So long as the war is properly conducted, just so long I wish to remain in the army, and I am in favor of making it bloody, hot, hungry or

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49 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to his sister Clarissa Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, January 10, 1862, written from Camp Jefferson, Bacon Creek, Kentucky, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.
50 Lemon Devol, 62nd OVI, to friend Martin Andrews, 62nd OVI, undated but most likely summer of 1864, written from unknown location possibly Point of Rocks, Virginia, Lemon Devol Collection, Washington County Historical Society, Box 504, Marietta, Ohio.
anything else to accomplish the required end. I never saw a set of men more anxious for peace than the rebels themselves.”51 Explaining the rebel desire for peace, Devol wrote, “Nearly every paper we exchange with them, the first question they ask is, ‘Is there anything about peace in it?’ The only wonder with me is that more of them do not desert.”52

In addition to battle accounts and rumors, soldiers wrote home about their impressions of their enemy. John Benedict described to his sister Clarissa his encounters with his Confederate adversaries in various ways, including on the battlefield, as casualties, and as deserters. This last category resulted in an extensive commentary, which made it home in a letter in the spring of 1863. He averred, “Deserters from the rebel army report great dissatisfaction in their ranks and a great scarcity of provisions throughout the whole south. I guess they begin to think in the south that it is such a nice thing to cede as they anticipated.”53 Benedict offered his own perspective in the letter to his sister on how to best win the war, “If the government would only call out enough conscripts immediately to fill all the regiments in the field now to 1000 men, this rebellion would be swept from the land in less than six months.” He, like many thousands of other soldiers, found fault in the administration and bureaucracy of the government. “I do not see why the government is doing nothing towards filling up the ranks, when it knows that the rebels have every available man in the south, white and

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51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to his sister Clarissa Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, March 26, 1863, written from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.
black, bringing them against our thinned lines. If we ever needed men, now is the time.”

Benedict, a man familiar with the difficulties of war, put an emphasis on urgency. He noticed the vast number of Confederate deserters and really wanted the Union to rally around the soldiers, raising more, and finally finishing the war.

Even if the reports were not always reliable the soldiers continued to spread the rumors to each other and back home. This firestorm of communication between combatants and their supporting friends and family was extremely important because it revealed that they fought the war together. When those at home suffered, their soldiers suffered as well. When those at the front faced difficulties, those at home cried as well. It was a terrible shared experience.

Known for their service alongside General Sherman in his historic “March to the Sea” in 1864, several soldiers wrote home about the destruction and conditions they witnessed throughout the South. They had a close up view of the living conditions of southern civilians, which resulted in some fascinating reflections from the Ohio soldiers. These Buckeye troops, who had been receiving letters from family and friends explaining the unrest and terrible conditions at home, wrote to their families that it really was not that bad in the north. They wrote about the poverty throughout the south, evident on the plantations and in the communities. These harrowing accounts put the destruction of the South in an interesting context. These were not just places along General Sherman’s

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54 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to his sister Clarissa Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, March 23, 1863, written from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.

55 For a more comprehensive look at soldiers’ impressions of the enemy, see Linderman, Embattled Courage, 200-214.
march; there were stories of poverty in western Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina. William McKnight described to his wife, “I have seen whole families of women and children who had been stripped of the last pound of meat and Ear of corn which they had collected and raised themselves. Yes and not a Dollar in the ward to buy and nothing to buy if they had.” He continued later in the letter, “Just imagine for instance a poor woman perhaps barefoot with half dozen little Barefoot and nearly naked children makeing their way across a mountanous country of som hundreds of miles alone. This is no ideal picture but reality.” McKnight shared this sad news with his wife because he wanted her to know about the conditions in the South as well. The people at home could relate to suffering, but McKnight and other soldiers emphasized that southerners had it much worse. The reality of “civil war” set in for these people when they began to understand the suffering of the entire nation.

Andrew Jones of the 76th Ohio, wrote about the people of the South in a letter to his father. He explained their conditions, accenting in particular the class division of the region. “It showed plainly that there were but two classes here before the war to say nothing of the niger, that is the very rich who owned all the land and all the nigers, and the very poor who owned nothing and who were not as much respected as the slave. I hope some change will take place before the war is ended.” Jones seemed to view the war as a social revolution. This was an important point to be sending home, particularly

56 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), April 6, 1864, written near Paris, Kentucky, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 172.

57 Ibid.

58 Andrew Jones, Co. D. 76th Ohio, to father, Washington County, Ohio, April 5, 1864, written from Paint Rock, Alabama, Washington County Historical Society, Box 505, Marietta, Ohio.
in the spring of 1864, a year in which the presidential election campaign addressed the overall war aims. Jones wrote about these observations of the South at a time that they would have been particularly relevant for those at home.

Eli Coulson described more of the southern social situation in his own letter home. With reference to marching with Sherman’s army, Coulson wrote, “So you see we marched over a great deal of Ga and no doubt but a great many families will suffer, I pity the women and children of the South I hait to see little children crying for something to eat it makes me think of my little Brothers and Sisters and I cannot help sympathizing with those.”\(^{59}\) Coulson’s insight made an explicit connection between his enemy and his own family. Not only did this prove the connection between the home and battle front, it also expressed a vivid relationship between Union soldiers and their “enemies.” It grew increasingly more difficult for Ohio soldiers to fight against southern civilians once the Confederacy’s back had been broken. John Benedict explained another aspect to the reality of southern suffering. He wrote, “And what makes it worse is that most of these poor families are good Union people. Their husbands and sons have been conscripted and forced into the rebel army, and their wives and children have to suffer for it.”\(^{60}\)

The sympathetic attitude toward common southerners continued later into the war. John A. Brown of the 148\(^{th}\) Ohio described to his wife in May of 1864, “This place [Harper’s Ferry, Virginia] shows the marks of war. The main part of the town is entirely

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\(^{59}\) Eli Coulson, Co.E, 78\(^{th}\) OVI, to parents, Morgan County, Ohio, December 16, 1864, written from George Anderson’s Plantation, Near Savannah, Georgia, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 5567.

\(^{60}\) John M. Benedict, 18\(^{th}\) OVI, to his sister Clarissa Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, April 12, 1863, written Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.
destroyed. There is any amount of buildings whose walls bear witness to the bloody strife for which this is noted.” Some soldiers actually realized that the destruction of the south was part of the larger Union strategy later in the war. Joseph Hoffhines wrote to his wife Nancy about the change, “this Government is now entering upon a new policy we are ordered to burn cities and Barns and Houses where ever we go and lay waste the Entire Country...” He described the Union course of action toward the civilians as, “...all the men women and children that wants to go north the Government will take free of charge and all that wants to go south it will transport and those that will not go either way can stay and starve several places are already Burned great numbers of men women and children Black and white are pouring in from all quarters.” It was evident in Hoffhines’s description that the situation was dire for the southern populace and Hoffhines believed it to be important for his family to know about the conditions of the enemy, both for a prospective end to the war but also to give them perspective on their own suffering.

Hoffhines wrote again the next year reflecting several similar and important sentiments:

[Y]ou may think you suffer by the war, but you know nothing about trials yet. My heart has ached with pity for many poor families, stript of every thing, not one meal left, little innocent children. scared. Clinging to their mothers not having one meal left them. I have frequently asked the question where is your husband and with tears they have answered he was killed in such a battle at such a place

62 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Kingston, Georgia, November 11, 1864, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.
63 Ibid.
one, two, or three years ago or they drug him into the Army by conscription and we dont know where he is now. this is the condition of thousands in this country. the rebels are constantly comeing in from their Hiding places where they have been secreted from one to six months how glad they are to see us.

Hoffhines’ humanitarian side clearly arose while marching through the South.

His observations on the common southerners were poignant. He shared these experiences with his family members at home because they fought the war together, but also to help them keep their own suffering in perspective. He explained “you know nothing about trials...” which was a gutsy statement to write to his wife who was without him to help maintain their home. He testified to the loss of the rebels and even explained that they were “glad to see us.” For the people of the Confederacy to be “glad” to see the Union army, the situation must have been very dire indeed. These comments from the front show the connection between the common soldiers fighting the war, such as Hoffhines, and the supporting cast behind the scenes, such as his wife and family.

Benjamin Stone, Jr. described the relationship between the Union army and the rebellious southerners in a letter to his father. He wrote, “If an inhabitant dared to burn a bridge before us or impede the road, straightway, we burnt every roof upon his plantation. If the citizens resisted ever so feebly, the flames devoured every item of their substance. We found no organized enemy at all before us. Our march was almost complete without firing a gun at the foe.” This was the work of the soldier in late 1864. It complicated soldiers’ notions of what “fighting” and honor in battle really meant.

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64 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Cape Fear River, North Carolina, April 25, 1865, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.

65 Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73rd OVI, to Benjamin F. Stone, Sr., Washington County, Ohio, December 17, 1864, written from near Savannah, Georgia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, Civil War Letters, 157.
Later in the letter Stone coolly noted his personal estimate of damages caused by the Union army and hundreds of thousands of dollars in southern resources destroyed. It was a different kind of war. Stone and his fellow Ohioans were the fingers on the “hard hand” of war.66

In addition to writing about the poverty of the southern people, soldiers believed that they were doing some good. The story of southern “liberation” has been largely covered by the postwar stories of some southerners. However, there were thousands of African American slaves who saw the Union soldiers as a liberating force, finally destroying the slave power that had dominated their society for so long. Though it may not have had the permanent effect that some desired, basic supplies from the Yankee army helped ordinary southerners survive until the end of the war. Stone seemed to see no less value in their efforts, however, as he wrote the next day to his girlfriend Ollie, “Ours has been a wonderful campaign, a magnificent success.”67

John Benedict described the cause and reality of destruction throughout the South when writing to his sister Clarissa. He noted, “The presence of two large armies has stripped the country of everything. All the fences have been burned, the stock killed or driven off and all the grain and forage taken, and what few inhabitants are left are in a starving condition. You have no idea how much suffering there is among the poor

classes of the south.” In the ultimate irony of the Confederate soldier, men who volunteered to fight to protect their homeland found themselves unable to protect their own families. “There are families living near our lines that have nothing to eat,” Benedict continued, “except walnuts and greens, their natural protectors all being in the rebel army.”

Weary soldiers and civilians on both sides of the war could not wait for the conflict to end. Of course people wanted their own “side” to win the war, but reports of the impending end of the war began in the summer of 1861 and never stopped until they rang true. An occasional few mentioned no end in sight, but most dreamt that they were constantly on the verge of winning. This “end is near” false prophecy revealed both a hope and created a sense of constant disappointment.

Near the end of the war, Confederates began deserting to the Union forces in droves. Refugees, black and white, followed the armies throughout the South. John A. Brown described the situation in the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, just outside of Richmond, to his wife at home:

The Va. rebels are getting tired of the war. They are deserting every day. There was 20 came to this place yesterday. They are from Pickett’s division. The division is stationed in front of the works we were in before we came down here. One fellow left and told his brother if he was well used he would come back and signal to him. He went to General Butler’s headquarters and Butler sent him back with a proclamation to the rebs telling them to desert and come over and they will be used well. Those who came over yesterday say it has been circulated well. The rebs have been taught that if they come over to Butler, he will give them to his darkies to butcher, or put them in the army. All the deserters tell the same story and say if the soldiers knew that they would be treated well, they would

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68 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to his sister Clarissa Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, April 12, 1863, written Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio. 69 Ibid.
come over by the hundreds. I said 20 came yesterday. They have been coming every day.⁷⁰

Former Confederate soldiers came into the Union camps every day because they realized that the war was all but over. There was no longer a purpose in continuing their fight. This quotation included several important points, especially that the reality of the war’s end became imminent in the late summer of 1864. Although it took several more months for the war to officially end, these desertions were integral to the demise of the Confederacy. Another key point was the rumor that had circulated through the Confederate ranks that Union General Benjamin Butler would give the rebel soldiers to the freed slaves “to butcher.” This barbaric story seems hard to believe, but apparently some Confederates believed that is was true. It casts insight on both the soldiers themselves as well as the institution of slavery, that it seemed plausible that former slaves would commit such savage acts as vengeance for their time in bondage.

Jacob Shively wrote in a letter to his wife Mary about some of the southern deserters that he encountered near Chattanooga, Tennessee. He postulated, “The rebel deserters all agree in one assertion that with them this is the rich mans war and the poor mans fight and they wil not stand it any longer. One told me the other day that he was a Georgean and he had been compelled to fight on the 20th with a paroll in his pocket and his opinion was that the confederacy was played out and the rich were only contending to

try to save their property and the poor were compelled to fight through ignorance.”

These harsh statements were, perhaps, a bit coerced or misinterpreted, but nonetheless Shively’s words made it home. People in southeastern Ohio read from Shively and others that the Union had the upper hand in the fall of 1863, yet it took a year and a half longer to win the war.

Southeastern Ohio soldiers and civilians hoped with eager anticipation for the end of the war to arrive. Some were more vocal about these sentiments, but they were mutual between soldiers and civilians. It seemed that, for the Union forces at least, there were few who wanted the war at all. B.F. Kidwell wrote to his son George upon a false report that the Union had taken Vicksburg in February 1863: “The last report I heard from Vicks Burgh we had taken it but I do not believe it but I wish to God it was so. I am in hopes this war will end this spring. I do not know hardly what to write I would be as happy as a King on this place if you was hear to help me work it.” These types of wishful thinking reports that circulated between those at war and those at home were abundant throughout the war and their news, both good and bad, spread through communities at home and in uniform.

Ferdinand Cowee had a sense of the purpose of the war and the hope for its imminent end. He wrote to his friend Julia Sprague, “Well, we look forward with double interest to the time when we will be free again. First because we can return home and

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71 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, October 11, 1863, written from Chattanooga, Tennessee, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, Dear Companion... Yours untill death Jacob Shively 89th Regt. O.V.I., (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 25.
72 B.F. Kidwell, Washington County, to son George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, July 10, 1862, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.
second because we feel that by that time this war will be over, and our country free and purged from so much sin and wickedness.”

He described his proposed postwar excitement, “What a **happy** day it will be to the surviving soldier and our friends at home. And still we have a secret dread for the future—knowing that many must fall by battle, disease, and sickness.”

He emphasized, as a sustaining motivator, their opportunity to be reunited at the end of the war: “Still we have **Hope**, which is the star and stay of much comfort. It cheers us on in our dreary camps and hard marches. ‘**The hope that we shall meet at last.**’ How it buoy us along the rugged path of life.”

Joseph Hoffhines also speculated about the end of war. In January 1865, writing to his wife Nancy, “well we cant tell verry much about the progress of the war here, but it is the prevailing opinion that it will be over by the first of May. Ceartainly they cannot hold out much longer. most of our officers think the Hard fighting all over.”

He speculated more specifically about the context of certain states. “Georgia is expected soon to come back to the Union and South Carolina is following her footsteps and she had better for Sherman’s Army can and will go from one end of her to the other Just as we did in Georgia. There is no force in Georgia or South Carolina that can keep this great Army from marching right ahead where it pleases.”

Hoffhines and his fellow soldiers in Sherman’s army had been carrying out the “hard war” policy on the common

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73 Ferdinand P. Cowee, 36th OVI, to Julia M. Sprague, Washington County, Ohio, May 23, 1863, written from camp near Carthage, Tennessee, F.P. Cowee Collection, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Savannah, Georgia, January 9, 1865, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.

77 Ibid.
people of the Confederacy for over a year. After experiencing the destruction of thousands of homes, they knew the fall of the Confederacy was near.

The people of southeastern Ohio faced their own violent raid led by Confederate cavalier John Hunt Morgan. The following chapter explores some of the important difficulties of the war, particularly Morgan’s Raid in 1863. The shared experience of war between soldiers and civilians was evident in their correspondence regarding the raid. While it affected the home front in physical cost and fear, it was ultimately a point of connection between the soldiers and those at home during that tumultuous time.
Chapter 3

The “Thunderbolt” Strikes Southeastern Ohio: Hardships and Morgan’s Raid

Civilians in both the Union and Confederate states experienced hardships as a result of the war. This chapter explores the difficulties endured by the men, women, and children who remained in southeastern Ohio while their soldiers went off to fight against the rebels. In their effort to “put down the rebellion” these Ohioans left the majority of the hard work of home life for everyone else. While the remaining men, women, and children proved themselves equal to the task of maintaining the hearth in the absence of their soldiers, the hardships of work, disease, lack of resources, and missing loved ones plagued the civilians of southeastern Ohio throughout the war. In addition to the day-to-day suffering, the attack of Confederate raider John H. Morgan’s soldiers on southeastern Ohio in the summer of 1863 brought destruction and great fear to the region. It was at the point of shared sacrifice that the soldiers and civilians connected through the experience of the Civil War.

When northern Union men left for war, their absence created problems primarily for the women and older men who remained at home with considerably more responsibilities. For example, in a predominantly agricultural region such as southeastern Ohio, farms still needed to be worked.\(^1\) The work of planting and harvesting often required that farm owners hire laborers to help bring in the crop or rely upon family and

\(^1\) Based on a representative sample of three regiments (approximately 3000 soldiers) from southeastern Ohio, approximately 71% recorded their occupation as “farmer” in their regimental books. This constitutes a significant majority. See appendix “Occupational Breakdown of Southeastern Ohio Soldiers”
friends to assist. The family of William McKnight of the 7th Ohio Cavalry, relied upon an extensive network of relatives to help with the necessary agricultural labors on the farm that were left incomplete with William’s service. While some men were off fighting the war, other men and women had to work double duty to maintain farms. This communal effort accented the reality that war was not just a hardship for the men fighting it. The war had a tangible impact on the people of southeastern Ohio, upsetting their lives by requiring more work and sacrifice from everyone. Cynthia Stone explained to her brother Benjamin F. Stone, Jr. how she felt about his absence, “Dear brother you have been away so long, I sometimes think I cannot bear it any longer, and I go away by myself and cry. I’m so lonely.”¹ The absences were more than physical; they were personal and heartfelt.²

Soldiers did not enjoy being away from the home front as revealed in their letters. Using the language of homesickness or missing family members, some soldiers wrote about the farm. They explained to their wives, mothers, or friends how to handle the business of the farm. In particular, they seemed caught up in the details of what to plant, where to plant it, and how to manage the crops or the livestock. Joseph Hoffhines a Pickaway County private of the 33rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, writing from Savannah, Georgia, complimented his wife, telling her that he was, “fully satisfied with what you have done with the calf and pigs and am glad to learn that you dug seventeen bushels of

¹ Cynthia Stone (Washington County) to her brother Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., January [illegible], 1863, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
potatoes.” It was not uncommon for soldiers to provide counsel to their loved ones regarding who to hire to help with the crops, what to pay them, and how to utilize their labor. Soldiers sometimes provided advice on the purchase and sale of livestock from hundreds of miles away. They begged for the details of these important transactions, wanting to know if their wives got “a good price” for crops and livestock. Despite their distance from the home, soldiers still maintained a connection to their former lives. Though this was part of how “home” influenced the war, it was a point of intersection between the lives of the soldiers and the civilians. It was necessary after all, that farms continued producing food even while the soldiers were away. Assisting in that process of farming or running a business from a distance helped both soldiers and civilians cope with the suffering of the war, even if it was a hardship in and of itself.

When the Ohio Legislature called out the “Hundred Days Men” in the spring of 1864, some communities in southeastern Ohio realized the disastrous effect that call could have on the region. The men were supposed to free up some of the garrisoned veterans to join the front lines and finally defeat the Confederacy. The *Jackson Valley Express* commented on the situation, regarding the dire circumstances on the home front. The editor wrote, “The abstraction of such a large position of the able-bodied million at this busy season of the year will inflict serious, if not irreparable, injury upon the

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3 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines (Pickaway County), written from Savannah, Georgia, December 19, 1864, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596. Information on Hoffhines (alternate spelling Heoffhines) attained from his pension file at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, Stack 7W3, row 8, compartment 28, Shelf 5.

4 Several soldiers noted the importance of home businesses, including Benjamin Stone, Jr., William McKnight, and Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge.

industrial interests of our county. Some farms will be almost stripped of laborers."⁶ Even families that supported the war realized that it had a devastating effect on their families and local communities. B. F. Stone wrote to his son about the call for the “Hundred Days Men” in the spring of 1864, he said, “The calling out of the National Guard makes it hard on farmers, to get the planting done in season but all Union men submit cheerfully.”⁷ Stone’s comments hit on several important themes, most importantly being that the reality of service meant sacrifice for many at home. His point that Union men “submit cheerfully” also noted a definition of patriotism that supports the argument to preserve the Union. For Stone, it was worthwhile to make the sacrifice to save the nation. Though a hardship, it was all part of fighting the war together.

The people at home were regularly concerned with the health and welfare of the soldiers at war. They often wrote inquiring about specific conditions or problems that the soldiers were facing. Physical health, diseases, and safety in battle were topics of discussion in letters from home. It was common for correspondents in the nineteenth century to describe their health and conditions to one another. In a sense, civilians answered the “how are you?” question preemptively in their letters. In reply, then, soldiers described the physical conditions of the army, which often were quite unsatisfactory. The awful conditions such as incessant mud, long marches, and physical maladies, caused the people at home to suffer from anxiety regarding their loved ones in the army. Historian Gary Gallagher writes about the importance of newspapers in closing

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⁶ “National Guard of Ohio Called Out” *Jackson Valley Express*, Jackson, Ohio, May 5, 1864, Ohio Historical Society Microfilm Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, Roll 8759.
⁷ B. F. Stone, Sr. (Washington County) to B. F. Stone, Jr., May 13, 1864, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
the gap between home front and battle front in *The Union War*. “Whatever their politics, editors and readers maintained steady support for soldiers,” he said, “and consistently described the armies as congregations of men at arms who carried the nation’s hopes on their bayonets.”

There were many examples of families showing concern for their loved ones’ health and well being. “I feel more anxious about you [his son, Benjamin Stone, Jr.], since you had the typhoid fever,” said Benjamin Stone, Sr. of Washington County, “I wish you to be extremely careful that you do not have a relapse...” The suffering of the soldier caused anxiety and pain for those at home. Enclosed in the same letter Benjamin Jr.’s sister expressed similar sentiments regarding his health. She wrote, “I fear you are still sick. Brother wont you tell us the truth just how you are dont join the regiment until you are well able to bear the fatigue of marching and exposure it makes my heart ache to hear of how little you all have to eat and the quality too.” The letters of Cynthia Stone frequently made reference to a regard for her brother’s health and safety. This particular quote revealed that she knew about the conditions of war, which caused her to worry about him getting more seriously ill. Families in southeastern Ohio received letters and read newspaper stories about soldier after soldier succumbing to childhood illnesses. As Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. wrote to his son, “I suppose more soldiers die of sickness this

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9 B. F. Stone, Sr. (Washington County) to B. F. Stone, Jr., June 23, 1862, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
10 Cynthia Stone (Washington County) to her brother Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., June 23, 1862, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
summer than by the cannon of the rebels.”\textsuperscript{11} His comments were accurate not just for the summer of 1862, but for the entire war. They had legitimate reasons for concern. The people at home wanted vivid details about the health of their soldiers and their wartime activities. Families wanted information to come from the soldier rather than from neighborhood news. Nelson B. Sisson, an Assistant Surgeon in the 92\textsuperscript{nd} OVI, received harsh words from his wife Lucevia when she wrote, “Now I am going to scold you you have been sick and never told me I guess I want to know when you are in trouble as sick as well as you do when I am sick.”\textsuperscript{12} She apparently had been informed of his illness from a friend’s letter. Her emphasis was on their mutual experience, despite the distance. She continued, “Well dont I want to know when my own dear precious husband is sick too so that I can pity him.”\textsuperscript{13} Lucevia Sisson wrote that he “never told me” as if to connote her frustration that he did tell her, his own wife, about his condition. The distance of serving in the military made it so that Lucevia could not care for her own husband when he was ill. It was a sure measure of the hardships experienced by the people of southeastern Ohio.

Civilians at home were anxious about their soldiers’ safety under fire, particularly when receiving regular updates of casualties from the front via newspaper reports and word of mouth. Cynthia Stone disclosed the trepidation she had for her brother’s life when she wrote, “The present is the most fearful and most trying time of the war; and you

\textsuperscript{11} B. F. Stone, Sr. (Washington County) to B. F. Stone, Jr., July 5, 1862, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
\textsuperscript{12} Lucevia Sisson (Gallia County) to her husband Nelson B. Sisson, July 22, 1863, Nelson B. Sisson Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, MSS 1299.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. The underlining in the passage is preserved from the original.
are just where the most blood must be shed. I think of you much and with prayerful 
anxiety.”

The horrific nature of the war as experienced by her brother Benjamin 
affected Cynthia at home. B.F. Kidwell advised his son George, a soldier in the 77th 
Ohio Volunteer Infantry, to be careful under fire, connoting both a sense of parental 
concern as well as hope for his safe return home. Kidwell wrote, “I want you to take 
good care of your self and do not expose your self more than necessary never turn your 
back to friend or foe if you should ever get in battle and get over powerd, surrender as the 
rest do but I hope that will never be.” Kidwell did not want his son to take any extra 
risks for the sake of patriotism because his life was valuable. This advice emphasized the 
code of honor that was so powerful for nineteenth century Americans, particularly 
soldiers. Gerald Linderman’s classic Embattled Courage explores this concept in detail. 
His assessment of combat motivations, including some of the conditions of family honor, 
explains why so many soldiers were willing to fight and die in the war. 

There was something deep and personal about why they fought. The war caused emotional grief of 
not just lost loved ones, but also those still in the fray.

For soldiers off fighting, or often sitting in camp, being disconnected from their 
livelihood had to be a difficult struggle. The initial enthusiasm of the war quickly 
evaporated. Predictions that the soldiers would be home by the fall harvest of 1861 
proved inaccurate. Those who joined during the first three-year enlistments in the 

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14 Cynthia Stone (Washington County) to her brother Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., July 26, 1862, B.F. Stone 
Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
15 B. F. Kidwell (Washington County) to George Kidwell, July 10, 1863, Correspondence of George 
Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.
16 Gerald F. Linderman, Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War (New 
summer of 1861 braced themselves for a long time away from home. Emphasizing disconnect, some even wrote of seeing loved ones in their dreams. Isa Brown of Washington County wrote to her husband “Johna” Brown, a soldier in the 148th Ohio National Guard during the summer of 1864, telling him that “I have been dreaming about you. Almost every night, I dream that you are at home and of talking with you, but when I wake in the morning, I find that it is all a dream.”\textsuperscript{17} Though missing a loved one was not a unique occurrence, it was an indication of the hardship experienced by the people of southeastern Ohio. Part of their sacrifice required in fighting the war together meant nights dreaming of loved ones who were encamped several hundred miles away in locations such as Tennessee, Alabama, and eastern Virginia.

It was difficult for civilians to cope with their loved ones being far away. Historians cannot necessarily quantify “love,” but qualitatively it was evident from the letters, that families worried almost incessantly about the health and welfare of their soldiers. They worried about health, physical conditions in the military, and most often whether their family and friends were in battle. Every battle report that crossed their paths carried with it the potential for them to see the name of their loved ones. Though historians now look at a particular soldier station and view it as a relatively “safe” place, the people living the war had no idea where the battles might take place.

Civilians had to survive with the reality of life without their loved one. Families wrote to their soldiers over and over begging their loved ones to come home. Only in

special circumstances did officers grant furloughs to common soldiers. Family members wanted to know when their soldier might come to see them. Furloughs though temporary, were a welcome break from the monotony and pain of distance as well as the danger of war. Maria Kidwell of Washington County wrote to her son George, a sergeant in the 77th Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the fall of 1862, “...if you cold come home and see the folks we would all be glad as for my part I would hate to see you go away again that would be the worst part but still if you can get a chance to come do so...”18 Although separating would be painful, the opportunity to see her son again was alluring for Maria Kidwell.

Cynthia Stone wrote a paragraph to her brother that was both encouraging as well as terribly sad. Benjamin Stone, Jr. had been at war for three years and his sister had barely seen him in that time. She wrote to her brother Benjamin:

Keep up good spirits Brother. I cannot bear to think of you never coming back to this dear home of ours. there are no sweeter hopes in my daily life than that of living with you or your living here with us. I never sit down to eat without thinking of you. I always feel your place vacant. you dont know how precious you are to us, and how we long to see you. I know you wish to be here, you are suffering privation, weariness, sickness, and pain to secure to us this home to save our beloved country I feel that I can never do enough for you.19

Cynthia Stone commented that she both understood why he was gone, but missed him nonetheless. This was an indication of the sacrifice and hardship experienced by the people living in southeastern Ohio. Though the Stone family’s letters remained after the war, several thousand others shared this sacrifice and hardship of having their loved one

18 Maria Kidwell (Washington County) to George Kidwell, October 26, 1862, Correspondence of George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.
19 Cynthia Stone (Washington County) to her brother Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., June 1, 1864, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
off at war. Though it was not unique to southeastern Ohio, it was still an important point to remember that these communities and their soldiers endured the war collectively.

Some civilians complained of a lack of time to write. Women in particular had to maintain the household, raise the children, and find time to do the work that their men used to do. Some described long periods of time in which they would not remove clothes for sleeping, simply because it took too much time. Private William McKnight wrote in an understanding tone about his wife Samaria’s lack of time to compose him letters. He wrote to his wife, “I know that you have a poor chance to write on account of so much to do...” but he explained to her that it was important to him that she write. He continued writing to Samaria, “…but write as often as you can and if I dont get as many as I think I ought to I will know the reason is because you have not time.” Private McKnight was not forceful or demanding, but he let his desire be known that he wanted to hear from his wife. Civilians frequently confessed to not taking the time for correspondence. Reid Mitchell explains that letters were both helpful and harmful for soldiers in feeling the sadness of distance and the longing to be connected.

To remain both emotionally and physically supportive, civilians took action through writing letters as well as preparing supplies. That support manifested itself in many ways including simply writing letters to the soldiers. Others wrote about prayers, thoughts, and positive sentiments toward their loved ones at war. The most tangible form of support was to provide supplies such as food and clothing.

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20 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), May 19, 1864, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 179.

21 Mitchell, The Vacant Chair, 34.
Soldiers received packages of supplies of all kinds from members of church organizations, ladies aid societies, and family members. They coveted a package full of quality homemade foods probably more than anything else. All too often, however, these packages of foodstuffs broke open or spoiled during the journey, which could take a week or two depending upon the location of the soldier and the transportation network in place. The food that arrived intact was under the significant probability of being attacked by other hungry soldiers. Commenting on both home front labor and the lack of supplies, George Kidwell’s mother wrote to him regretfully, “...if you want anything from home you must let me know the folks about here all cooked a deel of everything and sent it to there sons in the 36 it made me feel bad to think that I could not send my son any thin because I have not the chance.”

Not having the chance was largely due to needing to maintain her household without the elder son to help. Maria Kidwell worked hard to merely provide for those who were at home, let alone offer extra sustenance for her son who was at war.

Supplies sent from home also included hand made garments. No one knew the soldiers’ needs and bodies more than their wives, mothers, sisters, and friends. Those women were often well qualified to darn the necessary socks, knit requisite caps, or sew together homespun cotton shirts. Some soldiers, however, wrote to their families telling them not to bother with the homemade clothes because they could purchase them cheaper from the government supply offices than they could be made at home. Some soldiers still preferred the home crafted garments because of comfort, durability, and the connection

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22 Maria Kidwell (Washington County) to George Kidwell, January 4, 1863, Correspondence of George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.
with the home front. For those at home, the production of these garments required time, patience, and dedication. Though they considered it their own patriotic duty, it was nonetheless a way in which the war caused hardships for those at home as well. Historian Patricia Richard explains that the significance of these packages from home was that they reminded soldiers of civility.²³

Soldiers responded in various ways to the support they received from the folks at home. Many expressed their appreciation of support in their letters. Samuel H. Putnam of the 1ˢᵗ Ohio Cavalry wrote to his girlfriend Miss Abbie Mixer, “I dont want you to shed any tears (while I am gone) for me for I think I am going to fight on the right side and I feel confident we will be victorious.”²⁴ Not only did Putnam respond to Mixer’s emotions regarding their separation, he used the separation to emphasize the importance of his cause. The suffering was worth it, he implied, because he was fighting “on the right side.” This connection between the right and wrong of the war, the moral dimension, played a direct role in motivating soldiers on both sides to fight. Historian Frances Clarke explains the importance of the suffering narrative in understanding the North during the Civil War. She writes, “The majority of Northerners held fast to their providential understandings of suffering throughout the war, believing that the nation was headed in a progressive direction despite the madness of the battlefields.”²⁵

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²⁴ Samuel H. Putnam at Pilchers Trustel on the Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad, September 12, 1861, to Miss Abbie Mixer, Washington County, Samuel H. Putnam Collection, Marietta College Special Collections.
words, Clarke’s analysis helps explain the reason that, despite the costs of war, the people of southeastern Ohio continued to support the soldiers and the war effort.

While women supported the war effort via supplies for the soldiers, men of all ages on the home front served in the militia and the home guard units. Men who were past their marching ages provided advice and council regarding the organization and maintenance of the force. Young men provided exuberance and enthusiasm. There were even wounded or sick men from other volunteer units who offered to help with organizing and running the local militias. These groups drilled on the weekends or a few times per week, under the assumption that it would help them be prepared to defend their home communities. “We, therefore, call on every man in the county who has a rifle, a musket, or shot gun to put them in good shooting condition,” the Lancaster Gazette implored in the fall of 1862, “without one day’s delay—provide ammunition and hold themselves ready to defend the State at a moment’s call.”26 Though this enthusiastic call did not seem like a “hardship,” it did mean that the men had to prepare themselves and be at the ready, showing how the war directly influenced the lives of the people at home.

The people on the border lived in fear. The reality of war also meant that war could strike the home front at any time. Kentucky, which shared a border with Ohio, was home to thousands of Confederate sympathizers. Western Virginia, mostly a loyal region, harbored its own blend of rebellious citizens who had little concern for the rule of Richmond or Washington. This borderland was not as bloody as many others to the South, but it still provided many opportunities for violence and the people of southeastern

26 “To the People of the County” Lancaster Gazette (Lancaster, Fairfield County), September 4, 1862, OHS Microfilm Collection, OHS, Roll 26705.
Ohio experienced some of that violence. Rumors constantly circulated about the Confederate leaders, usually in guerrilla bands or raiding parties, riding through towns or counties stealing and destroying property. These rumors and threats kept the people of southeastern Ohio in a state of terror. The fear of local attack loomed throughout the war, especially for those living along the Ohio River, not far from Confederate raiders and guerrillas in Kentucky and western Virginia. Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. explained to his son, “It has been a most exciting time here the month past: probably you have seen in the papers the alarm at Parkersburg: they telegraphed to Marietta for all the men we could spare: in a short time we started a company to go to their rescue, but before they passed Harmar [a small town just across the river from Marietta] another dispatch said they did not need them.” Although in this case the militia did not have to fight, it was still a newsworthy event for Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. Knowing that they could be attacked at any moment, or their neighbors just across the river, meant a consistent hardship of fear, anxiety, and standing guard.

Threats occasionally morphed into real attacks as was the case with Morgan’s Raid. The raid made life more difficult for the citizenry by disabling infrastructure, creating logistical problems, and requiring the rebuilding of roads, bridges, and buildings. Most of the people in southeastern Ohio could not afford to lose parts of their infrastructure like business fronts, bridges, or equipment. Farmers could ill afford to have Confederate raiders take their supplies of food or costly animals. Though their

suffering paled in comparison to that of southerners, the hardships of the war most assuredly influenced southeastern Ohio.

The elusive Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan brought terror to Ohio, both literally and figuratively. In the summer of 1863, Morgan again, as he had done several times before, threatened to invade southern Ohio. This time he did. His raid through several counties along the Ohio River caused thousands of dollars of damage to Ohio residents. It also brought the war home to Ohioans, who understood how it felt to have their soldiers off fighting in faraway lands while the people at home were left to fend for themselves. The local militias, under the command of Major General George Rue, arrested Morgan with the help of the Union army, but not before he had thoroughly frightened and destroyed the property of thousands of Ohioans. John Hunt Morgan’s Raid into Ohio made the war come alive for the citizens of southeastern Ohio and it forced the civilians to fight the war with their soldiers. They fought the war together and Morgan’s Raid was one of the moments in which that was most evident.

There were as many versions of what happened in the summer of 1863 as there were people who lived through it. For some, it was the most hair-raising experience of their lives. For others, it seemed to make hardly a difference in the way that they lived. Some residents of southeastern Ohio came face to face with Morgan and his men, while others only heard the footsteps of the cavalry as they rode through the region. Even those who encountered the raiders did not have a universal experience, as some found the raiders barbaric and others responded sympathetically, seeing the Confederates as
desperate and pitiful men. Regardless of their experience with Morgan’s Raid, many civilians wrote to their soldiers to explain what happened in their home communities.

Those who were scared of the cavaliers must have believed the rumors and stories about Morgan’s exploits in other states. Morgan had built his reputation by defending pro-Confederate Kentuckians from their Unionist neighbors. He had made several raids of varying size and effectiveness into western Kentucky and southern Indiana. The previous raids mostly included horse thievery and infrastructure damage, the basic mission of guerrilla forces. Morgan’s strategic goal was to provoke fear among the populace, certainly, but doing so through the destruction of property and vital resources. Morgan’s plan to attack southern Ohio was simple. He wanted to stay close to the Ohio River, cause trouble with railroads, bridges, and live off the land for a while, then jump back across the river into the safety of western Virginia. This was not a grandiose plan to win the war for the Confederacy, but rather a way to disturb northern forces and cause some of them to remain home to defend their communities. Although this mission would not directly win the war, it was meant to help turn the northern home front against the war. His plan almost worked.²⁸

Historian James A. Ramage describes Morgan as a flamboyant epitome of the southern cavalier. Morgan was born in Alabama in 1825. He was six feet tall and weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds, a physically imposing man. Morgan was an experienced soldier, having seen action in the Mexican-American War and the 1862 Battle of Shiloh. Ramage describes Morgan as an important figure for southern honor

and identity. Ramage writes, “When he raided Northern towns, giving enemy civilians a sample of the bitter taste of invasion, Southern honor was to some extent restored.”\textsuperscript{29} Morgan was the preeminent guerrilla fighter of the Confederacy, combining ruthless criminal behavior with legitimate military tactics. His conduct involved harassing the enemy, living off its people, and striking when absolutely necessary. His tactics, including masquerading as a Union officer or traveling business man, tricked many Union soldiers to ensure his successful invasion. Morgan’s unconventional tactics provided an example of the unsavory and unromanticized aspect of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{30}

Morgan’s widespread success in Kentucky made him a hero among the people of the Confederacy. They read about his exploits in newspapers across the South. Likewise, northerners read about Morgan’s exploits from the other side of the border. When northerners learned of the brutal killing and ransacking raids of Morgan’s men, many feared for their safety. The proximity to the border made it ever more likely that Morgan and his raiders might cross into Ohio to kill, steal, and destroy. The people of southeastern Ohio knew about the Morgan Raid as news traveled fast from other parts of the Midwest. He made his successful breakthrough into Ohio in the summer of 1863, when Union forces were spread across the western and eastern theaters.

Morgan did not have such a positive reputation in southeastern Ohio. The people there feared him for his destructive nature, but did not respect him in the same way that soldiers respected their enemies. The editor of the \textit{Gallipolis Journal} explained, “It is an outrage on civilized warfare to call such men soldiers. Their object is simply to steal and

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\item \textsuperscript{29} Ramage, \textit{Rebel Raider}, 2-7.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ramage, \textit{Rebel Raider}, ix-7.
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destroy. The fate of felons should be meted out to them.”

Providing even more substance to his assault on Morgan’s character, the editor continued, “The greatest criminal in our penitentiary is an honest man compared with them.”

This characterization of Morgan was loaded with a particular version of northern honor. According to the editor, Morgan was not an honorable soldier. He was a raider and a criminal, who did not deserve the respect of an enemy that fought fair.

The purpose of Morgan’s Raid was twofold. Confederate commander Braxton Bragg gave Morgan orders to cause trouble behind enemy lines and divert forces away from other points of contact in the western theater of the war, namely to keep Union forces away from his army in Kentucky. However, Bragg’s orders mandated that Morgan not cross the Ohio River, which of course he violated to pursue his infamous raid for the purposes of supplying his troops and sustaining his force on the fat of the Ohio land. Morgan’s unique force, comprised of several hand picked leaders and a few thousand willing volunteers, had made a career of similar dashing raids. Some of his men commented that they enjoyed serving with such a daring commander, one who was active and always on the run, rather than the conventional forces that spent days on end encamped or awaiting orders. Compared with the lament of soldiers in General Robert E. Lee’s army, Morgan’s force was a welcome alternative to the lethargy of large armies and long campaigns.

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32 Ibid.
By the time Morgan’s raiders reached southeastern Ohio’s Pike County on July 16, 1863, they had already traversed a few counties in southern Indiana and several counties in southwest Ohio. The people were afraid he was coming due to the incessant speculations of the regional newspapers. What they did not know was what he would do
when he got there. Some were resolute to stand in his path, while others found it expedient to flee the area. All feared for the loss of their horses and supplies. Though it was still early summer and all the harvest was not yet in, there were enough foodstuffs in the area that the subsistence farmers had much to fear from Morgan’s starving and war-trodden raiders.

Olivia Allston wrote to her companion Benjamin Stone, Jr. of the 73rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry in anticipation of Morgan’s arrival, “War has actually come upon our own soil almost to our very door. John Morgan and his brigands are scouring the country all around us and we would not be surprised to see him dashing into town with his 5000 cavalry at any moment.”34 She assured Benjamin that the men of the region were preparing for Morgan’s arrival by assembling the militia. Olivia detailed the war measures taken by the men, including training and drilling all the time. She feared that there would be a lack of supplies and arms to outfit all of the willing volunteers who came from the surrounding areas to stand in defense of Ohio. Olivia described to Benjamin her perspective on why Morgan chose to come through her town of Chillicothe in Ross County, “As a natural consequence of so many country boys coming to town, a large number of horses fill the stables and stalls. This might of itself be an inducement for Morgan to come.”35 She explained her understanding of Morgan’s strategic aim in the letter to Benjamin, “Evidently his object now is to get to the river as soon as possible and he can do it in no easier way than by capturing fresh horses wherever he can find

35 Ibid.
This was an insightful observation by Olivia. In order for Morgan’s guerrilla tactics to be successful, he needed fresh horses. His epithet, the “Thunderbolt” of the Confederacy, a reference to Morgan’s use of cavalry for quick attacks, could only hold true if he could maintain speed on horseback. Rapid movement and burning bridges or cutting trees behind him were the only ways to keep ahead of his pursuers. As Olivia rightly assessed, if Ohioans could either prevent Morgan from getting much-needed fresh horses or prevent his path back across the Ohio River, they would be able to capture the Confederate raider.

The raid itself caused more damage to property than to lives. Witnesses to the destruction complained of Morgan’s men plundering stores and burning buildings. While there were no official totals of the destruction, the following account from the Gallipolis Journal gave an indication of the damage. The editor claimed that, “Morgan’s thieves robbed nearly all the stores accessible to them, in their transit through Gallia county---Every store in Vinton was robbed, the goods wantonly strewed along their track, and their propensity for stealing, was highly exhibited everywhere.”

Fulfilling their purpose to disrupt lives of common northerners, the Confederate raiders continued to destroy as much as they could while staying on the run. Another account in the McArthur Journal based in Vinton County explained that Morgan’s men set fire to buildings, including a corn crib, and burned railroad bridges. The raid gave a tangible price to the cost of war

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36 Ibid.
37 Untitled article, July 30, 1863, The Gallipolis Journal, Gallipolis, Ohio (Gallia County), OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648, 17649.
for the people of southeastern Ohio, particularly those who lost valuable stock and food stores. There were no county-by-county records left of the damage caused, but one estimate puts the damage in the state of Ohio over $400,000, with another $450,000 spent to mobilize the local militia.39

Lucevia Sisson wrote to her husband Nelson, who was an assistant surgeon in the 92nd Ohio. Lucevia described to her husband in great detail the feelings at home regarding the coming of Morgan and his raiders. She wrote of Morgan’s tactics and fears for their own family:

They go to a house and pretend to be Union men say they must have horses and some will let them take them. It is a real hubbah all the time folks cant work. well it takes what few men there are left to guard the roads and take the prisoners to town I will not try to tell you the half but I expect you know better than I can tell you I am afraid they will burn our house but they have not done much in that time yet about here they burned one house up in Salem I think because the man was in the army but I hope we will not be disturbed.40

Lucevia’s note reminded Nelson of several important problems in their home community. Not only did they have Morgan’s raiders to worry about, but they also did not have enough people to work and maintain normal society. Having a volunteer army worked well in theory, but the thousands mobilized for the war created a hindrance for the local community.

Fear of having their home burned was obvious from the tone of Lucevia’s letter. The Sisson family along with their neighbors had never faced a threat like this. Though

39 Statistics from http://www.carnegie.lib.oh.us/morgan, accessed March 13, 2012. The sources from the site are imprecise and less than reliable, but unfortunately there is no way to get an exact count of the damage.
40 Lucevia Sisson of Gallia County to her husband Asst Surgeon Nelson Sisson, 92nd OVI, July 22, 1863. Ohio Historical Society, MSS 1299.
there had been threats for years that Confederate raiders would ransack their homes, this was the first real possibility of that happening. She notes at the end of the above quotation that Morgan’s men burned a home in Salem, “…because the man was in the army.” That must have been a horrifically frightening thought, even if it was merely a rumor. Though her husband was only a surgeon, he was still serving the Union with the 92nd OVI, which could have been enough provocation to cause Morgan’s men to burn down their house. This threat made her husband’s sacrifice of serving his country all the more tangible and terrifying.

Describing the effect of the terror on the region, Fannie Ford of Jackson, Ohio, wrote to her uncle after Morgan visited her home. She told him, “We are quite worn out with loss of sleep and excitement…” Morgan’s Raid ripped through the region damaging the people and property of southeastern Ohio. While the soldiers were away in Virginia, Tennessee, and Mississippi, their homes in southeastern Ohio received an unwelcome visit from John Hunt Morgan’s Confederate raiders. Though causing more harm to possessions than people, Morgan’s Raid was an infamous and powerful moment of terror for the people of the region. The raid was but one of many hardships that directly influenced the people of southeastern Ohio and caused them to experience the war with their soldiers as they fought the war together.

When Morgan initially made his way into southeastern Ohio, there were no Union soldiers opposing him. He faced only local militias for much of the time he was in the state. Local militias prepared themselves with shotguns and hunting rifles, few as

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41 Fannie E. Ford to her uncle (unnamed), Jackson, Ohio, July 23, 1863, Fannie E. Ford Letters, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 878.
accurate or as useful as the weapons carried by Ohio’s volunteers who were off fighting in other states. The militias attempted other, simpler tactics such as felling trees across the roads that Morgan wished to utilize. The locals established ambush points, where they hoped to catch Morgan in his tracks. These small groups of a few hundred had no idea of the force and power of several thousand seasoned Confederate veterans.

Supplying the Ohio militia was a cost to local southeasterners as a result of Morgan’s Raid. For example some of the citizens had to join the militia to fight. Still others had to provide the militia with supplies, particularly horses. The editor of the Gallipolis Journal commented negatively about the process of supplying the local militia, “This mode of supplying our army ad libitum, tends to bring the Government into disrepute, even with its best friends. It enables its enemies to taunt Union men by odious comparisons with Morgan. In many respects in weakens the confidence of men in the ability of the law to protect them.”

Emphasizing the cost on the local populace, he wrote, “It places honest farmers at the mercy of every rogue and horsethief in the country; who are even now taking advantage of the pressing process to swindle our farmers out of their stock.” The people were already living by limited means in the midst of a war, but this was an extra concession. Putting it in the national context, historian Phillip Shaw Paludan explained, “Anywhere from 125,000 to 200,000 men served as home guards, and their presence in the communities of the North kept the war...

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42 “Untitled article,” July 30, 1863, The Gallipolis Journal, Gallipolis, Ohio (Gallia County), OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648, 17649.
43 Ibid.
in the minds of the people at home.”44 In the circumstance of southeastern Ohio, the militia was in place to help stop Morgan, but nonetheless helped to keep the war alive in the minds of the people there.

This cost of supplying horses to the home militia was a heavy price for southeastern Ohio farmers. These were subsistence farmers who depended on what little livestock they owned. The editor of the Gallipolis Journal spoke for the people of the countryside. Many of them could ill afford a lawyer to press for a case for replacement stock, at least in enough time for it to make a difference. Following Morgan’s Raid there were advertisements in local newspapers offering assistance for federal claims due to damages associated with the raid. However, subsistence farmers who surrendered supplies and stock to the militia found it a tedious and frustrating process.

Historian Lester Horwitz tells the story of Joseph McDougal, a school teacher who lived in Pike County, Ohio, in the town of Jasper. No one recorded the details of what happened to him, but Morgan’s raiders captured and executed him. When Morgan’s men arrived in the town of Jasper, they demolished buildings and stole thousands of dollars worth of goods. The editor of the Portsmouth Times described Morgan’s actions, “They broke open the stores and helped themselves liberally to what they wanted.”45 The article detailed that they burned the flour mill and stole some lumber. On their way out of Jasper, Morgan and his men destroyed the Scioto Canal Bridge. Though it is not fully known what McDougal did to deserve his fate, his death

45 “Morgan’s Doings in Pike County,” July 25, 1863, The Portsmouth Times, Portsmouth, Ohio (Scioto County), Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm Collection, Portsmouth, Ohio.
sent a clear message to the people of southeastern Ohio that Morgan had brought the war to their region. This series of events in Jasper was more brutal than Morgan’s other stops along his raid, although more than 200 northerners, the majority of whom were soldiers, lost their lives as a result of Morgan’s Raid.46

The Ross County militia prepared to meet Morgan at Berlin Crossroads, just east of Jackson, Ohio. Volunteers in Athens and Vinton Counties formed their militias, waiting at the ready to fend off Morgan’s men. Militia members, by the summer of 1863, were mostly men too young, too old, or too ill to serve in the Ohio volunteer regiments. Some were unwilling to fight in other states, but were willing to serve in Ohio’s home guard. Ohio’s militias were inexperienced and faced the possibility of having to fight Morgan’s hardened veterans. For example, in Langville, Meigs County, the townspeople could not stand up to Morgan’s trained soldiers, so the raiders captured the townspeople and forced them to build a makeshift bridge for the raiders’ escape.47 As Morgan crossed the state with militia chasing him and Ohio volunteers awaiting him in the east, he established a plan to cross at Buffington Island. The island, a lightly wooded piece of land in the middle of the Ohio River, just north of Pomeroy, provided an easy location to wade horses and men across the river into the relative safety of western Virginia. There was one seemingly unpredictable problem for Morgan; the water level rose to

46 Lester V. Horwitz. *The Longest Raid of the Civil War: Little Known and Untold Stories of Morgan’s Raid into Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio*, (Cincinnati, OH: Farmcourt Publishing, 2001), 174-176. There is speculation that Morgan’s men shot Joseph McDougal, a young school teacher, for his part in building a barricade that slowed Morgan’s progress. The raiders reportedly shot McDougal and put his corpse in a canoe to offer a sign to others who contemplated standing in Morgan’s path. The source in unverifiable and the reliable sources available for the incident do not give such detail. [http://www.piketoninfo.com/page/6183/Morgans-Raiders](http://www.piketoninfo.com/page/6183/Morgans-Raiders)

47 Ibid.
unseasonable highs due to the rain and run off from the western Virginia mountains. The locals foiled Morgan’s plans on several occasions by moving the ferry downriver to make it useless to Morgan at both Middleport and Pomeroy, where he planned to utilize the ferry to cross.

The rebel commander relied upon the guidance and information of native Ohioans at times to guide him through the region. Whether these men and women were Confederate sympathizers remains debatable, but the fact that they helped Morgan move through their state is undeniable. Morgan may have coaxed or forced them to help, but he found a way to gain the information he needed, including the location of Union forces and prospective locations to cross back into the southern states. What Morgan could not get from his sources was the actual location of the pursuing Union army. Though he had little reason to worry about the militias that chased him, there were Union soldiers under the command of General Ambrose E. Burnside who planned to prevent Morgan’s escape back into western Virginia. The high water prevented Morgan from wading across the river and it allowed the Union Navy’s gunboats to participate in capturing the Confederate cavalier. A horse-dependent fighting force could not simply wade across high water, as the weight the animals carried would cause them to drown. The unexpected high water kept Morgan and his men in Ohio longer than they wanted to stay. This gave the local militias time to track down the Confederates. Additionally, the high water allowed Union gunboats to wait outside of river towns such as Pomeroy to prevent Morgan’s crossing. These Union gunboats effectively caused Morgan’s capture because
he did not plan for them. He was unable to easily maneuver around them, even though he had well-seasoned horsemen at his command.

Morgan’s raiders consistently engaged in the activity of bridge burning. As they crossed a bridge, they burned it to prevent the enemy from following them. This tactic was devastating for the Ohioans who lost bridge after bridge. These were not only important for crossing over ravines and rivers, they were also important for allowing the railroad and all of its products to make it to and from the region. Morgan’s guerrilla warfare tactics that continuously targeted the infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and railroads wreaked havoc on the regular functioning of Ohio society. The citizens were eager to eliminate Morgan as a threat to their homes as well as their way of life.

After seventeen days in the saddle, three of which were in southeastern Ohio, the chase ended for some of Morgan’s men at the Battle of Buffington Island on July 19, 1863. The battle was inaccurately named because it actually occurred on the Ohio side of the river near Portland, Ohio, not on the island itself. Morgan knew that the Union cavalry pursued him, but he did not anticipate the naval gunboats awaiting him in the river (or, most likely, the Union forces waiting for him on the western Virginia side of the river, either). Due to superior numbers and a simple flanking maneuver, the Confederate forces were caught in a crossfire of Union bullets and could not survive for long. The combination of Union soldiers and local militias defeated Morgan’s fatigued and surrounded troops. The Confederates broke into a rout, with some running north with Morgan and others heading in nearly every direction, including some who successfully forded the river. All told, the Union forces captured 573 prisoners with horses and
equipment. Morgan began the battle with approximately 1,700 soldiers in his command. He and roughly 700 soldiers escaped the battlefield, but were captured a week later in Columbiana County after the Battle of Salineville.48

The Battle of Buffington Island was itself an awakening for the people of southeastern Ohio. No longer was the war fought only in distant places. The war hit close to home. Morgan’s presence required that the militia had to engage his forces whenever they met, turning Ohio’s soil into Civil War killing fields. Though historians do not give Buffington Island much strategic importance in the grand story of the war, it marked an important moment for the people who lived near the battle. The north shores of the Ohio River were not safe. When Morgan and his raiders were in southeastern Ohio, they brought a tangible set of struggles, fears, and physical damage. First and foremost they threatened material possessions, namely horses, food, and war material. Lucevia Sisson, previously mentioned regarding her fears of Morgan’s men in close proximity, wrote to her husband Nelson:

The night that Morgan passed one of his men cam here about 1 o’clock asked the road to Ports[mouth] and wanted something to eat I had to let him in of course and give him some but you better believe I was afraid a little he behaved very well though thankful me one gave me a silver fork I let on to be wonderfully pleased I am so afraid they will get old Charley we keep him hid as well as we can but they might find him.49

48 Horwitz, 219. For more information on the military proceedings of the Battle of Buffington Island, see the The war of the rebellion: a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate armies. ; Series 1 - Volume 23 (Part I), United States War Department, part of the Making of America Digital History Project, http://dlxs2.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=moawar;cc=moawar;g=moagrpx;c=1;q1=buffington%20island;rgn=full%20text;idno=waro0034;didno=waro0034;view=image;seq=0649, p. 633-786. Morgan’s force had begun the raid with nearly 2400 soldiers in his command, so the raid took a toll on his force.  
49 Lucevia Sisson of Gallia County to her husband Asst Surgeon Nelson Sisson, 92nd OVI, July 22, 1863. Ohio Historical Society, Nelson B. Sisson Papers, MSS 1299.
Surmising that Charley was a horse and an important family commodity, it is obvious that Lucevia again communicated her fears to her husband who was off at war. Not only did she have to harbor the enemy, he “paid” her with a silver fork that he undoubtedly stole from someone else along the raid’s path. This short passage explained to her husband that although she had to help an enemy soldier, she made it out safely. A few days before then, Nelson Sisson’s son Joseph wrote about the news of Morgan’s raid. He mentioned that the bridge had been burned in Vinton. He added, “Morgan took horses, money and any thing else he wanted. He got as far as Pomeroy with out any opposition but there the Malitia attacked past of his army and the 23d OVI coming up the enmy skedaddled on double quick.”

Joseph continued, explaining the dramatics of the Battle of Buffington Island. The tone of Joseph’s letter was one of excitement, rather than fear as his mother’s writing conveyed. Clearly this raid, like the war itself, was a different experience for each involved. At the conclusion of the letter, Joseph added a practical request, for Enfield cartridges and caps, and Joseph planned to protect his family if needed. Joseph noted that a few nights previous he and a few neighbors stood at the forks of the road awaiting rebel stragglers.

What Joseph and his comrades stood to defend was the vestiges of their home community. To give a sense of the scope and actual destruction of the raid, a newspaper article written at the end of the week in the *Gallipolis Journal* on July 30, 1863, recapped the exploits of Morgan and his men. The editor wrote of Morgan, “He burnt the bridge over the Scioto at Piketon, and destroyed all the bridges over small streams. From

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50 Joseph Sisson of Gallia County to his father Asst Surgeon Nelson Sisson, 92nd OVI, July 20, 1863. Ohio Historical Society, Nelson B. Sisson Papers, MSS 1299.
Piketon he rode to Jackson C.H. [court house], captured the place, burning depot, car and destroying the track. John divided his forces at Jackson, one going towards Hamden, Vinton county, and the other towards Centreville, in Gallia County.”

Remembering that soldiers often had access to local newspapers, this report must have frustrated many Ohio soldiers. Morgan not only stole goods, he burned valuable aspects of the home front society, including bridges and railroad depots.

One of the survivors of the raid was Emily Ford of Jackson, Ohio. She noted at the beginning of the letter to her brother that everyone’s mind had been upon “Morgan” lately and her harrowing story explains just why that was the case:

...about twelve when 20 cavalry came dashing in to town rode down the streets as if they were familiar with the place, inquired for the fair ground, arrested all the citizens on the street, fired on several who attempted to escape. By this time their whole force came in. The Depot and bridges above and below were immediately fired and every Stable in town robbed of horses and feed. They then went to the fair ground and built camp fires and a part rested while the others proceeded with the work of destruction.

The letter continued, describing in lurid detail:

A villainous looking fellow came in and wanted bread. I told we had given all out. he said, ‘well you can bake some I must have bread for my company’ I replied that ‘I could not bake bread for a company of men’ well bake all you can and I will be back soon after it’ like a fool I baked some but he did not come back. this with a little corn was all they got from us the expected our house to be sacked and perhaps burned. we buried our spoons, money and watch, and packed our wearing apparel but it was not interfered with.

52 Emily Ford to “brother,” written from Jackson, Ohio (Jackson County). Fannie E. Ford Letters, Ohio Historical Society, VFM 878.
53 Ibid.
Emily Ford’s story showed actual damage. The raid struck her home and though none of them died, the Ford family experienced the war first hand. Emily enumerated the exact details of the items taken and destroyed in local businesses. Though this may seem like a minor attack in the grand scheme of the Civil War, to the people of Jackson, Ohio, it was extremely important.

The woman noted that they hid their valuables, anticipating that their home would be ransacked. For a brief few weeks, their experience of the war paralleled that which many southern families had endured for months. Due to the exhaustion of preparing food for the invaders, Emily allowed her daughter Fannie to complete the letter. Fannie described Morgan’s departure to her uncle, “They went away singing, shouting and yelling, like fiends, and by the thick clouds of dust we could see that the advance was out for miles before the rear had left town.”54 She wrote about the lingering effects of the raiders’ presence, “But all the afternoon stragglers were riding about town and showing no signs of leaving. The people here were in a state of fear and anxiety for the thieves had left word that the rest of their band would soon be along to finish their work and burn the town.”55 According to Fannie’s portrayal of the event, Morgan and his men used terror to maintain control of the people.

Though there were stories of Morgan’s men showing restraint, there were also stories of them using deadly force. Fannie relayed some of the details to her uncle in a letter shortly after the raid, “A Dr Burrows whom they met just after leaving town

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54 Fannie E. Ford to “uncle,” written from Jackson, Ohio (Jackson County). Ohio Historical Society, VFM 878.
55 Ibid.
hesitated when ordered to give provisions and [illegible] they shot him dead. One thing I must not omit they destroyed the ‘Standard Office.’ Breaking the press and scattering the types.’ The crime did not go unpunished, as Fannie explained, “And our men returned the complement by demolishing the ‘Express.’ They asked us often if we were not afraid and said the women of J[ackson] were better soldiers than the men. Mrs. Miller told them the men were traitors was the reason.” Fannie alluded to the destruction Morgan and his men committed while in the town of Jackson, Ohio, when they smashed the Republican press at the *Jackson Standard*. In response, Union soldiers later demolished the Democratic *Jackson Express* to even the score. The importance of war rhetoric and political language cannot be overstated. If newspapers held little meaning in this time, Morgan would not have destroyed the Republican paper. Throughout the war newspaper editorials argued back and forth about the major issues of the war. Morgan’s raid pushed that disagreement from words into literal destruction.

Fannie’s comments about the Dr. Burrows shooting included a gendered dynamic as well. Confederate soldiers reportedly said that the women of Jackson were “better soldiers than the men.” While this may have been a sort of macabre teasing, it may carry a much deeper significance about the women of southeastern Ohio. To earn such a distinction from the enemy soldiers, the women must have stood in opposition to the raiders’ wishes. Perhaps, like historians have concluded about southern women, the pro-Union women of southeastern Ohio helped to instigate, motivate, and perpetuate the Civil War and this woman’s story provides evidence of that attitude. Likewise, it could have

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
been an attack on the masculinity of the men in southeastern Ohio by saying that they could not fight as well or with as much strength as the women.\textsuperscript{58}

Morgan’s Raid caused such widespread panic that some residents made irrational decisions. Olivia Allston of Chillicothe, located in south central Ohio, forwarded the following story to her companion B.F. Stone, Jr. who was away fighting with the 73\textsuperscript{rd} OVI:

Some of our scouts had been sent down that road [where women were fleeing the possible arrival of Morgan], and seeing the others, who had been sent the day before returning and thinking everybody on horseback was Morgan or Basil Duke [Morgan’s second in command], raised the cry ‘Morgan is coming’ without waiting to find the truth of the matter. As a consequence the bridge was ordered to be destroyed, not burned, however, only a few planks torn up here and there to prevent the artillery from being brought across. But the scared scouts fired it and ran. Now we have all our fright for nothing, our bridge burned, and a great many people put to a great deal of unnecessary trouble, besides the expense of rebuilding the bridge.\textsuperscript{59}

This story, somewhat humorously written by “Ollie” conveys the unfortunate mistake of a number of Ross County’s men. They had no way of knowing that Morgan was not knocking on their doorstep. The colorful anecdote explains the deep-seated fear of the people living in Chillicothe during the Civil War. They did not know where Morgan was, if he was coming, or what he would do if he did arrive. They were struck with fear, paralyzed with the possibility that their town could be next on Morgan’s route, and willing to risk the bridge for the sake of safety.


\textsuperscript{59} “Ollie” to Capt. Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73\textsuperscript{rd} OVI, July 17, 1863, written from Chillicothe, Ohio (Ross County) in Medart, 106.
The story of Chillicothe’s Paint Creek Bridge fulfilled Morgan’s mission exactly. Not only did he want to steal and destroy property, he intended on creating widespread panic among the northern populace. Not knowing where Morgan and his men really were caused great anxiety among the people. The residents of Chillicothe were willing to burn their own bridge due to the possibility that Morgan might arrive to attack them. The effect of the raid transcended the physical damage caused by the raiders in both the psychological and physical harm it inflicted on the Ohioans.

In addition to the real damage caused by Morgan’s actual attack, some in southeastern Ohio had to prepare and never actually confronted the raider. One somewhat comical version of the scenario presented itself in Monroe County. The editor of *The Spirit of Democracy* wrote, “Although tolerably good-natured, we felt very much like *cussing*, when we, in common with the balance of our fellow citizens, were compelled to shovel dirt on Mr. Cutler’s farm in Washington County to make rifle pits to impede the progress of John and his men.”

Not only were the volunteers frustrated by their work, the conditions also were less than ideal. He continued, “In addition to the inconvenience of the spade and pick exercise while the thermometer stood at 94 in the shade, the Spirit office had to be closed...” Although this kind of effort paled in comparison to the sacrifices of the soldiers in the Union army, it nonetheless revealed the shared cost of war on the home front. These people in Monroe County paid a price in time, energy, and ultimately fear by having to make war preparations for Morgan’s Raid.

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61 Ibid.
The eventual capture of Morgan took a while. Although many of his forces were defeated at the Battle of Buffington’s Island, some escaped with Morgan and continued their ride north. The *Gallipolis Journal* described it:

John again managed to slip out with about 600 of his thieving followers, and resumed his ride up Campaign creek, bivouacked that night in Porter, in this county, and at early dawn was pursuing his ride in a northeast direction, less some 50 thieves, who struck off in a southwesterly course, most of whom were captured near Green Bottom riffle on the Ohio, by the Gallia militia under command of Capt. Jacob Riggs. The next heard from John was at Ewington in this county, where he captured about 200 of the Scioto militia, who furnished him with that number of Enfield rifles and forty rounds of ammunition. From Ewington he resumed his ride in a northeast direction, and after ‘wiring in and out’ on all points was captured with the balance of his party near Salinesville, Jefferson County, Ohio.62

The *Gallipolis Journal* consistently referred to Morgan’s men as “thieves” or more specifically “horse thieves.” This was a rhetorical decision that consciously prevented these Confederates from legitimate service. In the eyes of the editor, Morgan’s men were not heroically fighting for God and country. They were nothing more than horse thieves. Though militarily they contributed to the Confederacy’s larger strategic goal of defeating the Union (both its home and army components), the northern press, as evidenced by the *Gallipolis Journal* did not appreciate these maneuvers as military actions.

One of the most surprising aspects of Morgan’s raid was his willingness to pay for services or supplies that he acquired along the way. In particular, two individuals in Pike County, an elderly woman and a blacksmith, both reported receiving receipts from Morgan for the goods taken or services rendered. Two of the most difficult handicaps on Morgan’s force were the need for fresh horses and the supplies to care for them, namely

forage and shoes. Finding these willing and helpful individuals allowed Morgan to continue his push through the northern countryside. Fannie E. Ford wrote a letter to her uncle, telling him that “most of them were civil, even thanked us for any favor granted.” An account in the Portsmouth Times mentioned, “No violence was offered to the citizens, and they paid for their provisions with stolen goods.”

Morgan maintained a semblance of order, despite the highly destructive nature of his mission. When some of Morgan’s horsemen broke into a Masonic Temple and began gallivanting in the ornate robes, Morgan reprimanded them. Morgan made the men put the clothes back into the hall. This story, coupled with the raiders’ willingness to pay some people for the items taken, reveal the ordered destruction of tactical guerrilla warfare. They made calculated decisions to directly harm the enemy on the home front, which by 1863 was an established battle ground.

One of the underlying debates about Morgan’s Raid, then and now, is whether the Confederate raider received assistance from southern sympathizers living in Ohio. Some residents of southeastern Ohio did not want the Republicans to win “their” war because of its ties with the abolition cause. Others claimed heritage and family ties with the south, therefore wanting Confederate victory. It remains difficult to prove one way or the other. Even Fannie E. Ford could not come to a solid conclusion as to whether

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63 Horwitz, 170, 178. Fannie E. Ford to “uncle,” written from Jackson, Ohio (Jackson County), July 23, 1863. Ohio Historical Society, VFM 878; “Morgan’s Doings in Pike County,” July 25, 1863, Portsmouth Times, Portsmouth, Ohio (Lawrence County). Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm.
64 Horwitz, 184.
Ohioans aided in Morgan’s travails. Fannie wrote to her uncle, “They had maps of the
town with every street, ally, house and barn marked,” she described, “…also maps of
southern Ohio with all the roads, towns, stations marked.”\(^{66}\) Ford, among others
wondered how Morgan’s men got the sources. Fannie continued in describing to her
uncle, “They professed to have received letters from here, but I cannot vouch for it this
much we do know certain persons mingled with them very freely while here. Neither of
the mills were burned.”\(^{67}\)

According to Ford, there were suspicions of Morgan getting assistance from
residents of Ohio, even in 1863. Accusations of “Copperheads” arose all over the
southeastern Ohio region throughout most of the war. Aiding in a physical raid of the
enemy was quite a different story than reading an antiwar newspaper. If it was indeed
true that Ohioans helped Morgan by giving him maps and sending him letters, the level of
treasonous activity in southeastern Ohio went beyond even that which people accused at
the time. It would be difficult to prove that people in southeastern Ohio aided in
Morgan’s Raid. There were many soldiers who served from the affected counties, so it
seems highly unlikely that people would assist the direct enemies of their friends and
family members. It was unlikely that even antiwar men and women in southeastern Ohio
would help Morgan destroy their neighbors’ homes. Even those who were against the
war would rally with their northern neighbors to fend off Morgan and his raiders. The
notion that there were Ohioans complicit in the relative success of Morgan’s Raid was

\(^{66}\) Fannie E. Ford to “uncle,” written from Jackson, Ohio (Jackson County), July 23, 1863. Ohio Historical
Society, VFM 878.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.
most likely a postwar Lost Cause legend. There is no evidence of anyone being punished for assisting Morgan and his men.

Based on the evidence, it seems that assistance from locals was detrimental to Morgan’s cause. For example, the *McArthur Journal* recounted how a local man pointed Morgan and his raiders in the wrong direction. The editor wrote in July 1863, “The citizens of McArthur were reasonably looking for Morgan to visit them during the night, but fortunately for them, at Vinton Furnace, the wrong man was impressed to pilot him through the country.”

It was unclear whether the guide was ignorant or purposeful, but his information was incorrect. The editor continued his description, “The guide represented to Morgan that the road from Vinton Station to McArthur was lined with a large force of armed men. So after cutting the telegraph wires and robbing the store, he was conducted northward and encamped on John Karns’ farm four miles North of town.”

The account from the *McArthur Journal* conveyed the message to its readers that some patriotic people remained in southeastern Ohio and were helping to capture Morgan. It was not clear whether the informant had faulty information or, indeed intended on sending Morgan into a trap. Morgan could not be sure of who to trust as he traveled through enemy country. Morgan had to rely upon instinct, speed, and daring to make his way through the north. Though there were rumors of people who would assist him, even Morgan knew that these people were not reliable. If they gave him anything,

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69 Ibid.
they would only do so in hopes that he would not harm them. As guerrilla warriors laying waste to the public infrastructure, Morgan’s men could not guarantee the support of anyone they met along their way.

Despite their fears before Morgan’s arrival and the harrowing experiences of some southeastern Ohio residents, others judged the Confederate troops as unimpressive. An article in the *Portsmouth Times* taken from the *Waverly Democrat* expressed, “The rear guard passed through Piketon about dark. They were all a dirty looking set; not one half of them were armed, and most of them had inferior arms; there were not 200 of them that had sabers.”70 Though the comment might have been referring specifically to the rear guard and not Morgan’s main force, the citizens clearly no longer feared Morgan in the same way that they had before his arrival. Morgan became the hunted with southern Ohio’s famous “squirrel hunters,” nick-named for their use of hunting rifles chasing Morgan until his eventual capture. In a letter written to his son, Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., a captain in the 73rd Ohio, Benjamin Stone, Sr. provided his perspective when Morgan’s Raid was over, stating that “This morning we have news that Morgan, with all the balance of his men is captured at Wellsville, Ohio. It seems strange (if not a shame) that we could not stop him before this time, but better late than never.” He mentioned, also, in the same letter, that there were about fifteen thousand militia soldiers in and around Marietta, Ohio, during the fiasco of Morgan’s raid. Whether this is an accurate count may be difficult to ascertain, but certainly there were numerous Buckeye men willing to

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help to defend their home soil.\textsuperscript{71} Morgan, to his credit, escaped his imprisonment at the Ohio State Penitentiary in one of the most daring tales of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, but was killed by Union cavalrymen in September 1864 fighting in Tennessee.

The \textit{Gallipolis Journal} reported that the local militia was successful and deserved credit for its role in catching Morgan. The July 30, 1863, issue, which included the full story of Morgan’s Raid, commented on the local militia: “They have shown themselves men ready to obey any command however irksome, or perform any duty however dangerous. The good order observed in town during the continuance of Morgan’s raid, was of itself, sufficient to satisfy any one that these men were in earnest.”\textsuperscript{72} The civilians acknowledged the service of the local militia. The final sentence that “they can be relied upon in case of emergency” reveals some sense of doubt before Morgan’s Raid. However, once the raid was over, the people were glad that the militia was there to support and protect them. The report continued, “We know now that they can be relied upon in case of emergency.”\textsuperscript{73}

Since communication was not instantaneous during the Civil War, volunteer soldiers in service in other locations were unable to know exactly what was going on at home during Morgan’s Raid. Once the events of the invasion ended and word made it to the soldiers, in as little as a few days or as long as a few weeks, soldiers began writing back home to their families. This exchange of information was vitally important to the

\textsuperscript{71} Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. to Capt. Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., July 27, 1863, written from Marietta, Ohio (Washington County), Ross County Historical Society, Benjamin F. Stone Collection.

\textsuperscript{72} No headline, July 30, 1863, \textit{The Gallipolis Journal}, Gallipolis, Ohio (Gallia County), OHS Microfilm Reels 17648, 17649.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
communal experience of the war. The people at home and in the ranks fought the war together. Morgan’s Raid punctuated that reality by causing the home front to see, feel, and experience more of war’s horrors than they had before the Confederates galloped through their homes. James Oliver of the 36th Ohio, wrote home to his brothers William and Christian Oliver the following reflection, “I hear that Gen. John Morgan with 4800 men is in Ohio I hope he and his force will soon be captured. I also hope he will show the Copperheads who and where their friends are, and what Government and soldiers protects their property.”

Even though Oliver was away at war, he still knew about the conditions of his friends and family at war. They were not isolated from one another. Interestingly, Oliver did not command his brothers to action. Instead, he offered them political advice regarding the Copperheads, or Democrats who did not support the war against the Confederacy. Rather than writing about frustration or sadness about the attack, Oliver wanted the raiders to attack the “Copperheads” at home. Oliver’s reaction was less of concern for his family and more about vengeance toward his political rivals.

Showing a slightly nonchalant attitude, First Lieutenant John M. Benedict of the 18th OVI wrote to his father Jabez Benedict in Meigs County, “I suppose by this time the campaign had ended in Meigs County and throughout southern Ohio, and if I start a letter there will be no danger of John Morgan’s getting it. You must have had exciting times there for I see by the papers that he passed through someplace near there, and no doubt

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74 James Oliver to brothers William and Christian Oliver, July 16, 1863. Marietta College Special Collections, Civil War Box 1, transcribed and edited by Clifford Gold (1974), Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio.
some of his forces went through Rutland.75 Rather than fearing for the lives of his loved ones at home, John Benedict wrote about the situation as if it was not a major problem. Perhaps he had been jaded by the war, or realized that being encamped in Decherd, Tennessee, did not give him the opportunity to intervene on behalf of his family.

Morgan’s Raid was one of the defining moments of the war for the people of southeastern Ohio. Whether they were actually raided or not, many people experienced the terror associated with a war in which civilians were also targets. The raiders stole material possessions, hurt, and even killed people in southeastern Ohio. Morgan’s presence and destruction brought the war into the local communities of southeastern Ohio. There was no distinct attitude change or behavioral change following Morgan’s raid, but the way in which civilians wrote to their soldiers and other family members revealed several important points.

First, the letters showed that the terror was real for the people of Ohio. When the war began at Fort Sumter, the threats were hundreds of miles away. For some in southeastern Ohio, Virginia and Kentucky were only a river’s width away. As noted from Morgan’s tactical plan, the river was often easy to cross. The reality of a border war remained strong. It only took a few thousand horsemen under the capable command of a Confederate cavalier to complete the audacious and effective attack. Morgan’s ability to cause damage and live off the land resulted in a seemingly justified terror from the people of southeastern Ohio.

75 First Lieutenant John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, letter to father Jabez Benedict in Meigs County, Ohio, July 25, 1863, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.
Also, the letters written by the civilians of southeastern Ohio expressed trepidation and denial. Civilians could not believe that these Confederates were actually in Ohio. They had heard of Morgan for over a year. Ohioans always knew that it was a possibility that Confederate raiders would make it into their communities, but when it actually happened they seemed awestruck. Reflecting on everything from the outfitting of the Confederates, to their seemingly contradictory conduct of stealing with manners, the civilians used their letters to not only express what happened, but to debrief the experience for their own well being. Most of the civilians attacked had never been in any type of combat zone, so the stories of burned bridges and killed neighbors brought on emotions and fears that these citizens had never felt before the summer of 1863.

The third trend in the communication from the home front to their soldiers was that of suffering. They explained to their soldiers how they suffered from physical and emotional strife. From local businesses destroyed to families’ entire stock of food eaten or stolen, writers conveyed to their family and friends in the military that this raid brought the war to their home communities. Though the soldiers saw suffering throughout the south, the people who remained in Ohio wanted their soldiers to know about the suffering they experienced as well. Many of the people writing from home were women, writing to husbands, brothers, or significant others. There was an underlying frustration among the writers that so many of the men were gone. They trusted the militia, but many of their best men were off with the army.

Curiously, the people did not request that their soldiers come home. Though the letters carried a tone of concern, or shock from the attack, not a single author asked for
the soldier to desert and come home. Perhaps the people did not request it because they knew it would not happen or because they wrote the letters after the local militia had captured Morgan. No one wrote editorials to the newspapers requesting better defenses or for their men to return home. The people seemed to think that the best way to prevent other attacks like Morgan’s was to win the war. The best way to win the war, according to the president and the army commanders was to have the soldiers threatening the South.

Similar to the civilian mentality, the soldiers did not offer to come home to support either. Perhaps the soldiers knew of their value in the ranks, or thought it impractical to attempt to make it home. The soldiers wrote of wishing to be home for the romantic and flowery parts of life, but not to defend in this sense. Some soldiers wrote about wanting to be home to fight the “Copperheads” or to settle unrest, but not to prevent another raid like the one that Morgan brought to southeastern Ohio. The soldiers did not explain why they were not interested in coming home to help, but it was pragmatically impossible, strategically not expedient, and rationally unimportant. The Union army did send several thousand troops under the command of General Ambrose Burnside to southeastern Ohio during the latter part of the raid. With so many soldiers from the region serving in Tennessee and eastern Virginia, it was not practical for the Union army to spend the time and resources to ship these men to Ohio to defend their homes. It was also not strategically expedient to relocate those thousands of soldiers when it was the militia’s job to handle raids such as the one led by Morgan. The missions in other states were more important in the larger scheme of the war than protecting the cities and towns of southeastern Ohio. It was rationally unimportant to
defend a rural region of Ohio. It would not pay off to defend the region, despite the food
and coalfields there, the railroad hubs and cities of Chillicothe and Marietta, the region’s
most advanced locations, provided no strategic gain for the Confederacy. Plainly put, it
was not worth it for the Union to defend southeastern Ohio with force.

The most shocking effect of Morgan’s Raid in southeastern Ohio was that it
caus[ed] little permanent alteration of home front defenses or way of life. While it
doubtless unsettled the people who were witnesses of the destruction, there were no
serious changes in home front defense. The militias remained intact, the soldiers
remained in the field, and there was no noticeable transformation in the way that the
people lived their day-to-day lives. Those who were able returned to work in fields,
mines, and along the river. Correspondence continued with the soldiers and the business
of southeastern Ohio remained constant.

One of the lasting problems of the raid was its cost. The state government spent
the next several years sorting through claims for the attacks made during Morgan’s Raid.
People submitted compensation claims for all sorts of items, including the legitimate
losses of horses, food, and supplies. Others sought to violate the system, asking for
resources to be replaced that they never had. The people of Ross County asked for their
bridge over Paint Creek to be replaced. The Ohio state government denied the claim
because the Ross County militia burned it themselves. These long and tedious claims
processes left a lasting sting on the people of southeastern Ohio. Day after day attorneys
worked to process the paperwork to help southeastern Ohioans get their lives back up and
running. These attorneys ran advertisements in the newspapers promising great results
from the claims process. Though it may not have been the same as the people living in
the occupied southern states, the lingering effects of Morgan’s Raid went far beyond
what may have happened in July 1863.

Despite the damage and the long-standing consequences of the raid, there was no
formal organization for vengeance. The people of southeastern Ohio, after assuring that
Morgan had been captured, seemed intent on moving on with their lives and the war.
This region did not turn into the incessant border wars seen in other places across the
divide between north and south, such as Missouri or North Carolina. The Ohio militia
did not organize a response raid and destroy Kentucky. It could be that the people of
southeastern Ohio did not want vengeance or to send their own men into the Confederacy
because so many of their men were already there. Soldiers from southeastern Ohio
fought in both the eastern and western theaters of the war. They were camped along
rivers and in valleys from the Shenandoah to the Mississippi. They were already
exacting revenge each and every day that they fought through the Confederacy. The
people may have also been unsure of how to react to guerrilla warfare. It was not like
being marched on by a formal occupying army. Morgan and his men struck quickly,
caused considerable damage, and moved on to other targets.

The people at home saw the realities of Morgan’s Raid as a major point of the war
and communicated about it to their soldiers off at war. Although the soldiers did not
come home to help their friends and family members, it was still a major event about
which both soldiers and civilians wrote. The civilians wanted their soldiers to know
about the attack, or near attacks, that happened throughout their home communities. The
soldiers wrote about their frustrations with the raid itself, but more out of a sense of “news” and curiosity rather than the burden to intervene. The people experienced the war by having their homes raided. The Battle of Buffington Island brought the war to northern soil in southeastern Ohio and made veterans out of some of Ohio’s militia. The connection between the home and battle fronts was important in their shared experience of the war. As those at home wrote about the war, they surprisingly did not receive much tangible support from their soldiers. However, it seemed apparent that soldiers and civilians from southeastern Ohio shared in the burdens of war as a result of Morgan’s Raid.

In addition to the external attack of Morgan’s Raid, the people of southeastern Ohio also faced the internal strikes of the peace Democrats or “Copperheads.” These individuals, who were sometimes southern migrants and other times simply anti-abolitionists, refused to support President Lincoln’s continued efforts to stop the southern rebellion. The loyal Unionists of southeastern Ohio and the soldiers both found the “Copperheads” despicable people who were undermining the Union war effort. The “Copperheads,” the traitors at home, brewed hatred among their neighbors and drew the ire of southeastern Ohio’s soldiers across the country. The next chapter examines the relationship between the Union war supporters and the peace Democrats.
Chapter 4

“Traitors at Home”: Civilians, Soldiers, and the Power of the Press

Political divisiveness on the home front struck southeastern Ohio viciously during the Civil War. The contentions over the Clement Vallandigham and John Brough gubernatorial election in 1863 proved to be stark. The tumult of the 1864 presidential contest also caused a stir among the people of southeastern Ohio. Beyond electoral politics though, was the willingness of loyal Unionists to use sheer violence against Democrats or “Copperheads” who sympathized with the peace platform. It was in this debate and battle that the internal turmoil of southeastern Ohio was most evident.

Civilians at home wrote to their soldiers about these political problems and the soldiers replied with harsh, even threatening, words about the “Copperheads.” This chapter reveals the reality of war on the home front as the political skirmish remained hot and at times grew violent. While the soldiers fought to win the war for the Union in faraway places, their friends and family members fought a completely different war on the home front against people who contested definitions of treason, loyalty, and fundamental American identity.

Republican political figures and newspaper editors were predominantly responsible for labeling antiwar Democrats as “Copperheads.” The term’s origin came from several different places, having to do with both the snake that shares the name as well as the copper-headed one-cent piece. In either situation, the nickname was not intended to be a compliment for its recipient. When Republicans called their political
rivals “Copperheads” this designation carried with it a connotation of cowardice, sneakiness, and an unwillingness to fight for freedom. The article, “Traitors at Home,” in the McArthur Journal explained the reason for strong feelings towards their political rivals. The essay said that “It is a notorious fact that we have, in Vinton county, several traitors, who would be pleased to see the Rebels of the South succeed in their infamous attempt to overthrow the Government.”

Democrats were not a monolithic group. There were many people who considered themselves Democrats including those in favor of peace and those in favor of continuing the war. The major difference between the Republicans and the Democrats of the 1860s was whether or not they supported President Abraham Lincoln and his abolitionist leanings. Members of the Democratic Party or at least those who sympathized with Democratic principles, tended to be against the president’s policies, including most importantly the war and the Emancipation Proclamation. As a result of their opposition to the war and its purposes, they were also ardently opposed to the policy of conscription, which the federal government passed to fill the ranks of the Union army in the spring of 1863. This created a strong connection between the Democrats, the antiwar movement, and the moniker “Copperheads.” The “Copperheads” first appeared

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at the beginning of the war as peace advocates, but their influence and reputation grew as
the war continued.³

As chapter one discussed the variety of definitions of patriotism, so this chapter
explores the several definitions for treason or disloyalty. For some, being a traitor meant
to defy the war effort in any way from the ballot box to the battlefield. For others, a
traitor was someone who explicitly worked for the benefit of the Confederacy in its
attempt at independence. The contested definitions of traitor within southeastern Ohio
caused considerable tension. Of course notions of nineteenth century honor helped to
define northern conceptions of manhood and patriotism as well. As Reid Mitchell writes,
the concepts of manhood, soldier, and civilian were connected.⁴ Individuals that stayed
home, even if doing the loyal work of growing crops for the war effort or maintaining
order, fought a constant battle to define their own patriotic identity.

The opinionated editor of *The Democratic Union*, a newspaper based in Somerset,
Perry County, Ohio, offered a lengthy definition of traitor. He wrote:

Who are the traitors, as the term is applied to the people of the North at the
present time? It is they who would maintain and defend the Constitution and laws
of their country according to the strict letter of the same --- it is they would not
interfere with slavery in the Southern States, because it is a local institution
beyond the jurisdiction of the general government---it is they who are opposed to

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the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of their fellow-citizens, without due process of law— it is they who protect against the forcible levying of an army by the general government without the intervention of the State authorities, in a word— they are considered the traitors to the govern, who are opposed to the violation of every constitutional right of States of corporations and of individuals. The patriots on the other hand are considered to be those who are ever pleased to justify every infringement on our rights, and willingly assist in subverting our liberties. Transpose the terms and we have a correct understanding of the matter.\(^5\)

This particular definition of traitor versus patriot was defensive, but applicable to the debate. The editor emphasized government intervention and infringement of rights. For this editor, a patriot was someone who would “maintain and defend the Constitution” while traitors were “those who are ever pleased to justify every infringement on our rights...” The contested nature of how people defined loyalty and disloyalty directly influenced the war effort in many ways, most notably the support for the soldiers.

The press played a central role in instigating and maintaining this political debate. A group of war supporters physically attacked the Jackson Valley Express and threatened some other papers. The editor of the Gallipolis Journal commented on the situation with another regional newspaper. The editor described the situation, “The Portsmouth Patriot has changed hands. Its late editor, Sam Pike, received a warning from the hands of the loyal men of that city, that such treason as he was weekly putting forth, was not acceptable to them, and would not be endured.”\(^6\) The press offered an indication of the complexity of the democratic debate in southeastern Ohio. In a time of war, people believed that they had the right to silence a newspaper’s perspective and forego the

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\(^5\) “Who are the Traitors?” February 4, 1864, The Democratic Union, Somerset, Ohio (Perry County), OHS Microfilm Collection Reels 34807, 34808.

\(^6\) No Headline, August 29, 1861, Gallipolis Journal, Gallipolis, Ohio (Gallia County), OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648, 17649.
editor’s right to freedom of the press. The people at home knew the power of the newspaper, not only to convince the people at home, but as an important communication device that often ended up in the hands of the soldiers. The editor of the *McArthur Journal*, a newspaper based in Vinton County, aided in fueling the fire of the soldiers. The editor wrote in the spring of 1863 commenting on the antiwar advocates on the home front, “The soldier is ready to spit upon them; for he has noticed their traitorous course, and has marked them as *his* enemies, as well as the enemies of the cause he loves so well, and for which he has signified his willingness to give his life.”

This rhetoric pitted the soldiers against some of the people at home. With the press being so integral to the communication between home and battle fronts, this was an antagonizing if not debilitating reality for the soldiers.

Southeastern Ohio’s Union soldiers were not pleased to hear that people on the home front were supporting the peace Democratic platform. As historian Gerald Linderman writes, “Soldiers were antagonized not only by civilian incomprehension of combat and the persistence of civilian early-war sentiment but by their conviction that certain sectors of civilian society had actually begun to work in opposition to soldier interests.”

Soldiers tended to support Lincoln more consistently than those at home. As Chandra Manning explains in her book *What This Cruel War Was Over*, emancipation was a consistent war aim for soldiers in the Union army. The soldiers were upset with

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the home front to the extent that they threatened to come home and commit physical violence upon the traitorous scoundrels who supported the opposing party. While this may sound like a bit of political bombast, it was indeed supported by actual conflicts in southeastern Ohio between peace Democrats and soldiers.\(^\text{10}\)

The war was the underlying issue for the political problems between Republicans and Democrats. The war not only split the Union, it split communities within the North. Historians Frank Klement and Jennifer Weber articulated the divisions throughout the Civil War North between peace Democratic “Copperheads” and pro-Union Republicans. Weber’s contention that the Copperhead threat was a serious, political-landscape altering movement, finds support among the people of southeastern Ohio.\(^\text{11}\) In fact, it was the division articulated in the anti-war movement that gave soldiers’ families so much to fight for on the home front. Building on that emphasis, this study of southeastern Ohio shows how the personal connections between soldiers and their home communities changed the relationship between Republicans and Democrats, or soldiers and those who stayed home. The *Perry County Weekly* explored this rocky relationship in the fall of 1861. The editor wrote, “Why is it so difficult to raise any considerable number of Volunteers in the North portion of the County?—The reason is plain. Too many of the


so-called ‘Democracy’ up there are opposed to the Government and who’d like to see the Jeff Davis Confederacy succeed.”

The paper argued that it was difficult to raise soldiers to fight for the Union because they were traitors. Peace sentiment started early in the war. The reasons for wanting to see the Confederacy succeed were varied, including the racial issues of slavery and the moral assertions of abolition. The problem of raising Union volunteers, though, continued throughout the war in select districts of southeastern Ohio, most notably in the northern part of Vinton County, Noble County, and parts of Morgan County. These pockets were not directly connected via geography, which highlights even more the disconnection between resisting groups.

Peace Democrats had various reasons for their platform, including what they deemed was an unnecessary sacrifice for a purely abolitionist cause. Some who resisted the war did not do so because they were afraid to fight, but because they felt that fighting to end slavery was an unworthy cause. In an article titled “Peace,” the editor of the Democratic Union in Perry County, Ohio, lamented, “The graves of half a million brave men—the tears of a nation of helpless widows and orphans and bereaved parents—a government bankrupt—a nation[al] debt which will never be paid—enormous taxes, and a probable ‘final and eternal disunions...” Clearly the editor of the Democratic Union did not see the sacrifice of the war as a price worth paying to free slaves or hold the Union together. A few months later the newspaper included a letter from an unnamed

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12 No headline, September 4, 1861, Perry County Weekly, New Lexington, Ohio (Perry County), OHS Microfilm Collection Roll 34901.
13 “Peace,” January 8, 1863, The Democratic Union, Somerset, Ohio (Perry County), OHS Microfilm Collection Reels 34807, 34808.
soldier, who was supposedly encamped in Dumfries, Virginia, and explained the necessary actions for the nation, as seen through an antiwar Democratic lens. The soldier declared that “There is only one line of policy that can by any possible means save the country in this its hour of darkness and trouble, and that is to throw the radical Abolition ideas to the dogs, and adopt the Democratic creed, as enunciated by Jefferson, Jackson, Douglas, and other departed patriots, who loved and revered the Constitution.”

White attitudes toward abolition were hotly contested in southeastern Ohio. As evidenced in numerous newspapers in the region, perspectives ranged from strong abolitionist support to virulent racial hatred. One of the primary concerns for northern Democrats was that a free black populace would take the jobs of northern whites. That point of view was evident in the following excerpt taken from The Democratic Union in November 1861, “What will become of the white laborer? It appears to us that already labor is by far too scarce in the North for the laboring man. What will become of the white man’s labor, then, when the North becomes flooded with these Negroes?”

Continuing by answering his own difficult question, the editor declared, “Some pretend to argue that this will never be the case. Let ‘some’ get the amount that have already arrived, and after he learns that it reaches thousands, and the work has not yet fairly begun, if he then concludes that there is danger he will then have proven that reason in his mind has conquered party prejudice.” Besides equality and rights, for some in

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14 “Another Soldier’s Letter,” March 19, 1863, The Democratic Union, Somerset, Ohio (Perry County), OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 34807, 34808.
15 “Fugitive Negroes Taking the Places of White Northern Laborers,” November 21, 1861, The Democratic Union, Somerset, Ohio (Perry County), OHS Microfilm Collection 34807, 34808.
16 Ibid.
southeastern Ohio emancipation meant employment competition. Almost a full year later the newspaper had not changed its stance on the issue of race, encouraging people to organize the Democratic party with the words, “Turn out then, all who are opposed to making this a war for the freedom of FOUR MILLIONS of Negroes to overrun the North and deprive the white man of his labor.” What began as a political statement grew into a slogan for political change and eventual resistance to the party of the soldiers.

This unnamed “soldier” may have been just a cover for the editor or another sympathetic writer attempting to persuade the readers of the “folly” of abolition. Regardless of the reliability of the source itself, the public read and at least marginally accepted the ideas. The author signed the note “soldier,” which provided a context of violent political activism for these anti-abolition sentiments. This quotation showed that not all of the soldiers were willing participants in the crusade against slavery.

Interestingly, the writer referred to the foundational Americans such as Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, then included Lincoln’s former opponent Stephen A. Douglas, calling all of them “departed patriots.” The “soldier” invoked these men in an effort to show a Democratic interpretation of American patriotism. It was an intriguing, if only slightly popular way to look at the debate. The basic argument in this quotation sustained the peace movement throughout the Civil War. Peace Democrats did not want to fight a war in which the end result was abolition.

The Democratic Union published another soldier’s letter that seemed a bit more credible, as the soldier recorded his unit affiliation as the 62nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

17 “Meetings of the Democracy.” September 25, 1862, The Democratic Union, Somerset, Ohio (Perry County), OHS Microfilm Collection 34807, 34808.
Private William Flowers wrote, or rather dictated, the following sentiments through his fellow Private Jesse M. Guy also of the 62nd OVI. He said, “I have got to say to these men at home who call Democrats and peace men traitors that they should be forced into the army and made to suffer the hardships that we did on the Alleghanies and in the Shenandoah Valley for fifteen months, and for the last three months in North and South Carolina.” He explained the effect that service would have, “I’ll bet they would say settle on any terms. But I notice that these men who say no peace are all at home, saying, ‘give them hell, boys,’ but they are cowards; they won’t come out and help us, like men.”

William Flowers expressed anger toward the people at home who were instigating the war. “They are cowards...” he proclaimed, because the men would not fight in the war. This accusation of cowardice was not taken lightly in the 19th century. Flowers was frustrated that the people who started the war did not have to actually fight it. The core of his comment was that if those men at home actually had to do the fighting, they would want peace immediately. His experiences with the horrors of war and the discomfort of the soldiers’ life made him upset at those who did not serve. He mentioned the suffering he experienced as a soldier, with little patience toward the cowards at home.

Another soldier of the 62nd OVI wrote to the Democratic Union and signed his letter “Devotion.” He wrote, “...this Copperhead is a lover of his country and is willing to spill his blood for it; but is not willing to lay down his life to put the negro on an

18 “Soldier’s Letters,” May 7, 1863, The Democratic Union, Somerset, Ohio (Perry County), OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 34807, 34808.
equality with his parents, wife and children.”

He continued in his tirade, “And so it is with all those who are called ‘Copperheads.’ Their hearts ache for their country, when thinking of the situation we are placed in by the Abolition, negro-loving, unconstitutional, Union-destroying men in power.”

Although “Devotion” chose to hide his identity, he did not conceal his feelings about the war and its political causes. In particular, “Devotion” was upset about the changing war aims after the Emancipation Proclamation. This letter was written in March 1863, only three months after President Lincoln signed the emancipation decree, but was not published until May. The wounds of abolition were still fresh in the flesh of the anti-abolitionists. “Devotion” emphasized that he did not want African Americans on an equal level with his “parents, wife and children.” This soldier saw the freedom of African Americans as a direct assault on his family.

“Devotion” also observed a national conspiracy led by the abolitionists. He accused them of being unconstitutional and “Union-destroying” because of their decision to change the war’s purpose. Doubtless, the soldier did not fully understand why the president chose to emancipate the slaves. Perhaps he felt betrayed by the rapid change in politics. No matter what caused the hatred in him, the most interesting words in “Devotion’s” selection were when he wrote that he was “...willing to spill his blood for it...” referring to his country. Other peace Democrats did not serve. Instead they made the choice to hide away, resist volunteering, and eventually resist the Conscription Act.

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20 Ibid.
The Emancipation Proclamation was a highly controversial document during the Civil War, even for citizens of the Union. Some argued it on the basis of Constitutional authority while others simply disagreed with its purpose of racial equality. The *Democratic Union* declared it the “Last Proclamation” of “King Abraham.” The editor described how the Confederates ought to respond, “Their arms would fall to the ground; and even in the face of an armed foe, the moral influence of such a proclamation to make them believe that Providence himself had caused this great change of hate to friendship, and they would obey.”21 This mocking declaration argued that really nothing in the South would change as a result of the proclamation. The tone of the article mentioned the “moral influence” and “Providence himself” as a sarcastic reference to the fact that the southern way of life was not going to change just because a northern president made a proclamation about slavery. Similarly the *Portsmouth Times* had several scathing indictments directed at President Lincoln, accenting their racist attitude toward the newly-freed blacks. The editor wrote, “The weak, vascillating [sic] man at the Capital, with one stroke of his pen has knocked the chains from the limbs of the slaves, and we are called upon to see, in imagination, the blacks of the South reveling in unrestrained liberty.”22 The flippant tone continued that with a similar proclamation the president should, “order them to depart out of the territory of the United States.” The editor explained, “It would be so simple. Let him proclaim.” The Portsmouth editor’s claim to

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22 No headline, January 3, 1863, *The Portsmouth Times*, Portsmouth, Ohio, (Scioto County), Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm Collection, Portsmouth, Ohio.
remove African Americans left little for debate regarding some Ohioans views on race and liberty.

Nearing the end of the war, the editor of *The Spirit of Democracy* used harsh language to describe the social fallout of African American equality. He wrote, “Whatever is done by Sambo is in the eyes of these fanatics, much more important than if done by anybody else, jumbles of ignorance and pomposity which constitute [N]egro lectures and [N]egro speeches are paraded as exhibiting predigious talent.” Without mincing words the editor allowed derogatory language to make it clear for his readers his perception of inequality between the races. The common people of southeastern Ohio, at least those evidenced in these largely Democratic newspapers, had little interest in accommodating the freed people.

In addition to the soldiers reacting disapprovingly of the Emancipation Proclamation, so too did many of the common people who voiced their opinions through the words of newspaper editors. The editor at the *Gallipolis Journal* put the abolition mission in the context of the rest of the war. He wrote, “No truly loyal man will regret, however, that the object of the rebellion, keeping the negro in slavery, has failed, and that the persecuted and despised race have proven themselves not only able to cope with their oppressors, but be a powerful instrument under Providence in exterminating a class of men who inaugurated, without cause, a wicked war against the best government the

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world has yet seen, but of which they have proved unworthy.”

The connotation of “truly loyal man” shows that this editor did not approve of the war. The sentiments of hatred toward abolitionists for causing and sustaining the war dripped from the pages of this editorial.

The hatred for the abolitionist crusade manifested itself in multiple locations throughout southeastern Ohio especially in newspaper editorials. Interestingly, accusations of cowardice went both ways. While the soldiers accused those at home of being cowards for not serving, those at home accused the abolitionists of being cowards for not fighting. The editor of the *Jackson Valley Express* emphasized this point, “[the] cowardly stay-at-home Abolitionists, think it is ‘a righteous war’ and ought to be carried on until ‘the last man is killed’ and ‘the last dollar is spent;’ but they get certificates of exemption from military duty and stay at home and let the families of many a poor soldier starve.”

The class element of the “poor soldier’s family” continually arose as an important point within the debate. Accusations were made, similar to the “planter conspiracy” in the South, that northern abolitionists started a war that they did not fight themselves. The “Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight” moniker held true in the North as well.

In addition to newspaper editors vitriolic commentary on the war, common people expressed their views on the war via interpersonal correspondence. Emma Hudgel of Perry County wrote to her male companion Edwin Brown, who was at war in the 36th

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25. “A Party Against the War,” February 19, 1863, *Jackson Valley Express*, Jackson, Ohio, (Jackson County), OHS Microfilm Collection 8759 WE, 8759 JE.
Ohio, focusing on both abolition ideology and economics. Emma was a strong supporter of the national war effort and specifically Edwin through the early part of the war. However, her perspective on the war began to change in the spring of 1864. She wrote, “Abolitionists in the town are mean enough to get Soldiers to vol[unteer] and then work their cards so as to make 15 and $20 per head on them... enough to make any body hate the whole tribe.”

In this letter, Hudgel alludes to the complexity of the war’s origins and to those who appeared, from her perspective to be gaining considerable profit from the sacrifice of others. Emma specifically found it deplorable that abolitionists instigated the war, but often did not fight in it. According to Emma, her friends and family had to fight the war. Explaining one particular version of the peace platform, Emma wrote, “...our country is drenching with the blood of her own people... it is an awful thought to think of the American people fighting her own people brother fighting another when is their folly going to cease.” Between the times of sending those two letters a bullet took the life of Emma’s stepfather at the Battle of the Wilderness further deepening her sense of turning against the war effort.

Along with “Copperheads,” another nickname for peace Democrats or those who opposed the war on the home front was “butternut.” This was another derogatory nickname derived from the quality and color of clothing that the people wore. Many of the individuals who opposed the war were poor and could not afford expensive fabrics, so

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26 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, Apr. 21, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 333.
27 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, May 20, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 338. The couple eventually broke up later in 1864 as a result of their drifting political persuasions.
they would dye homespun wool with nut hulls, making them a light brown color. The name “butternut” stuck as a term both for poor northerners who sympathized with the South as well as for predominantly poor southerners. Sometimes soldiers referred to poor southerners as “butternuts” rather than “rebels” or Confederates. These “butternuts” in Ohio tended to oppose government intervention in the form of taxes and more often, conscription or the draft. Isa Brown wrote to her husband John of the 148th Ohio National Guard, “... all the Butternuts at home are saying all and doing all the mischief they can.”

One of the primary elements to sustain the Union war effort was the Enrollment Act (1863), which required that all men of fighting age (18-35) could be drafted into the army. It was not a particularly popular policy for many who fundamentally disagreed with the war aims. As an act of refusal to accept conscription, locals in Noble County offered armed resistance to state authorities who attempted to uphold military service quotas. This local standoff received press that made it into the hands of the soldiers, creating even more virulent hatred for the “traitors at home.” The resistance of the people from Noble County became known as the Hoskinsville Rebellion. Tertullus Brown of Hoskinsville, Ohio, wrote to his friend John Wesley McFerren who was fighting with the 76th OVI in Tennessee. Brown pleaded, “Come home if you possibly can get home, for to conquer the South is an impossibility.” McFerren never received the letter, but apparently deserted. This letter fell into the hands of federal authorities, who

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sent a United States marshal to arrest both Brown and McFerren. When the official
arrived in Hoskinsville, there were approximately one hundred armed men waiting for
him. The United States Army then dispatched two companies of soldiers to quell the
“rebellion” and upon doing so was met with little resistance. The soldiers rounded up
and arrested sixty-five Noble County dissenters. Of those arrested, forty were indicted
for “obstructing process” on April 23, 1863. Most were fined and some spent time in jail.
Tertullus Brown escaped to Canada and never returned to Noble County. His friend John
Wesley McFerran returned to Hoskinsville after the war and lived there the rest of his
life.29

B.F. Kidwell explained the Noble County situation to his son George, who was
fighting with the 77th OVI. B.F. Kidwell wrote:

Up in Noble County the Copperheads had a meeting and past Resalutions
that all the soldiers that would desert thay would proctect them and thay wrote to
some soldiers that went from thair if thay would desert thay would protect them
with thar last drop of blood by such promises thay deserted and came home but
some of the officers got hold of the letter and sent a Lieutenant and 20 men after
the deserters when thay came thay found 500 men armed to resist them the Lt
went to Marietta and telegrapht to Gov Tod and told him the circomstanc and the
Gov sent a lot of artilrey and infrintry out thare and thay soon made the
coperheads skadle thay took one of thair leaders prisnor thay took one fellow by
the name of Davis he diserted from son Regt and came home and joind the Rebles
if I aint mistaken he belonged to the 77th Regt I think I saw the man when he cam
back he told me the Regt had gon to Vicksburg and that was 3 months ago I
would not wonder much if thes Valandingham men men would have to be put down
yet I heard Valandingham made a speach at Marietta last Monday thay had out to
hung the old Son of a Bich dam all such men thay had all ought to be sent to Hell
if ever I vote a democrat ticket I hope some one will shoot me I will stick to the
government if I die for it if I had a dozen boys and thay was old a nough I would

29 Lester Pickenpaugh, Fern Pickenpaugh, and Roger Pickenpaugh, Noble County Images, (Baltimore:
October 1938, p. 319-354. Some of the details for the fate of the Hoskinsville rebels came from
send them all to help Uncle Sam I am no abolitionist but I go in for old Abes Proclamation and every other measure the President takes to put down this Rebellion  

Although Kidwell did not support Lincoln or abolition, he wanted whatever measure would end the war. People had grown tired of the war and desired its end. Kidwell wanted his son to know that he supported him. B.F. Kidwell mentioned, “...every other measure the President takes to put down this Rebellion” as a tacit display of support for his own son, who was fighting in the war. Kidwell made a direct connection between the resistance in Noble County with the abolition aspects of the war. Though few people supported a southern rebellion, when the war aims for the Union changed with the Emancipation Proclamation, it altered the willingness of some northern people to fight or support the war.

George Kidwell’s sister Julia also wrote about the resistance in Noble County with a decidedly different tone than her father. Though she also opposed the draft resisters, she mentioned more of a local and personal element of the fight, “I guess by the way people talk there is a good many Butternuts up this way [...] you remember Ed Sprague dont you? He is a strong Butternut the Knights of the Golden Circle their sign is a butternut ring, Sprague was in Lowell with one on and George Lucas came up and asked him if ‘that was his sign...” The accusation grew to a threat as the story continued, “I think it is you had better haul it of dam quick, he took out his pistol and made him take it off and he has not had it on since either thay ought to have Georges all over the country

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30 B.F. Kidwell to his son George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, April 1, 1863, written from Washington County, Ohio. Correspondence of George Kidwell, Marietta College Special Collections, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta, Ohio.
Juli’s story of the Ed Sprague and George Lucas confrontation was both frightening and slightly humorous. Julia clearly expressed support for Lucas’s actions of threatening a man in a peaceful protest with a pistol. Her suggestion that “they ought to have Georges all over the country...” put her in a firm category of those, like her father, who were eager to win the war by any means. This encounter between these two men and the fact that it made it into the hands of a Union soldier conveyed both the sense of discord on the home front, but also the enthusiasm of some on the home front to fight against the peace Democrats, with force if necessary.

Reactions to the Noble County resistance that remain tend to be unquestionably against the rebellion. For example, Benjamin Stone Sr. wrote to his son, B. F. Stone, Jr. who was fighting with the 73rd OVI, “Drafting me for the army will commence next week. I hear that in Noble County some threaten to oppose drafting by force of arms: if they do, I think they will be sick of their opposition.” Echoing a similar sentiment, Benjamin Stone, Sr. summarized the end of the tensions in Noble County in a letter to his son, “A party of copperheads in Noble County undertook to opposed, by force and arms, the taking of deserters: they took away an officer’s sword and gave him a thrashing...” Stone Sr. described the governmental response to the event thusly, “then, two companies of soldiers were sent from Columbus to settle the matter – but before they arrived, the copperheads held a meeting, and, upon second thoughts, voted, that they wanted not to

31 Julia Kidwell to her brother George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, April 1, 1863, written from Washington County, Ohio. Correspondence of George Kidwell, Marietta College Special Collections, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta, Ohio.
32 Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. to Capt. Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., September 10, 1862, written from Marietta, Ohio (Washington County), Ross County Historical Society, Benjamin F. Stone Collection.
33 Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. to Capt. Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., March 24, 1862, written from Marietta, Ohio (Washington County), Ross County Historical Society, Benjamin F. Stone Collection.
oppose the government—and when the soldiers arrived, they had skedaddled—and no deserters could be found.”

B. F. Stone, Jr.’s father Benjamin Sr. seldom minced words when writing to his son, a soldier in the 73rd OVI. He wrote to him regarding the peace Democrats at home telling him, “From the commencement of the rebellion, my greatest fears have been that the rebels in the north want to paralyze the efforts of the government, to subdue the rebellion... I think every person who pleads the cause of the rebels, should be arrested and kept under arrest until the war is over...” Benjamin, Sr. did not mention any specific names in this note, but it did not seem like a hypothetical situation. He was upset that people were undermining the war effort. Since his much-loved son was part of that army, it mattered to him that other people not compromise the cause.

Frustration with the Democrats resulted in extensive political commentary from soldiers and their families. They wrote about the war itself as well as the origins of the war, sometimes in crass and pointed language. B.F. Kidwell wrote to his son George Kidwell, stating that, “I see the Democrats are going to do all they can against the government they aint agoin to alow any appropriation for th rais monny to pay soldiers...” He continued, “I mean the democrats that are in the legislative thay say the war is unconstitutional and a abolsion war dam them I would like to shoot all such men I wonder if thay think it was Constitutional for the south to begin this war if thay had behaved themselves thay could had thair Nigers and Lincolin nor no body els would not have bothered them...” His racially-focused perspective went on, “...I wish our men

34 Ibid.
35 Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. to Capt. Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., October 16, 1862, written from Marietta, Ohio (Washington County), Ross County Historical Society, Benjamin F. Stone Collection.
would take every Nigger in the south and make them fite the sesch or send them to Halifax. I dont car which the sooner we get red of the Nigger the better it will be for the country.\footnote{B.F. Kidwell to his son George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, January 12, 1863, written from Washington County, Ohio. Correspondence of George Kidwell, Marietta College Special Collections, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta, Ohio.}

B.F. Kidwell raised several issues about the war in this letter to his son. He wrote about Democratic unwillingness to help support the war monetarily and the connection between abolition and the war’s purpose. Kidwell expressed a blatant racism that put African Americans at the heart of the nation’s problems. Kidwell’s politics were a concoction of pro-Union patriotism and anti-black racism. He was no abolitionist, yet he recognized the importance of winning the war for the survival of the nation. His comments about Democrats regarded them as obstacles to the army being able to accomplish its mission in winning the war, making them enemies as well. A few weeks later in a letter of a similar tone, B.F. Kidwell added, “...the North is not United as it ought to be these Valandigham Democrats are a dam sight worse than Jeff Davis I told them last fall any body that would vote that ticket was a Rebble...”\footnote{B.F. Kidwell to son George, January 29, 1863, MCSC.}

Republicans had an agenda for the war, be it the preservation of the Union, or a deeper cause of abolition. Regardless of their reason for wanting to fight and win the war, most agreed that the antiwar Democrats undermined the efforts of the administration and ultimately the army. John A. Brown of the 148th Ohio National Guard explained to his wife Isa, “I think if the Butternuts could only see the desolation that slavery and
secession has wrought on the plains of Virginia, they would begin to be loyal.” Brown connected the conditions of the south with the political ideas he observed from some northerners. While most soldiers did not articulate such a nuanced understanding of this connection, others realized quite baldly that peace Democrats compromised the mission of the Union army.

Many northerners perceived the peace Democrats or “Copperheads” as being fundamentally anti-soldier because they were antiwar, but often their focus was actually on class rather than race. In fact, regarding the class dynamic, Democrats hoped (and at times believed) that the soldiers would join their side. Some Democrats were convinced that due to George B. McClellan’s popularity with the common soldiers as a former commander, he would defeat President Lincoln in the 1864 election. Regarding the importance of the 1864 election, the editor of The Spirit of Democracy explained what would happen if McClellan did not win. The editorial said, “If the Union Abolition party should elect their candidate for President this fall, through the supine-ness of the Democratic party, the country is ruined; your farm, your property will be worth nothing, it will be so borne down by taxation that you will be obliged to seek a home in the far west, and your property given up to the monied aristocracy.” This was class warfare. This testimony reveals an attitude even in the North about how class played into attitudes toward the war. These common people, regardless of moral debates involving African

38 John A. Brown of the 148th ONG to his wife Isa Brown, Belpre, Ohio (Washington County), July 2, 1864, letter written from Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, in Lee, Dear Isa, 111-113.
Americans resisted the war out of a basic economic fear of the ramifications of emancipation.\textsuperscript{40}

Not all efforts were well received. In one instance, peace Democrats held a reception for local soldiers, but none of the soldiers attended. One soldier explained to Lieutenant Colonel David Dove, who was home in Gallia County recovering from a war wound, “...the copperheads made a ball for the soldiers and not one of them attended the copperhead ball they say that they would rather eat hard tack and sowbelly as to eat oysters and the luxuries at the hands of the copperheads.”\textsuperscript{41} The writer was straightforward in his assessment that the soldiers did not want anything to do with the “copperheads.” This was an interesting intersection between the political worlds of the peace Democrats and the soldiers.

To some soldiers, the political stance of the peace Democratic movement was illogical and counter productive. This attitude resulted in some hateful writing aimed at the “Copperheads” and their supporters. James Barker of the 36\textsuperscript{th} OVI wrote to his family, probably his Aunt Charlotte, “I heard that the teacher in our district is a Valland[igham] man and vile copperhead, if so for the love of God send him to Canada or Caffraria in South Africa. A Copperhead to teach a relative of mine! He should not whistle up a dog of mine. I hope I have heard a false report of the young man, but if he is

\textsuperscript{40} For more on the discussions of class warfare in the Confederacy, see the work of David Williams, especially \textit{Rich Man’s War: Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley}. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

\textsuperscript{41} Unknown, probably “C Millachen” to Lt. Col. David Dove, 2\textsuperscript{nd} WV Cavalry, at home in Gallia County recovering from a war wound, April 17, 1864, written from Jackson, Tennessee. Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Lt. Col. David Dove Collection.
old enough to teach that school he is old enough to fill our thin ranks.” Barker’s frustration emphasized both the importance of education and a problem of manpower in the military. Perhaps the most interesting part of Barker’s tirade was his anger toward the “Copperhead” sentiments in the classroom that could spill onto the students. Barker recommended banishment for the teacher, or more fittingly to his eyes, that the young man be sent to the army. Despite his obvious hatred for the man’s beliefs, Barker envisioned the possibility of military experience reforming the man was, in Barker’s own estimation, politically misguided. There was a sense from the soldiers that the eligible men who chose not to join the army before the draft were somehow cowards or shirkers. Without considering their responsibilities at home or their contributions to the war effort in other ways, such as working in a factory or providing food via farming, soldiers often assumed those who stayed home did so out of a lack of patriotism or willingness to risk their lives. William Tall wrote home to his mother and his sisters in the spring of 1863, “All the talk here now is about conscription. The boys say that those who have been at home taking things easy will have to come out and do what they was afraid to do before.” Tall’s choice of words was fascinating when he wrote “taking things easy” and “afraid to do before” as if there were no legitimate reasons to refuse to serve in the Union army, such as helping family or maintaining order on the home front.

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42 Captain James G. Barker, 36th OVI, no addressee, but probably to Aunt Charlotte in Washington County, Ohio, January 1, 1864, written from unknown location. Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio. Correspondence of Captain James G. Barker, Box 500.
43 William A. Tall, 2nd WV Cavalry, to “Mother and Sisters” in Gallia County, Ohio, March 10, 1863, written from Camp Piatt, West Virginia. Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, William A. Tall Collection.
In addition to Tall, Jacob Miller of the 90th OVI wrote to his brother about his anger and frustration toward the northerners who chose not to fight:

I would be glad to hear of all the Northern traitors being made to play ‘shut mouth.’ It is very discouraging to those who have left their homes, their friends, and all that they held dear, to endure the privations, and sufferings of a soldier’s life, for the sake of their country, to hear of people in the North, who ought to have more sense, sympathizing with Southern traitors and rebels, and using their influence to break down the best Government that ever existed; and one that has and is now, protecting them and their property--- it is really too bad; and I look upon such men as cowards, and enemies to the Union soldiers, and I would, if any difference, rather use the bayonet on them than the soldiers in the rebel army for many of them are ignorant of what they are doing. I hope that the time will soon come when they will be made to hide their faces for shame.44

Miller’s letter contained several expressions of agitation toward his political rivals. He noted the sacrifice of the soldiers and how the protests of the antiwar movement would break down the “best Government that ever existed.” Miller connected the soldiers’ sacrifice to the preservation of the government. For him, the preservation of the government was worth the cost of war. He wrote that these soldiers were protecting these “Northern traitors.” The soldiers essentially fought to preserve the “traitors” right to protest.

Miller wrote that he would rather use the bayonet on the northern traitors than on the southerners. There was a sense evident in Miller’s letter and others’ writings, that southerners were a more honorable enemy than the northern traitors. At least the southerners were willing to fight for their way of life. The northern peace advocates merely caused trouble, resisted service, and hindered the progress of the Union armies.

For Miller and his comrades in arms, these people at home who undermined the war effort were worse than the common southerner, who Miller explained, “...are ignorant of what they are doing.” Aside from being blatantly discriminatory toward southerners, it was a direct affront to the northerners who, according to Miller’s contrast, must have been well aware of their treasonous actions. Jacob Miller added that he hoped the traitors would have to hide their faces in shame. It was astounding for soldiers, Miller included that the northern protestors were so outspoken against the war. Rather than understand the antiwar argument, the soldiers villainized them. The shame should come from accepting rights protected by the soldiers, while refusing to support their efforts on the battlefield.

Many soldiers used their recovery time to reflect on their war experiences. One such soldier was Lemon Devol of the 62nd OVI who was sent home to recover from his wound in the spring of 1863. While there, he continued communicating with his former comrades via letters. In one such letter, Devol expressed his attitude about the men at home who did not serve in the military. “Wouldn’t it be fun for some of us fellows who have been in our ranks for twenty months to have a chance to drill the tories and copperheads in a good cause? I should like to make them come up and toe the mark in Uncle Sam’s cause and according to Old Abe’s orders.”

Devol conveyed the opinion that all able bodied men were responsible for contributing to the war effort. He gave the reasons for “Uncle Sam’s cause” and “Old Abe’s orders,” which displayed both a

45 Lemon Devol, from Morgan County, Ohio, formerly of the 62nd OVI, to Martin R. Andrews of the 62nd OVI, May 20, 1863, written from the soldiers’ hospital on Folly Island, South Carolina. Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio, Box 504.
measured reliance upon the federal government as well as a trust in the president. Devol, like other soldiers, did not see a valid excuse in the refusal to fight. Some soldiers were so insulted by the peace advocates unwillingness to fight that they sent home threats in letters. For example, William McDonald a farmer from Pike County wrote in a letter home to his wife in August 1864, “I understand that there is men in Ohio professing to Be peace men that is doing all they can to rais a war at home...” McDonald later discussed the consequences of their actions, “they have to Bring old soldiers home they will not spare them[.] they can not hide in a salt piter cave from Boys that long heard the thunder of this campaign...” In other words, because these dissenters were not supporting the war, they became the enemy.

Union soldiers felt betrayed by the able-bodied men who stayed home. James Barker wrote, “Gladly would I lead a company into battle with the rebels and traitors at home or any place they could be found.” Barker did not discriminate when referring to the people who opposed the Union. He wanted to fight against any of them. George Kidwell of the 77th OVI, whose father and sister wrote to him about the Noble County “rebellion” wrote of a similar sentiment, “...if the soldier ever have to come home to fight them [Copperheads] they will rue the day for so sure as that would happen there would be hot work if the copperheads would stand up like men and us but I dont think they would do that.” Kidwell conjectured that the “Copperheads” would not be willing to fight

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46 Corporal William McDonald, Co. D, 53rd OVI, in a letter to his wife Sarah, Pike County, Aug. 24, 1864. William McDonald Collection, Ohio University Special Collections, Mahn Center, Athens, Ohio, MSS 182, Box 1, Folder 4.
47 Captain James G. Barker, 36th OVI, to Kate, in Washington County, Ohio, August 30, 1864, written from camp near Charleston, [West] Virginia. Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio. Correspondence of Captain James G. Barker, Box 500. George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, to his father B.
back against former Union soldiers. Kidwell assumed that if the antiwar Democrats were unwilling to fight against the rebels, they would also be unwilling to fight against Republicans or soldiers.

The soldiers were aware of their own sacrifices and deemed them necessary for the survival of their nation. The men who refused to assist in such an important cause seemed to the soldiers like cowards, or worse, traitors. F. P. Cowee, a soldier from the 36th OVI wrote to his friend Julia:

I hear (some drafted men from) Noble County refused to go into the Army. How I wish that every traitor was compelled to go and serve during the war. I think the men in power are too easy with the Tories. I tell you it makes us boys grind out teeth and swear vengeance on those at home who even sympathize with the South. And, could we have our chance, we would doubly wreak our vengeance upon them. To think that we have sacrificed all, and spend two years hard service on behalf of our glorious Union, to have our own people, yea even our own neighbors, rise up and try to put us down. I tell you I would far rather shoot such a man than the hottest Secesh in the rebel army. I wish the old 36th (Regiment) was up in Noble and Morgan Counties. I think we could soon settle some of their hash.48

Cowee’s vitriol was evident. The Noble County resistance represented far more than an unwillingness to fight for their country. To Cowee, these men were “Tories,” a term used to describe those Americans who were loyal to the crown and unsupportive of the patriots during the Revolutionary War.

Cowee also expressed a willingness to kill the traitors at home. When he wrote, “I would rather shoot such a man than the hottest Secesh in the rebel army,” it may have been a bit hyperbole, but hatred was clear. These men were not fellow fighters, like the...

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48 F. P. Cowee, 36th OVI to his friend Julia M. Sprague in Washington County, Ohio, April 3, 1863, written from Carthage, Tennessee. Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio, Box 500.
secessionists that met him fairly on the field of battle. Cowee wished that the “old 36th was up in Morgan and Noble Counties.” In other words, he wanted to go with his new brothers in arms to fight former neighbors. These men were cowards in Cowee’s eyes and he was unafraid to describe his rage.\footnote{To provide context that these Ohio soldiers were not alone in their ire for the Copperheads, see Randall C. Jimerson, The Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 226.}

In agreement with Cowee, Solomon Denius a soldier in the 78th OVI, wrote to his friend David Perry an expression of disgust toward the “traitors” at home. He wrote, “But if all reports Be true I think they ought to send a part of them to noble County to settle some of the traitors therein first to look at it its Enough to raise to Bristles of any Soldier...”\footnote{Solomon Denius, Co. G, 78th OVI, to friend David Perry (spelling varied, Parry) of Noble County, Ohio, March 29, 1863, written from camp, probably in western Tennessee. Denius Family Civil War Correspondence, Ohio Historical Collection, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 5568.} He explained his reason for such hatred, “…we are here Doing all we can to save our Country and there is a pack of traitors in the north tearing Down the government raising up in arms against our soldiers that went to Arrest nobody But a traitor and Deserter By the name of J W McFerran that left this company at memphis if it hadent Been for the traitors of the north this war would have been over they ought to hang by the neck till they are Dead Dead and maby this war would then close”\footnote{Ibid.} Denius fought with three of his brothers, two of which did not return home with him. It was obvious for him the level of sacrifice his family made. His family was from Noble County, yet they served and did so at a high price. Denius directly connected the antiwar efforts of his home county with the inability of the Union army to win the war. His scathing words,
“this war would have been over” reflect the deep wounds of someone who had dedicated much to the cause of preserving the Union.

The reaction of soldiers to resisters in their home region was apparent in their letters home. Samuel H. Putnam of Marietta wrote to his female companion, Abbie Mixer throughout the war. When she wrote to him about the draft resistance in the spring of 1863, he replied with these harsh words, “I just wish they would order the First Ohio Cavalry back home to gather up the conscripts under the new act and to suppress all treasonable language and conduct against our Government.” Describing his hatred, he continued, “A Northern Traitor I Dispise and when I would be gathering in the conscripts and come across one I would make short work of him. I have no patience with them at all. I hate them far more than I do a southern rebel. I would just as leave die in Ohio defending the honor of my country as down here in the cedar bushes.”

Putnam’s sentiment that “I have no patience with them at all” pervaded among several different soldiers. He wrote that he would rather die in Ohio defending his country rather than in the South. Putnam drew a direct parallel between fighting the southern rebels as fighting the draft resisters in Ohio. There seemed to be no middle ground for the soldiers. The people at home either supported the war or resisted it.

Barker and Cowee were not alone in their anger toward the peace Democrats and draft resisters in southeastern Ohio. Private Andrew Jones wrote to his parents in the late summer of 1864, “In your next letter I want you to let me know what the copperheads are

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52 Samuel H. Putnam, 1st Ohio Cavalry, to Miss Abbie Mixer, Unionville, Ohio, March 2, 1863, written from camp at Stewards Creek [Tennessee]. Samuel H. Putnam Collection, Marietta College Special Collections, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta, Ohio.
doing, are they preparing to fight? We have such rumors here, and we are aching to come up there and tear them limb from limb and to destroy them and burn them from the face of the earth.”

Jones wrote that the soldiers were “aching to come up there and tear them limb from limb.” This was obviously aggravating the soldiers to know that they were so far away that they could not come to the assistance of their friends and family.

This was an important point of contact for the soldiers in showing real emotions to friends and family via letters. Cowee did not belie his feelings in the hopes of keeping his friend Julia calm. He conveyed his honest pain and anger to her via their limited connection point of letters. This sentiment, however, provided significant proof of the way in which soldiers and their home front associates maintained meaningful contact throughout the war. They exchanged ideas about the war and its marquee events, including those that were locally significant, such as the Noble County draft resistance.

The loyal Unionists of Ohio perceived the “Copperheads” as a direct threat to their way of government and way of life. To the Republicans and war supporters, the “Copperhead” platform meant a turn against the soldiers. James Oliver of the 36th OVI, advised his brothers in the spring of 1863 regarding the Copperheads, “…I say knock them down if you want to kill a copperhead you must at once mash his head or else he might bite you.” Oliver emphasized the threat that these home front enemies posed, making it necessary to kill them.

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53 Andrew Jones, Co. D, 76th Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry, to parents in Washington County, Ohio, August 23, 1864, written from camp near Atlanta, Georgia. Andrew Jones Diary and Letters (Originals owned by Virgil Ted Dixon), Box 505, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.
54 James Oliver, 36th OVI, to brothers William and Christian Oliver in Washington County, Ohio, April 19, 1863, written from unspecified camp. Civil War Letters of James Oliver, transcribed and edited by Clifford
James Oliver held extremely strong beliefs about the “Copperheads.” In March 1864 Oliver drafted what appears to be an original “letter” to the unspecified “Copperheads.” Oliver wrote:

A few lines for the Copperheads. Disgraceful scoundrell sir.  
If you want to know the sentiment of the soldiers about the copperheads just pay attention a little. If we had you here we would hang you to a tree and let you remain there until the buzzards would pick the flesh of your filthy carcasses from your bones, you deserve a tenfold harder death than any traitor in the south that meets us in arms, its a shame on you that you are trying to dissolve the Union, the best Government that ever was known on the face of the earth, should you not rather support and defend, when in danger a Government under whose laws and regulations you have been permitted to live in peace.  
I wish we were permitted to return home at present and we would soon give you the reward of those who take up arms against our Government 
Remember me as one

Oliver included several important concepts that provided insight into the mindset of Union soldiers. First, he used exaggerated and violent language to describe what the soldiers would do to the “Copperheads.” This was not terribly unique as other soldiers noted these similar types of torturous punishment. Second, Oliver articulated that these unnamed villains, “…deserve a tenfold harder death than any traitor in the south that meets us in arms…” There seemed to be a distinction for soldiers between those willing to fight the Confederates and those who were not, the traitors at home. This difference resulted in extremely harsh rhetoric from the soldiers, full of threats and promises of retribution. Finally, the letter boasted of the “…best Government that ever was known on

55 James Oliver, 36th OVI, to parents and brothers in Washington County, Ohio, March 2, 1864, written from the Naval Hospital in Annapolis, Maryland. Civil War Letters of James Oliver, transcribed and edited by Clifford Gold (1974), Civil War Box 1. Marietta College Special Collections, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta, Ohio. Oliver died two months after writing this letter.
the face of the earth...” completely excluding any possibility that the peace Democrats similarly believed that the Union was worth saving. Oliver, similar to other soldiers, was unwilling to understand the war through anyone else’s perspective. He was so fervent in his thoughts about the traitors at home that he refused to acknowledge their reasons for wanting to end the war with “peace on honorable terms.”

Soldiers hated the peace movement, especially when individuals attempted to get them to desert the army. The McArthur Journal included an interesting exchange of information between one such scenario involving a Vinton County man named James Ankrom. In a letter to an unnamed soldier in the 53rd OVI, Ankrom encouraged him to desert and promised him safe haven in Vinton County. Sergeant Enoch Owens responded, seemingly on behalf of the soldier. Owens wrote that Ankrom had shown himself a rebel by encouraging soldiers to desert. The sergeant added, “You say you are not a secesh, but still you will do all in your power to cripple the army of your country.”

Owens’s letter continued by addressing the cowardice of Ankrom and people like him, “If you think this is an Abolition war, and don’t like it, if you are so disgusted with the policy of the Government, and if you really are so tender of the Constitutional rights of armed rebels, why in the name of common sense don’t you take your musket, put on a butternut uniform, and go and help your friends fight it out. If you were not a coward, you would do it.” After the accusation, Owens explained what he and his comrades planned to do once they won the war, “We are going to stay in the army until this war is

56 Enoch Owens, 53rd OVI, to James Ankrom (Vinton County), May 26, 1863, written from Moscow, Tennessee. Published in “A Soldier of the Union,” The McArthur Journal, McArthur, Ohio, (Vinton County), OHS Microfilm Collection Roll 34793.
57 Ibid.
ended, and when it is ended, we don’t want to have to go again every time some Southern traitor is made President.”58 Then, in religious terminology, he described the ultimate significance to their actions, “We intend to make a clean sweep both North and South, until there will not be one left to advocate the cause of the wicked one, Jeff Davis.”59 Owens had the end goal in mind to win the war. Even after the war, though, Owens predicted that the armies would rid the nation of southern sympathizers. Though this may have seemed unrealistic, the message Owens sent to Ankrom was that living in the north did not make him safe from postwar retribution. Owens again exhibited his grasp of national politics, yet in this case he was not an accurate prognosticator.

Many of the soldiers harbored hateful and angry attitudes towards the “traitors at home” or the draft resisters. Nelson Purdum of the 33rd OVI took a different perspective on how to deal with those who did not cooperate with the war effort. He insisted upon sending these reluctant men to the front, where they could be properly directed. Purdum wrote to his brother late in the war, “I hope you are all well and getting along fine with your work. And that the Quota is going to be Drafted in Ross County. do nothing to prevent it for here is the best place in the world for Butternuts.”60 He described how it would convert them. “... we got lots of them the last haul, Old Abe made. Send them on we will train them up in the way they Should have went long ago.”61 Purdum’s tone conveyed an attitude of faux optimism by mixing serious and sarcastic ideas. In an effort

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Nelson Purdum, 33rd OVI, to brother [unnamed] in Ross County, Ohio, January 30, 1865, written from camp along the Savannah River in Georgia. Nelson Purdum Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2107.
61 Ibid.
to convert unwilling men to fight for their country, put them in the ranks with veterans who would happily train them. The final sentiment “…the way they Should have went long ago” was an attack on the bravery and lack of patriotism of these men. The implication of Purdum’s words were that by joining the military, even late and by force, would change the attitudes and overall acceptance of these men. Rather than destroy them, Purdum wanted to convert them.

Lt. Col. John Benedict of Meigs County wrote home to his sister to express his views on the peace party. He wrote, “The actions of the ‘peace party’ in the north are doing a vast amount of harm to the union cause. It does not dampen the spirits of the soldiers so much as it encourages the rebels.” He explained why the rebels benefited from Copperhead efforts, “It makes them think that the majority of Federal soldiers and people of the North are in favor of peace at almost any price. They are worse enemies than those who come out openly and declare themselves enemies of the Government.”

Benedict’s articulate phrasing expressed a sadness over the false impression the peace party gave the South. According to Benedict, the peace party encouraged the southern rebels to continue fighting as they assumed northern public opinion was shifting against the war. Benedict’s assertions were not far from reality. The Confederate government insisted that at almost every point of the war, they were one quick victory away from independence. Benedict was correct when he wrote that these antiwar Democrats offered encouragement to the rebels. He added in a letter later that spring,

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62 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to sister Clarissa Benedict in Meigs County, Ohio, February 28, 1863, written from camp near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.
63 Ibid.
after observing the terrible conditions of many southerners, “I wish to God that some of
the copperheads in the north who are encouraging the rebellion could be made to
exchange places with them. It would make them change their tune.”64

Republican and pro-war soldiers varied in their strategies for dealing with the
peace Democrats. Most, it seemed, wanted to physically harm the “Copperheads” in an
effort to convert or destroy them. Others wrote that the draft was a good idea because it
would force the antiwar men to see what was really going on in the South. In most cases,
the issue of dealing with war resistance revolved around the key issues of the war itself.
Whether they were upset about the Emancipation Proclamation or that the war cost so
many lives, the antiwar advocates expressed agitation and aggravation with the war itself.
The soldiers found these criticisms to be insulting and treasonous.

Some civilians agreed with and supported the soldiers, so they were upset with
their neighbors who refused to support the war. There was no single determining factor
for whether a person might support or oppose the war. A “Union Lady” wrote to the
Gallipolis Journal in the spring of 1863, “I am a Union woman, and despise home
traitors, who claim to be Union men and at the same time doing all in their power against
the Union and the Government, by finding fault with every effort that is made in trying to
 crush this wicked rebellion.”65

The woman continued her letter with more specifics about the traitors and the

64 John M. Benedict, 18th OVI, to sister Clarissa Benedict in Meigs County, Ohio, April 12, 1863, written
from Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy,
Ohio.
65 “Letter from a Union Lady,” May 7, 1863, The Gallipolis Journal, Gallipolis, Ohio, (Gallia County),
OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648, 17649.
effect that they had on the war effort. She wrote:

These traitors say we are a ruined nation of people, the North is whipped, the South will conquer, and all this to dishearten our brave patriots, who have gone forth to fight in defense of their country; and to heap mountains of trouble upon their friends and families at home, these traitors assert that our brave boys did not go for their country, but for money, that they are getting big wages, and want the war to continue so they can make a fortune. I will not answer such twaddle, but I think home traitors should be handed over to the tender mercies of our brave boys, who know how to deal with such cowards. Our brave volunteers need our hearty thanks and cheers and well wishes; they need our Union feelings and sentiments, to correspond with theirs; they need our prayers to God in their behalf to uphold and sustain them at their post of duty, and then they can go forth with cheerful hearts, fighting the battles, knowing that they have good Union friends at home who will welcome them back with hearty cheers and kind greetings when this rebellion shall have been put down, and this treason blotted out of existence.66

The anonymous “Union lady” signed her letter “Mrs. -----“ meaning that she could have been virtually any Union woman. Though it could have been merely contrived by the newspaper editor, the sentiments were interesting and noteworthy. Although women did not typically have a public forum, this woman’s letter appeared in the newspaper. Her comments about the need to stop the traitors and support the soldiers as acts of patriotism were poignant.

The Union lady drew a direct connection between the home community and the soldiers, wishing for the soldiers to take hold of the traitors. She wrote about a powerful feeling of hatred toward the traitorous neighbors. In addition to the soldiers expressing frustration about the home front betrayal, here it was obvious that even the people on the home front who supported the war found the antiwar advocates to be committing some level of treason. Though it may seem unnecessarily violent, the Union lady wanted the

66 Ibid.
soldiers to whip the traitors into shape. She showed no indication of lending credence to
the concerns of the peace Democrats in any meaningful way.

The Union lady noted that the problem with the traitors was that they undermined
the work of the brave soldiers. She wrote that the people at home should offer
encouragement and not cause further problems. The author mixed the religious necessity
of prayer for God’s provision with cheerful assistance, which would give the soldiers
ample courage to fight the battles. Though the tone of the letter seemed a bit detached
from the reality of war, it did express the important connection between those at home
and the soldiers at war. It was an imperative, according to this Union lady, that the home
community provided support for the war. Without them, the soldiers did not have the
necessary support to fight and win the battles. The traitors at home, due to their lack of
support for the soldiers, caused further problems and hindered the progress of the Union
army. “Mrs. -----“ emphasized the necessity for the treason to be “blotted out of
existence” after the war’s end. The Union lady explained the nature of the
embarrassment these “traitors” caused her and the community. Though the traitors were
not completely removed from the region’s history, the author included this section of the
letter to show that cowardice would not be preserved for posterity.

At the end of the letter, the author noted a particularly important point about her
identity. She wrote, “I love my country, I love the Government that has so long protected
me, the freedom which I have so long enjoyed, the liberty for which our fore fathers laid
down their lives. I am a Union man, a whole Union man, and nothing but a Union man,
This passage noted a tacit love for country and its existent government. One of the most consistent themes for pro-war Republicans was the emphasis on the patriotic support of the war. It was not considered patriotic, at least by the pro-war advocates, to refuse to fight or to stand in defiance of the war or the administration that conducted it. Though few on either side were in favor of the killing that accompanied the war, some found it a necessary patriotic sacrifice. For this Union lady, to show her love for her country, she had to support the soldiers who fought to preserve the Union. The rhetorical statement at the end about “I am a Union man... if I am a woman” was not characteristic of the time. Wrapped up in this assertion was the notion that supporting the war made her more of a “man” than the traitors who refused to support the war. In the sentence directly before, the author mentioned the sacrifice of “fore fathers,” which was an intentionally gendered description of national origins. The Union lady let the antiwar men in her region know that they were not acting like men.

The account of the “Union Lady” most likely made it into the hands of soldiers through the newspaper. When soldiers did not communicate with home directly through letters, they relied upon newspapers such as these to provide important updates about the home front. This detailed letter from a “Union lady” must have been excellent support for the men from southeastern Ohio who marched through the mud in the spring of 1863. News from home was, at times, extremely encouraging. When it was not, when reports

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
of traitors or political corruption reached them, the soldiers reacted with harsh words in their letters back home.

Not all of the threats were mere rhetoric. In one particular case in Lawrence County, pro-war Republicans murdered two antiwar Democrats for their political beliefs and agitating actions. The *Portsmouth Times* reported:

Two men, brothers, named WILLIAM and DANIEL CAMERON were horribly butchered on Monday last in Lawrence county, while returning from Ironton to their homes at Etna Furnace. The cause of their murder was a difference of political opinion and the brothers having ‘hurrahed for Vallandigham’ and abused the administration were considered ‘traitors’ and deserving of death. They were literally cut to pieces and their bodies almost severed. The Abolition paper at Ironton palliates as far as possible the cold-blooded and fiendish crime, considering the ‘provocation great.’ No one at last accounts had been arrested.\(^{70}\)

The paper did not take a stand on the murders, but tended to be in support of the war and the soldiers but not particularly enthusiastic about slavery. This murder case was shocking that despite the threats, someone actually murdered these two men because of their political beliefs. Their story was not indicative of extensive violence of this type, but it nonetheless showed the willingness of some citizens in southeastern Ohio to commit political crimes.

“Copperhead” sentiments were popular enough to give antiwar candidate Clement L. Vallandigham a chance to win the Ohio gubernatorial election. The *Gallipolis Dispatch* recorded in March 1864, months before the fall election, “Copperheadism still rears its sneaky head in our midst. The antagonism between it and the soldiers is likely to

\(^{70}\) “Horrible Murder in Lawrence County,” July 9, 1864, *The Portsmouth Times*, Portsmouth, Ohio (Lawrence County), Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm Collection.
be greatly increased and embittered by the late manifests of Vallandigham.”\textsuperscript{71} The paper continued, “It is worse than useless to tax the community for funds in support of the soldier, and then entrust its safe keeping... to his bitterest enemy.”\textsuperscript{72} The editor of the paper revealed the seemingly contradictory point of raising money for the war and electing an antiwar candidate. The soldiers had no intention of electing Vallandigham. The author wanted his readers to remain aware of the ever-present threat of “Copperheads” and to work against it.\textsuperscript{73}

Unsurprisingly, the soldiers had no love lost for Vallandigham. The \textit{McArthur Journal} relayed a story about how the Ohio soldiers acted towards “Vallandigham the Traitor,” with the following account, “And, then Vallandigham had the unblushing impudence to visit the Camp of the Ohio boys at Washington. They hung him in effigy, labelled ‘Vallandigham, the Traitor,’ and were only prevented by the earnest endeavors of the officers from making a tragedy out of a comedy, and really hanging the real hive man.”\textsuperscript{74} The soldiers were eager to fight fellow Ohioans over political differences. This home front attitude of violence put southeastern Ohio into a much larger context of brutality and localism in the Civil War. What made it so grotesque were the sentiments expressed here by these Ohio men. They were not willing to compromise with “traitors”

\textsuperscript{71} No headline, March 24, 1864, \textit{The Gallipolis Journal}, Gallipolis, Ohio (Gallia County), OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648, 17649.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} “Vallandigham the Traitor,” July 18, 1861, \textit{McArthur Journal}, McArthur, Ohio (Vinton County), OHS Microfilm Collection Roll 34793.
at home. They wanted to “tear them limb from limb” and were willing to lead troops to fight against these “cowards.” This division was not artificial, contrived, or merely on paper. These men were serious.

The editor of the *Gallipolis Dispatch* observed the conflict between the soldiers and civilians as a serious problem for everyone. The paper described the situation, “What is the evident result of this [il] attempt to incite soldiers against the citizens of the North, if it be not to bring about a broad disregard to civil law, rioting and bloodshed.” The editor explained that people who spoke out against the current Lincoln administration were, “...inciting soldiers to take the law into their own hands and punish them against where they know nothing except as informed by these incendiary fanaticism.”\(^75\) In other words, the newspaper’s perspective against Lincoln and the abolition war should not be viewed as an affront to soldiers. Describing the *Gallipolis Dispatch* political position a few months later, the editor wrote, “The Abolition leaders and those who would make money out of the war at the sacrifice of human beings by the millions, will learn in November next, that the people have not forgotten the election of 1860; that this war could and should have been avoided; that over two millions of our friends have already been offered up as a sacrifice to enable the men in power to experiment upon their new and untried dogmas of Abolitionism.”\(^76\) The editor did not intentionally inflame the passions of the soldiers by speaking politically against the war, but the words were accepted as an affront. This contributed to the perceptions of patriotism and treason

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\(^75\) “Our Neighbor And The Traitors In Our Midst,” March 16, 1864, *Gallipolis Dispatch*, Gallipolis, Ohio (Galia County), Brossard Memorial Library Microfilm Collection, Gallipolis, Ohio.

\(^76\) “Peace and War Democrats,” August 5, 1864, *Gallipolis Dispatch*, Gallipolis, Ohio (Galia County), Brossard Memorial Library Microfilm Collection, Gallipolis, Ohio.
discussed throughout this dissertation. Because the people of southeastern Ohio did not agree on what it meant to be patriotic or a traitor, they fought adamantly on both sides of the northern political discussion. As evidenced here, sometimes that debate grew violent between soldiers who felt betrayed and antiwar citizens who did not think their political voice could be heard.

This was a point of exchange between the civilians at home and the soldiers at war regarding the political trials of the war. For some soldiers, the civilians supported them wholeheartedly and they fought the war together. For some, like the story of Emma Hugel and Edwin Brown, the war broke down that relationship between two people as a result of the war. These stories were not isolated. They fit into the much larger narrative about the Civil War. Any study of civilians must be carried out within the context of their relationship to the soldiers. The soldiers must be examined alongside the experiences of the civilians at home. When the Noble County draft resisters walked out to greet the United States marshal, they provoked an entire patriotic movement among those who remained faithful to the Union. This resurgence of patriotic pride was evident in letter after letter between home and battle fronts, where soldiers and their associates expressed emotional reactions to the political stances of southeastern Ohio’s people.
Chapter 5

“Let it be what it is”: Communal Connection through Religion and Family

Religion and family shaped the consciousness of the soldiers as they left their home communities in southeastern Ohio. As they embarked on the journey of war, they took with them the religious ideas and traditions that guided them through life. Those same religious conventions sustained them throughout the war. Soldiers commented extensively on the conduct of other soldiers in the army. While seldom admitting to taking part in any of the indulgences themselves, soldiers often wrote about the degeneracy of the other soldiers in the army. Similarly, soldiers wrote about the positive effects of religion, particularly regarding the ability to turn away from strong drinks and promiscuous women. Soldiers also used religious language to explain the greater purpose of the war, justification for killing, and a certainty or hope for survival. The stabilizing force of religion and its complementing morality helped to provide a little bit of the civilization of “home” in the midst of violent and chaotic war. The common religious experiences shared between those at home and those at war created yet another facet of how they fought the war together.

When the soldiers left southeastern Ohio, they did not go alone. They marched off with friends, family, and neighbors to put down the rebellion. The soldiers left representing their home communities. Their conduct on the field and in camp reflected the character and nature of their communities, including their most precious connections, their nuclear families. Community and family ties, such as letters and supplies sent from
home, provided a direct link between the thoughts and concerns of the home community with the day-to-day struggles of the combat soldiers. Soldiers made an association between their bravery in battle, toleration of military life, and the health and welfare of friends and family at home. This chapter argues that staying connected to the home community, particularly through a common religious base was integral for Union soldiers’ ability to persevere in the war.¹

For the vast majority of white Protestant soldiers, the connection to faith was integral to their war experience. The three-fold tapestry of home, war, and religious background provided the moral code by which Union soldiers lived. Soldiers were, at times, specific in their references to biblical imagery. More often, though, they wrote about a type of providence, a God who could determine the outcome of the war and who had the best interests of the nation in mind. Sometimes the soldier’s faith led him into battle; sometimes it led him to the grave. Religion and morality were representative of home for soldiers and contributed significantly to their conduct and decisions in the military. As historian Sean Scott accurately points out, Union soldiers developed a justification for the war that connected their willingness to fight with God’s blessing on

the battle. In summary, like their enemies in gray, Union soldiers believed that God was on their side and would help them win the war.²

Harry Stout’s book *Upon the Altar of the Nation* and Mark Noll’s *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* both examine religion on a national scale as a societal consciousness for nineteenth century Americans. Related to common Union soldiers, David Rolf’s *No Peace for the Wicked: Northern Protestant Soldiers and the American Civil War*, provides a superb examination of the connection between faith and military service. This chapter contributes to that historiographic conversation by showing how, in a rural northern region, the men adapted their faith as a motivating and sustaining force in combat and military service generally. By examining the intimate relationships between soldiers and their loved ones on the home front, this dissertation exposes the integral spirituality that motivated and sustained many of the soldiers throughout the war. This dissertation builds on Rolfs’ work by highlighting his concept of “cultural Christians,” that is those who were merely acting out Christian behaviors because it was a popular way of life, showing how the local community served to create and entrench that very “culture.”³

There were primarily three categories in which religion mattered for Civil War soldiers and their families. First, God’s providence decided who would win or lose the

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war and who would live or die in combat. Second, religion defined the moral code by which a man should live and, ultimately, determined what kind of man he really was. Finally, religion represented a tangible presence of home in the soldiers’ lives that contrasted greatly with the chaos and confusion of uncivilized warfare. Ensuring faithfulness in their lives, via prayer, devotional scripture reading, and attendance of camp worship services did not ensure their lives would be easier or their fate any more secure, but it did provide a context of civilization and order to a war that was certainly extraordinary. Typically camp worship services consisted of a sermon, some singing, and fellowship with local worshippers as well as other soldiers. It could provide liturgical comfort, to say nothing of the company of people whose intentions and actions were peaceful rather than bellicose.

Providence took on many forms for civilians and soldiers during the Civil War. God’s providence supplied the needs of the people. God’s providence decided the fate of his people. God’s providence decided the outcome of the war and for many the freedom of the slaves. For the civilians at home, providence helped put food on the table, held up the borders from the rebels, and protected their soldier at war. For the soldiers, providence kept their supply lines safe, guided themselves and comrades in battle, and provided for those at home. As George Kidwell who was stationed at Camp Dennison succinctly wrote to his father of Washington County in February 1862, “I hope that providence will let us meet once more at home and liberty and freedom with all good
soldiers.” It was an honest desire that he wanted to survive the war to celebrate its victory with those who helped win it.

Home influenced soldiers directly in defining their moral code. Soldiers’ worldviews took shape over years of coming of age in home communities and nuclear families. Their religious and moral background formed over their lives up until the war. When they left their home communities, they took those values with them. Home defined them as they left. Lorenzo Dalrymple while on active duty in Helena, Arkansas, explained some of the rules that he and his comrades in arms had created to preserve order in their camp. He wrote to his mother in November 1862. “We have laid down our rules. Which i will tell you a few., No card playing., which will not No profane language is allowed. Although some has practiced it so believe we have the civilest mess in the Camps it almost attemps me to say Regt.” Establishing moral codes was not always for a holy reason. Sometimes, as evidenced here, it was merely to preserve order. It was important to Dalrymple to inform his mother about these codes to set her heart at ease about the conduct of her son at war.

Newspapers sometimes captured the religious and moral pulse of the war in a similar manner as the letters between family members. The editor of the Gallipolis Journal, a newspaper based in the town of Gallipolis along the Ohio River in Gallia County wrote in the fall of 1861, “God in his Providence is working out of this seeming

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4 George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, to father B.F. Kidwell, Washington County, February 23, 1862, written from Camp Dennison, Ohio, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.
5 Lorenzo Dalrymple, 56th OVI, to his mother Sophia Dalrymple, Gallia County, Ohio, November 12, 1862, written from Helena, Arkansas, Dalrymple Family Civil War Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
evil, some great good. He is testing our constancy by this great trial of secession. He is proving us whether we are worthy to longer hold the glorious heritage of our fathers.”

The editor here developed the idea of forefathers and carrying on the legacy of patriotic sacrifice as connected with religion. The editorial continued, “He is showing us the road to liberty compassed about with armed fiends, who are ready to cry ‘havoc and let slip the dogs of war.’ He is forcing upon us the solemn fact that to deserve freedom we must do as our fathers did; suffer and die for it.”

This deep civil religion drew an explicit connection between the service and sacrifice of the soldiers in the Civil War preserving something holy. The quotation began “God in his Providence...” and attempted to put a positive spin on the war, as if the death of thousands was God’s way of teaching the people a lesson about the preservation of liberty. This may have not been a perfect representation of the people’s thoughts at home, but it certainly echoed the beliefs of many who fought and died for religious reasons with the support of those at home. To punctuate this point, Sean Scott argues, “Regardless of God’s intentions in the war, whether punishment for unnamed sins, the predestined destruction of slavery, the harbinger of the Apocalypse, or even something entirely unanticipated, the specific application mattered little when one possessed confidence that God supported the Union and would give victory to her arms.”

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6 No headline, *Gallipolis Journal*, Gallipolis, Ohio (Gallia County), September 5, 1861. OHS Microfilm Collection Rolls 17648 and 17649.
7 Ibid.
Soldiers wrote home, reminding their friends and family that God protected them all.9 William McKnight, a trooper in the 7th Ohio Cavalry from Meigs County, wrote to his wife Samaria while in Middleport, Ohio, “I hope you will put your trust in him who is able and willing to save. I hope you will Pray for me . . . feel that God is still as he has ever been a father and friend and is abiding.”10 There were interesting characteristics of God accented here, as father and friend. McKnight did not call on the service of an all-powerful creator, but rather an intimate and relational God as “father and friend.” These images of God were undoubtedly meant to convey a certain type of protection and comfort for his wife at home. He requested that she pray for him also and to put her trust in “him who is able and willing to save.” Though God’s salvation often meant from eternal damnation, in this context it meant saving from death while on Earth. William and Samaria shared this faith and utilized it as a way to sustain them during their time of intense trial of distance and danger.

One of the ways in which soldiers and civilians worked together spiritually was to pray for one another. Letters going either direction ended with a straightforward request for prayer. In 1863, James Oliver wrote home from a camp in the woods in Georgia and asked for his family to remember him, “pray God help us through safe and give us victory complete, is my prayer. I will now close pray for me.”11 Notably, the first part of

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9 Rolfs, No Peace for the Wicked, 78.
10 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), October 16, 1862, written in Middleport, Ohio, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 20.
11 James Oliver, 36th OVI, no addressee given but probably to his brothers, Washington County, Ohio, September 15, 1863, written from camp in the woods, Georgia, Civil War Letters of James Oliver, Marietta College Special Collections, Civil War Box 1, Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio.
the comment was for God to give “us” victory, as a statement that included those at home. He separated that from the latter, requesting prayer specifically for him. Though he did not note specific prayer requests, it was evident from his comments that he regarded prayer as a worthwhile enterprise. Echoing this sentiment, Jacob Shively of Ross County who served with the 89th Ohio Infantry in the ditches of southwest Atlanta in August 1864. He wrote to his wife, “Remember me in your prayers and I ask the same of the church.”12 This, again, included the entire community around that church in the war effort. He did not specify what he wanted them to pray for, but it was still part of their patriotic and civil religious duty to pray for their loved one at war.

Soldiers wanted God to look after their friends and families at home, so they prayed for their protection. They reminded their families to remain devoted and not to worry about their fate in the conflict. Infantryman Joseph Hoffhines of the 33rd Ohio Infantry, wrote to his family from Chillicothe, Ohio, “I hope you will do well and all be kept by the mercy of God until we meet again. dont think that I am down hearted I would rather come back than go but nevertheless I feel cheerful and hope to get back again if the Lord will.”13 There were two directions in this snippet home, one that Hoffhines wanted to ensure his family that God would take care of them. Secondly, he put his own hope and trust that God would help him survive. These dual sentiments were intended to calm and ensure his family that God was in control of their situation. This shared faith allowed

12 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, August 14, 1864, written from the ditches of southwest Atlanta, Georgia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, Dear Companion... Yours untill death Jacob Shively 89th Regt. O.V.I., (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 71.
13 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Circleville, Ohio, October 16, 1864, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.
the home and battle fronts to work together toward the goal of winning the war, believing that God was on their side to see them through to victory.

Despite the assurance of Providence that many relied on, Ferguson H. Trowbridge provided a great example of the uncertainty with which soldiers fought and how they coped with it. He wrote in a letter to his wife Ruth in Gallia County in September 1862, “Go on with the business yourself for the Lord only knows or how I will come out. I may never see you again although I would like to see you all.”\textsuperscript{14} Though the phrase “Lord only knows” could have been flippant, it seemed as though Trowbridge had resigned his fate to the Almighty. He wrote later in the same letter, reflecting on a similar sense of fate. “There is one thing I wish you to do: that is be of good cheer and make yourselves contented with your lot. Let it be what it is.”\textsuperscript{15} This unsolicited philosophy must have been a bit difficult for his family, waiting at home for husband and father to return. Not all the soldiers rested on their faith in the way that some devout families did.

At the heart of their understanding of Providence, soldiers grappled with their own sense of morality, especially in the context of the camps. They wrote home about the degradation that they witnessed, sometimes absolving themselves whilst accusing fellow soldiers. Morality was important though, because it determined what kind of man and soldier he was. An immoral man was not a good soldier. For some, morality meant behavior of omission, such as not gambling or drinking. For others, morality meant behavior of commission, such as being devoted to faith, extending charity toward others,

\textsuperscript{14} Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge, 117\textsuperscript{th} OVI, to wife Ruth Trowbridge, Gallia County, Ohio, September 14, 1862, written from Camp Portsmouth, Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
and writing often to mother. Moral codes often were connected directly with religious faith, and were the link between faith and works. Morality was not simply thinking the holy thoughts, but putting them into action.

Some at home gave direct morally based orders to their soldiers, often referencing reports of a particular regiment struggling with conduct issues. B.F. Kidwell of Washington County wrote in February 1862 to his son George of the 77th Ohio, “You say you have not tasted any liquer or plaid any gams I am glad to hear it stick to it and if you live to come home you can come like a man and not like a lofer...”\(^{16}\) He continued, contrasting his son with others, “that will be better than some of the boys that went from hear in the 36th thay have got to drinking and gambling to if you ever come home and thay live to get home you will see who thay are you nead not think that I give myself any oneasiness about your drinking or gambling that is the least of my troubles.”\(^{17}\) The way in which Kidwell ended the advice made it seem as though he was not really worried about his son, but he wanted to send a gentle reminder. When his son came home from the army, B.F. wanted him to do so with his head held high, not with bitter secrets to hide from family and friends.

Few soldiers provided outright confessions, but one letter from Ferguson Trowbridge accented a need for repentance. Trowbridge, a member of the 117th Ohio wrote to his wife Ruth in Gallia County, “I fear my duties to God is too much neglected but dear wife let your prayers ascend to heaven on all occasions for the preservation of all

\(^{16}\) B.F. Kidwell, Washington County, to son George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, February 22, 1862, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
of your family – me not excepted for if any [il.] need repentance it is me.” It would be only speculation to assume what Trowbridge had done that was so worthy of repentance. It was interesting that he had not even made it out of Camp Portsmouth, which was still in Ohio, before he wrote home this confession.

In addition to serving as religious confidants, friends and family at home also provided religious encouragement. For example, the people at home wrote to encourage soldiers to attend camp meetings. They wrote to request their soldiers to maintain correspondence and keep the connection with home, and consequently civilization, strong. The people at home wanted to ensure that their soldiers maintained a connection as a way to encourage them in their efforts, but also because it was part of how the people at home fought the war together with their soldiers. It was their way to be involved. Sean Scott focuses on the importance of women on the home front in serving this role as spiritual encouragers. He writes, “In letters to soldiers, devout women emphasized the value of prayer, the importance of spiritual growth, and the necessity of relying completely on God when suffering through trials.” These valuable actionable steps helped soldiers ensure that they were unified with God and family as they charged into the trials of military life.

People at home used letters to provide moral and religious instruction to their soldiers at war. They reminded their sons of the importance of moral purity and offered them hope for ensuing trials, including battle. They even explained to their soldiers the

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18 Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge, 117th OVI, to wife Ruth Trowbridge, Gallia County, Ohio, November 1, 1862, written from Camp Portsmouth, Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.

19 Scott, A Visitation of God, 72.
harsh realities of death and survival. It was really a remarkable relationship between some of the families, as their friends and family members at home positively influenced soldiers in terms of morality. Ferdinand Cowee openly admitted the benefits he gained from the teaching of his friend Julia Sprague. He wrote in the summer of 1863 while in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, “You will allow me to say that I have received much instruction and moral benefit from you, even though you may not have been aware of the fact.” Cowee did not explain exactly which lessons he learned or how she so successfully conveyed the ideas, but he nevertheless appreciated the instruction and connection there. This bold admission drew a direct link between the instruction and moral concerns from home with the overall well-being of the soldiers.

Religious instruction was an important part of the home front structure that built nineteenth century American civilization and therefore was important to continue when soldiers left the safe confines of home. William McKnight encouraged his wife to teach their children the religious traditions and beliefs that were integral to him. He wrote about their children in March 1864 from the Unionist haven of Knoxville, Tennessee, while serving with the 7th Ohio Cavalry, “Teach them to love the Savior for he says in the Holy Book to Suffer little Children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the Kingdom of heaven, therefor the whole Duty Devolves upon you to instruct them in the right path.” After acknowledging that she had a high task to do on her own, he gave her

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20 Ferdinand P. Cowee, 36th OVI, to Julia M. Sprgue, Washington County, Ohio, June 12, 1863, written from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, F.P. Cowee Collection, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.
21 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), March 18, 1864, written in Knoxville, East Tennessee, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do
further encouragement. “O that the Lord may give you grace to support you in the hour of trouble and crown your efforts with many blessings.” Raising their children in the Christian tradition was one of the ways in which McKnight and his wife could connect despite their distance. From the little details of how the children were doing, to the larger spiritual framework to guide them, the war put a direct split between the McKnight family. William and Samaria utilized letters to make that division more tolerable and their faith base was a major aspect of surviving the war.

For some, the war itself was a context for religious teaching. Joseph Hoffhines viewed his service in the army as an opportunity to help proselytize to many of the soldiers. He explained to his wife in November 1864 while on duty in Kingston, Georgia, his plans for religious education, “I have great Encouragement to hold meetings here. there are many praying people in our Regiment. We Expect to form a class soon and have our prayer meetings every week. I hope the Lord will bless us.” His note mentioned that there was a promise for religious development. He also observed that there were “many praying people” in the regiment, which was seemingly exciting for Hoffhines. It also connected the soldiers with one another. Religion was after all a symbol of civilization and the order of home. Spending time seeking after God together allowed the soldiers to feel human, connected to one another, and perhaps most importantly in communion with their loved ones at home.

They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 159.

Ibid.

Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Kingston, Georgia, November 11, 1864, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.
A few months later Hoffhines sent his wife a report of the meetings, explaining their significance for the war. He explained regarding their meeting the previous Friday night, “...about twenty five of praying people met to plead for mercy, we had a good meeting and although strangers to each other we realized and felt a kindred spirit and craved acquaintance with each other you dont know how refreshing it is after being with so many that is so profane and wicked to meet with good people, sing and pray and talk about religion.”

Hoffhines and his fellow believers found their religious practice to be a respite from the wickedness of war and the camp. This was a moment in which the believers connected through faith and religion, sustaining factors for some soldiers.

Hoffhines continued writing to his wife, expressing his desire for there to be religious awakening on the home front as well. He wanted all of them to experience revival together amidst the trial of war as a way to see it through and as a way for God to make good of a terrible situation. He wrote, “you dont know how glad I would be to hear that the lord was reviving his work among you. for this I pray daily and to know that god is Blessing you at home would make me greatly rejoice, Even here in the midst of trials and cares but I cant controll these things to suit my own wishes but will patiently wait the result of strong desires with fervent Prayer.”

Though the situation was completely out of his control, Hoffhines wanted to see revival among the people at home. He did not wallow in his own circumstances of war, but instead embraced the possibility that God

24 Hoffhines to wife Nancy, written from Savannah, Georgia, January 1, 1865, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, OHS, VFM 2596.
25 Ibid.
might move among the people at home. Their faith served as a rallying point between home and battle fronts and Hoffhines wanted unification through revival.

Religious teaching was necessary because the military bred several different vices, including profanity. Benjamin F. Stone, Jr. a soldier in the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Ohio Volunteer Infantry who was living in Ross County wrote to his father in Washington County from camp in Clarksburgh, Virginia, in the spring of 1862, “The immorality of the Regiment is great-in profanity. The men are so reckless and careless in this kind of life, no restraint except a military one is upon them. When you hear a Captain swear as lustily as a private soldier how can you expect their moral condition to improve. We have no Chaplain and I think Col. Smith does great wrong to permit this to go on...”\textsuperscript{26} According to Stone, there was clearly a higher standard of behavior being neglected among his comrades. Perhaps powerfully influenced by his background and the comments of his father, Stone saw the need to reform the regiment in terms of the undesirable behavior of profanity.

Another moral struggle that soldiers had was with consuming and controlling alcohol. Some drank to celebrate, some drank to forget their trials, and many drank because it was what they did in the civilian world. But from a society with a significant temperance movement and a war fought what some defined as a “moral” war, there were thousands encouraging soldiers and their officers not to drink. Though many objected, George Kidwell wrote to his father in defense of soldier drinking in August 1862, “our Major is appointed Lieut Co. of the 92 Ohio so I expect he will leave us in a week or two

\textsuperscript{26} Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73\textsuperscript{rd} OVI, to Benjamin F. Stone, Sr., Washington County, Ohio, February 27, 1862, written from Camp Orland Smith, Clarksburgh, Virginia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, \textit{The Civil War Letters of Captain B.F. Stone, Jr. 73\textsuperscript{rd} Regiment, O.V.I.} (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2002), 32.
I regret his leave of us for he is a good officer all the fault I have with him is he will drink a little too much sometimes but that is a failing most of the soldiers have in our division but still they are a good fighting men as there is in the army.”27 What some thought was a liability, the fact that the Major drank too much, was precisely what Kidwell liked about him. He was a tough fighting man who drank too much, but that was not a problem for Kidwell.

Kidwell wrote about an episode in the fall of 1862 involving several members of his regiment and their run in with a significant amount of alcohol. “We emptied about 8 barrels of whisky 12 kegs of ale and other liquors the value of which was something near $1000 or more the cause of this destruction was this.”28 Obviously this event did not go unpunished. Kidwell continued, “Our Col has issued an order that every liquor seller that was caught selling to a Com Officer or no Com officer or private should have his liquor threw out so today a sergeant of on Co. in our Reg’t got drunk and that was the cause of our doing this destruction work to ‘Old King Alco.”29 Though the story, written with a lighthearted tone, had the feeling of being a great adventure, it was representative of a problem for the Union army. Kidwell assured his father that he was not a drunkard, however, when he wrote, “You need not fear Dear Father that your son Geo will ever become a drunkard unless through insanity which I dont think will ever be.”30 In his reply to his son, B.F. Kidwell wrote that he never thought his son would be a drunkard.

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
because he was, “to much of a man for that.”

Though tested by the distance of war, their relationship reflected a dedication to winning the war and maintaining a strong moral ethic while doing so.

Soldiers were aware of the moral imperative they faced as soldiers in the eyes of their home communities. They wrote home expressing the details of their own conduct and that of their fellow comrades. They reported both good and bad conduct, which helped solidify the locally enlisted regiments as an extension of the home community. Because soldiers knew that their friends and family might hear about their conduct, good or bad, it affected their decisions. Hannah Beckley the wife of Captain John Beckley visiting her husband for Christmas, wrote to Van and Edwin Brown’s parents that she was happy to see so many soldiers at the church service. She wrote, “I was glad to see so many observe the Sabbath enough to go to Meeting when there is any, for there is not much regard for the Sabbath in the Army not as much as I think there ought to be or might be.” This was valuable information to the parents of two soldiers, whose son Edwin was in the company commanded by John Beckley. This was a way in which those at home could show their concern and connection with the soldiers through their shared faith. For Hannah Beckley, evidence of soldier obedience offered a powerful encouragement to her Christian faith.

32 Of course temperance was not new to the Civil War. For more on the temperance movement, see Alice Felt Tyler’s Freedom’s Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War, (New York: HarperTorchbooks, 1962).
33 Hannah Beckley, wife of Captain John Beckley, 36th OVI, to the Brown family, Athens County, Ohio, December 25, 1862, written from Charleston, Virginia, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 3, Folder 210, Athens, Ohio.
Soldiers did not like the conditions of the camp, but many did not succumb to the temptations and did not appreciate being characterized in one way unilaterally.

Benjamin F. Stone, Jr. wrote an impassioned letter to his father about the character of the men in September 1862:

> What you say to me of retaining one’s purity of character (for which I thank you heartily) suggests a word or two. I hear and read a great deal of the ‘vices of camp,’ of the ‘peculiar temptations of the soldier,’ but I do not see them. I will put our men (and they are not better than the average of the army, so far as I can see) against any equal number of men taken at random in any civil community for good character and good behavior generally. I am certain that our men are better than they were at home. They have fewer temptations, fewer opportunities for vice. They do not lie, they have no occasion. Stealing is rare. Everyone fares alike why should they. There is no opportunity for sensualism, and of course no gratification and the men forget their old appetites. The same is true of drunkenness. Gambling is strictly prohibited and if it were not I think it would be a rare thing. Habits of endurance, courage, honor, patience, kindness to each other when in peril and trouble are daily formed and strengthened. The only things which do prevail are profanity and coarse language. We shall all be, so to speak ‘roughened’ by our campaigning life, but except in individual instances, no worse results will happen to character from vices contracted. Nearly everybody swears; that’s undeniable. Men who did at home, as well as others. I do not, and shall not.  

Stone’s comment went in two different directions. In one sense, he wanted to quiet the rumors that the men were out of hand. The soldiers were no different than average men from any community, a point he made solidly. Then, near the end of his comment, he took it in another direction by adding, “we shall all be, so to speak ‘roughened’ by our campaigning life.” This was an insightful segment from Stone’s letters because it conveyed a sense of frustration with the home front, rather than the support that he often received. A skeptical reader might wonder if Stone did not alter some of the message

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here, in the interest of placating his father. It seems upon first blush to be a genuine reaction to the false accusations of those at home, but his final statements that all men swear, except for him, seems a bit “high and mighty” if not an untruth in its own right.

In a later letter to his father, Stone admitted the ill effects of camp, putting into perspective the lengthy defensive quote. He wrote about camp life, “It unfits men for good citizenship at home. Chaplains are a failure. They are for the most part shirks, grannies or impostors and the troops despise them.” Just when it seemed as though Stone dismissed common soldiers as hopeless, he provided an escape. He wrote, “Yet a man can do his duty faithfully here as well as elsewhere and do God’s service as a soldier. The man and the Christian is not necessarily lost in the soldier and in many cases I know it is not.” In this brilliant statement Stone combined the legitimacy of morality with the validity of serving one’s country. According to Stone’s perspective, the men who succumb to the temptations of the camp were not serving God in the same way as those who remained true to their religion. This fusion, however, explained why so many soldiers viewed their service in the army as a holy experience. Though some men were ruined by war, as Stone wrote “unfit” for “good citizenship” there were many thousands more whose service made them ever more devoted to their country and their religion. Those were the men that Stone accented with his comments home to his father, itself a

35 Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73rd OVI, to Benjamin F. Stone, Sr., Washington County, Ohio, January 14, 1863, written from Falmouth, Virginia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, 82.
36 Ibid.
communication worth noting because the son appeared to be setting his father’s
generalities straight.  

Interestingly, Stone Jr. reported his experiences with the vices of camp life
differently when writing to his love interest, Olivia “Ollie” Allston. In communicating
with her, he was a bit more frank and less defensive of his comrades in arms. Perhaps he
trusted her with the sensitive information a bit more, or perhaps the passage of time
lessened his patience with his comrades. In any event, he had some strong observations
to make of his fellow soldiers. He wrote to Ollie in February 1863 from Virginia, “I am
losing my taste for the beautiful and true which once was my deepest joy. Here is no
Sabbath, no Bible, no Christianity, nothing but swindling, selfishness, rapacity and a
perpetual scramble for power and position.” His frustration was evident. He missed his
home and the religious context of Christianity that he believed was absent in the camps.
His lack of connection to his family and his loved one made the letters an avenue through
which he could stay grounded in his prewar life and sustain himself through the
continuing conflict.

In another situation involving Ollie, Stone reacted cynically to a false report about
his drunkenness that traveled home. With a tone of cynicism, Stone explained the
situation to Ollie, “A word as to the gossip which worried you. I am extremely fond of
liquor eh! Why thats no news to me. Did you never hear how when I came on in
advance of the regiment last winter, I reached the station at Chillicothe so intoxicated as

37 Stone was not alone in this venture. Scott, A Visitation of God, 12.
38 Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73rd OVI, to Olivia Allston, Ross County, Ohio, February 17, 1863, written from
near Brook Station, Virginia, in ed. Medart, Civil War Letters, 83.
to be beside myself! Indeed certain worthy citizens of your city saw and actually spoke to me as I staggered up and down the platform with a whiskey bottle protruding from my pocket.”

Obviously being over-the-top initially, Stone calmed his demeanor for the remaining comments about the rumor itself. He continued, “I never could find out who [the] said worthy and reliable gentlemen were. There names were singularly not forthcoming. But that all this did occur is not doubted (by some) or at least stoutly affirmed.” He noted later in the letter that all the alcohol he consumed since he last saw her could not intoxicate him if consumed at once. Clearly, he was hurt and betrayed by the comments that had his love interest worried about him. This was more than just a case of a bad rumor, though, because Stone made it such an important point to be sober and a man of good character in war. After all, sobriety was godly and would help him in the war, so many soldiers and civilians thought. These reports home about the soldiers, or himself specifically, were disturbing and risked his ability to fight and survive the war.

The reality of the military life, however, did not always afford soldiers the opportunity to be fully devout with their lives, particularly the observation of the Sabbath. As Jacob Shively of Ross County explained to his wife Mary Shively in September 1862, “Last Sabbath whilst our chaplain was preaching our cooks were chopping all around. Hands were at work fortifying, sutlers selling, guns firing, blacklegs gambling, all in sight of our chaplain and besides this we could see hundreds of

39 Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73rd OVI, to Benjamin F. Stone, Sr., Washington County, Ohio, September 25, 1864, written from Atlanta, Georgia, in ed. Medart, The Civil War Letters, 148-149.
40 Ibid.
wagons hauling in every direction. In other words, life did not stop simply because a chaplain addressed the soldiers. There were people who had business to handle, military necessities to take care of, and simply some were ignorant and preferred to gamble. This natural snapshot of an army Sabbath must have been a bit of a shock to Shively’s wife, but it was important enough that he shared it with her so she could understand what the army experience was like for him.

In addition to sharing the burden of the war itself, soldiers and their home front associates also shared in the theological difficulties that the conflict created. They contemplated and reflected upon scriptures to comfort them in times of trouble and to cope with the death of their comrades. Though few actually carried Bibles or New Testaments with them, they found ways to remember and repeat scripture verses to sustain themselves. Soldiers inquired about the faith of their friends and family at home as well. They asked about the children and neighbors, if they were attending church, and sometimes correspondence included detailed discussions of sermons. Nineteenth century Americans generally had a strong understanding of theology. If Mark Noll’s assertion is correct, that the Civil War was itself a theological crisis, it is evident that these soldiers from southeastern Ohio fit neatly into that paradigm.

One of the intriguing issues regarding soldier spirituality were the variety of denominations found in the Union army. While most soldiers were Protestant, there were

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41 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, September 21, 1862, written from Camp Shaler, Licking Point Battery, Kentucky, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, Dear Companion... Yours until death Jacob Shively 89th Regt. O.V.I., (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 12.

42 Mark Noll, The Civil War as a Theological Crisis, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Few soldiers carried Bibles as they found them cumbersome while on the march. Rolfs commented on soldiers coping with the purpose of the war, Rolfs, No Peace for the Wicked, 73-74.
many thousand Catholic soldiers as well. In large part these soldiers fought together for
the common cause of preserving the Union, which mattered more than the faith of the
soldiers fighting with them. Soldiers tended to focus on personal spiritual dynamics
with family or the morality of the army as a whole. They tended not to write about the
denominational dynamics that were more prevalent during civilian life. While it was
quite popular for Protestant and Catholic soldiers to disagree and even fall into conflict,
none of the soldiers in this study wrote about those interactions. Instead, they focused on
the moral conduct of the soldiers at war.

The best example of these moral and spiritual relationships was Benjamin Stone,
Sr. and his son. Senior wrote to his son often about faith. He explained in June 1862 in a
letter to his son B.F. Stone Jr. a soldier in the 73rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, “Last evening
(il.) Francis Bossiter preach from ‘By grace are ye saved,’ – a good sermon- the hymn,
There is a fountain filled with blood, - and ‘Grace ‘tis a charming theme’ Who is your
Chaplain? - does he get an opportunity to preach?” The two concerns were that
spirituality from home got conveyed to the soldier and the father wanted to know about
the religious acumen of the soldiers.

The following passage, from Stone, Sr. to his son Stone, Jr. brilliantly synthesized the
effect of the home front on the soldier. He wrote, “The present is the most fearful and
most trying time of the war; and you are just where the most blood must be shed. I think

43 Rolfs, No Peace for the Wicked provides a great examination of Protestant soldiers and the
denominations within Protestantism. Catholic soldiers tended to belong to ethnic regiments (Irish or
German) or were a distinct minority in other regiments.
44 B.F. Stone Sr., Marietta, Washington County, Ohio written to B.F. Stone Jr., Co. C, 73rd OVI, June 23,
1862, B.F. Stone Collection, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.
of you much and with prayerful anxiety.” He encouraged his son, “I think you are in the way of your duty- I hope you will do it prayerfully, do it as to the Lord and not to your country only. Neglect not your testament daily. Take a firm stand against intemperance, profanity and all the wiles of the camp. The blessings of peace and the establishment of our government are great, but they may be purchased too dearly if our men return tainted with vice and irreligion.”

Benjamin F. Stone, Sr. was in his early eighties when he wrote these words to his son. They carried with them the wisdom of years. For the Stone family, clearly rooted in a devout Christianity, there was a direct connection between intemperance and irreligion. In order for Stone, Jr. to be successful as a soldier and a man, he had to be temperate and rise above the “wiles of the camp.”

Stone mandated that his son read his testament daily. It was imperative that he devoted himself to scripture and positive behaviors for the ultimate survival of the Union cause. It would be a pointless enterprise to have the Union win the war and all of the men return home “tainted with vice and irreligion.” In other words, for the war to really fulfill its purpose, the men had to win the right way, with moral fortitude and intemperance, so that they might preserve a strong Union.

Stone mentioned his own “prayerful anxiety” for his son. Though this could have been a hardship he experienced, instead Stone made it into an opportunity to display faith to his son. Although he feared for his son’s life, he maintained devotion to his faith and encouraged his son to do the same. The leadership by example was something that Stone, Sr. wanted his son to do as a leader of men in the military. There was a conduit

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45 B.F. Stone Sr., Marietta, Washington County, Ohio written to B.F. Stone Jr., Co. C, 73rd OVI, July 26, 1862, B.F. Stone Collection, RCHS.
from the father to the soldiers, through the son as their leader. This was a way in which the community influenced the integrity and overall quality of the fighting men, as the father acted as elders do, providing insight to his son that ultimately made it to the men in the ranks as well.46

More than simply the morality of the individual, Benjamin Stone, Sr. accented the importance of the morality and spiritual devotion of the nation as a whole. He explained to his son in the fall of 1862, “The affairs of the war seem to me more sad, more gloomy than ever before. Yet, I do not despair: I think God is punishing us for our national sins, and how long who can tell?” Stone’s call to action was, “We should all pray the God of battles to turn the seale for us. It seems to me there is an awful amount of wickedness in high places of rebellion or treachery in our army.”47 Stone, of course, was not alone in his thoughts of “national sins.” The notorious John Brown made those sentiments popular among radical abolitionists across the nation. Stone did not make it clear what he believed about slavery, but from this quote it is obvious that he thought there was some “national sin” that deserved punishment. His parting comment about the “wickedness in high places” and “treachery in our army” alluded to the fact that slavery, even if he believed it a cause, was not the sole cause for alarm for the Union.48 The soldiers themselves did not write about slavery from a moral perspective. When soldiers wrote about morality, they did so largely from a personal point of view. Despite national

46 Taylor, *The Divided Family*, 5. Taylor notes the exceptional case of fathers and sons going against one another. The Stones, Kidwells, and Benedicts all provide examples of unity in this study.
48 For more on purging “national sin,” see Rolf, *No Peace for the Wicked*, 142.
conversations about slavery as a moral sin, the soldiers of southeastern Ohio did not reflect on that theme. Though they wrote about their faith and the politics of the war, most did not draw a direct parallel.

In a series of letters, Benjamin Stone, Sr. described the relationship between the behavior of the people and the overall outcome of the war. He wrote, “The struggle with the rebels, seems to grow harder and more bloody: yet I doubt not that God will finally give us success when we shall be humbled and I feel our dependence upon him.”

According to Stone’s perspective, the ultimate success of the war hinged on the ability of Americans to humble themselves before God. He wrote, “Be faithful, my son, do all your duty do as you thought and resolved to do, in 1850, when you first confessed to be the Lord’s.” This point of encouragement infused the dual missions of fighting for his country and serving his Lord. It was a captivating moment that showed the direct influence of the home front on the soldiers, as Benjamin Sr. definitely offered his own perspective on his son’s life. Judging by the tone of Benjamin Jr’s responses, he did not have a problem with his father’s comments. In fact, they seemed to be a sustaining motivator for him throughout the war.

Apparently Benjamin Stone, Jr. had reported to his father that the chaplains were a failure. The information prompted his father to reply, “It is sad to hear that Chaplains are a failure: I hope not all are so.” Providing some context to the problem, the father added, “If ministers of the gospel are of any use anywhere, I think they might be in an

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49 B.F. Stone Sr., Marietta, Washington County, Ohio written to B.F. Stone Jr., Co. C, 73rd OVI, June 11, 1863, B.F. Stone Collection, RCHS.
army. Do you in your regiment have any public worship on sabbath, when you are stationary some days or weeks? if you do not, it is sad to think of...” Benjamin Stone, Sr. could not bear to think that the soldiers did not have an opportunity to pursue their faith. Chaplains, on the other hand, saw soldiers as a ministry opportunity. As the war transpired, chaplains wished for its end, rather than focusing on the lost souls of the soldiers.51

In addition to his view of the Civil War as a larger battle in the relationship between God and His people, Stone experienced the war as a father of a soldier. He wrote candid letters expressing concern for his son’s well being, often combined with further religious commentary and encouragement. He wrote, “God grant that your head may be covered in the day of battle. Commit the keeping of your soul and body into his hands, ready and then all will be well in the land.”52 He directly connected this type of service to the overarching success of the Union army. He added in his next letter, “…I think all Christian people are praying to the God of armies and the Judge of all the earth for the success of our righteous cause.”53 There was a constant connection between faith, obedience, and ultimate victory in the war. It was, indeed, a matter of life and death to remain devout in faith and works. Stone explained that works were not enough, but the mercy of God was necessary, “Trust not in any supposed good works of your own but

52 B.F. Stone Sr., Marietta, Washington County, Ohio written to B.F. Stone Jr., Co. C, 73rd OVI, May 13, 1864, B.F. Stone Collection, RCHS.
cast yourself upon the mercy of God in Christ. Do this every day and continually and tell your men to do the same. Then you may confidently hope, and fear not evil.”  

Stone’s letters continued with this tone throughout their correspondence. Later in the war Stone, Sr. suffered a health setback, most likely a stroke and his son survived the great hardship of being away at war with a sick father at home. Their relations, which remained strong throughout the conflict, was a testament to the devotion of some people in southeastern Ohio and how they fought the war as a unified front.

For some soldiers, the solution to the crisis of faith presented by the Civil War was to take action. Works, not faith, were more important. Ferdinand Cowee of the 36th OVI while encamped in Meadow Bluffs, Virginia, in July 1862 wrote to his friend Julia Sprague about his attitude regarding the war, “Still we cannot give up. God will take care of those who take care of themselves. Let us do our duty and trust to providence for success. ‘If we do not plow and sow, we will not reap.’” Though Cowee acknowledged that they must trust in providence, he realized that it would require a great deal of work from the people themselves. This quotation illustrated the connection between the home and the battle front because Cowee wrote to his friend Julia Sprague in the context of “we.” He knew that she was involved in the effort as much as he was. He wrote, “let us do our duty” and even the scripture reference was inclusive. They were in it together.

John A. Brown of the 148th Ohio National Guard while at City Point, Virginia, relayed a remarkable story home to his wife Isa about a man from his regiment who died

55 Ferdinand P. Cowee, 36th OVI, to Julia M. Sprague, Washington County, Ohio, July 28, 1862, written from Meadow Bluffs, Western Virginia, F.P. Cowee Collection, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.
and the spiritual realities of that passing from life to death. He described the graphic scene:

Bolival Stone died yesterday. He died a glorious death. He took something like spasms, and then he thought he was in heaven. I never saw a man so happy. He clapped his hands and shouted. He saw all his children there and called them by name. He then happened to turn his eye and saw Gust. He reached out his hand and took hold of him. ‘Why here is brother Gust, too. How long have you been here?’ He asked how the folks at home were. He asked how long it would be before his wife would come. Joseph Deeble then came in with his medicine. He raised himself on the bed, threw his arms around his neck. ‘Why,’ said he, ‘here is Joe Deeble and he looks as natural as ever. Joe, how long have you been here?’ Joe told him, ‘a good long while.’ Joe then got him to take his medicine. ‘Why Joe,’ he said, ‘this puts me in mind of Bermuda Hundred. Didn’t we have a good time out there?’ He then asked how long we stayed out there. Joe told 100 days. It seemed so strange to him to see Joe with a hat on—asked him if the Savior gave it to him. Joe said, ‘Yes.’ ‘Why it looks like the one you wore at Bermuda.’ This was two days before he died. Therefore I did not see him die. Deeble told me that he shouted as long as he was able and then clapped his hands till he died. If this case does not furnish proof of the reality of Christianity, it is strange. It must make every one use the prayer ‘Let me live the life of the righteous and my end be like his.’ It is also proof that ‘although the wicked is driven away in his wickedness the righteous hath hope in his death.’

The sad combination of the suffering of life and passing into the peace of death was heartwrenching. What made this quotation particularly poignant was how Brown used it to write home to his wife and share in the suffering of the war together. He did not feel the need to shelter his wife from this death. In fact, it was something that he celebrated with her, as he wrote it was “proof of the reality of Christianity.” It was a testimony of the faithfulness of the gentleman who passed and provided spiritual encouragement to the others left behind.

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Religion and morality left an indelible mark on the lives of the men from southeastern Ohio who fought in the Civil War as well as those at home who fought it with them. Living a life devoted to faith and good moral character was integral to the theological bases of many of the soldiers and their associates. Living in a nation with a rich Christian tradition, these people sought to preserve their own sense of life, death, and the eternity promised in the scriptures. The civilians attempted to do more than accept the distance of war. They sent supplies and letters to the soldiers in an effort to sustain them throughout the war. While religion comforted their hearts, the people at home helped to meet the needs of the soldiers through tangible support.

Soldiers often prefaced their letters with inquiries about the condition of those “left behind.” One soldier often addressed his letters “To the Dear Ones at Home.” These sentiments, though admittedly in letters home, showed without much depth of analysis that home was important for the soldiers. In fact, most soldiers in blue and gray stated that they fought for their homes. Jacob Shively, a soldier in the 89th Ohio, wrote to his wife that he had been thinking about “Home sweet home.” He then followed the statement, dismissing it, “But it is useless to dwell upon such things as it amounts to nothing at all.” The statement was not true at all. His mind being on home meant that he wanted to be there, that he missed his family, and that it was difficult to be so far from home with letters providing the only connection to those at home. Jacob Shively was

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57 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, December 13, 1863, written from Chattanooga, Tennessee, in ed. Medart, Dear Companion, 34.
from Chillicothe, Ohio, a former capital of the state where generations of Ohioans remained.58

The soldiers from southeastern Ohio expressed in no uncertain terms, that they fought for their families and their home communities. Historian Reid Mitchell writes, “The northern soldier did not simply experience the war as a husband, son, father, or brother – he fought it that way as well.”59 The sentiment that Mitchell expresses was evident among soldiers from southeastern Ohio. To fight the war in terms of familial relationships meant that soldiers saw a direct connection between serving their country and the well being of those at home. Samuel Putnam of Marietta, Ohio, wrote to his wife-to-be Abbie Mixer in the spring of 1863, “our friends at home are enjoying the blessings of the Government that we are out here bleeding and enduring great hardships endeavoring to maintain its honor and enforce its power...”60 He noted that it was worth their service because they were “fighting the rebels that are endeavoring to break up our Government, the best one the Sun ever Shown upon.”61 For Samuel Putnam, the risk of his own life was worth the reward that the home community gained. Putnam’s home of Marietta was a well-known Ohio River town that once held the promise of the gateway to

58 The soldier who often used the phrase “To the Dear Ones at Home” was John M. Benedict, from Meigs County, whose letters are widely cited throughout this study. Linderman writes about the profound influence of those at home, including ladies societies and religion. Gerald F. Linderman, Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War, (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 83.
60 Samuel Putnam, 1st Ohio Cavalry, to Abbie Mixer, Unionville, Washington County, Ohio, March 2, 1863, Samuel H. Putnam Collection, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.
61 Ibid.
the west. Though less the commercial boomtown it once was, Marietta remained a hub of commerce and conversation in southeastern Ohio.⁶²

William McKnight of Meigs County, described to his wife that he did not leave because he wanted to, but out of necessity. He wrote in January 1863, “Yet it was not because I did not love home and family that I left. You know that there was few that stayed closer hom than I did. It was from pure motives of duty to my country that I left home and friends and evry thing Dear to me.” Though questioning himself a bit, McKnight encouraged his wife Samaria to support him, “That I did right or rong the Lord only knows but I still hope that it is for the better whether or knot dear on[e] you wil try to be cheerful.”⁶³

Soldiers’ pre-war relationships did not stop when the fighting commenced. The relationships grew, changed, and developed over the course of the war. As the soldiers themselves experienced profound moments of loss, pain, triumph, hardship, and an inestimable range of emotions, their loved ones at home, both friends and family members were not often present to experience the same emotions. As the people at home and the soldiers fought through the war, in both a literal and psychological sense, they in some ways grew together and in other ways grew apart. These relationships of parent, child, sibling, and spouse or love interest, were important factors.

⁶² Reid Mitchell explains the combination of northern soldier as man at war, citizen, and human possessed of intimate relations. Mitchell, The Vacant Chair, xiv.
⁶³ Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), January 24, 1863, written near Lexington, Kentucky, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 47.
Once away from the friendly confines of the home region, soldiers experienced the harder aspects of soldier life as they marched through western Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and into the deeper south. The nights were cold, while the days at times were quite warm. They requested that equipment of various sorts from canned food to firearms be sent from home. Their friends and family networks became the extra supplier to Uncle Sam’s own supply lines.\footnote{Mitchell describes this love of home as essential to keeping soldiers in the ranks through privations. Mitchell, \textit{The Vacant Chair}, 31.}

The most obvious and tangible way in which soldiers marched off to war in connection with their home communities were the physical items from home that they carried with them. From homespun shirts to customized gear, soldiers made their way to the militia encampments throughout southeastern Ohio in Marietta, Portsmouth, and Athens. At these improvised camps, soldiers compared expectations of war and discussed their lives, which were sure to change. When Benjamin Stone, Jr. was just across the river in Clarksburgh, Virginia, he received a package including coffee, candy, and stationary. In his letter to his girlfriend, he expressed his delight, “For all the good things and for the kindness which prompted the gift, my heart utters its sincere acknowledgements.”\footnote{Benjamin F. Stone, Jr., 73rd OVI, to Olivia Allston, Washington County, Ohio, February 23, 1862, written from Clarksburgh, Virginia, in ed. Medart, \textit{The Civil War Letters}, 31.} Sometimes support came directly from families, while at other times the support came from larger organizations such as the Soldiers’ Aid Society and the Christian Commission. Local branches of the national societies organized fundraisers and work days to make supplies to send to the soldiers. Lorenzo Dalrymple of the 56th Ohio, described a useful tool in a letter to his mother: “...the ladies of portsmouth give
each one of us a pocket coshen and a fine come to coshen is to carry our kneedles and our thread and pins etc.”⁶⁶ These supplies were not from Dalrymple’s home county of Gallia, yet these were still local women in nearby Portsmouth contributing to the war effort through this means of support.⁶⁷

While stationed at the post hospital at Carthage, Tennessee, Edwin Brown experienced a different side of the war. He wrote home about the death and suffering he witnessed in his ward. However, he also reflected on the needs in the hospital and sent home a specific request for shirts that would help the sick and wounded. He wrote to his mother:

Mother I want you to tell the girls as if you make any shrits for the sick or wounded soldier to make this way. Straight sleavs and middler long in the tail and split down in front so they can be put on a sick or sounded man like a coat and have string to tye them up with. They are the best shirt used in the Hopt they are so handy to put on a sick or sounded that is not able to help himself properly. You know all about this I have been about a Hospt long enuf to know something about these things there is not much laibor to make them.⁶⁸

Edwin’s suggestions were based in his own trial and error efforts. However, this network of support, provided a great example of how the home and battle front fought the war together. Edwin, interestingly, did not petition the medical officials of the army. When they needed supplies that could be made at home, that was who he asked.

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⁶⁶ Lorenzo Dalrymple, 56th OVI, to his mother Sophia Dalrymple, Gallia County, Ohio, November 20, 1861, written from Camp Morrow, Portsmouth, Ohio, Dalrymple Family Civil War Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
⁶⁷ Richard, Busy Hands, 182. Richard asserts that aid societies served to support both physical and moral needs of soldiers.
⁶⁸ Edwin Brown, 36th OVI, to parents, Athens County, Ohio, April 28, 1863, written from Camp Carthage, Tennessee. Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 4, Folder 260, Athens, Ohio.
Sometimes care and provision went in the other direction. Fergusson Trowbridge, whose small children were at home with his wife, found it difficult to care for them from a distance. He advised his wife to use his earnings from the army to buy shoes for the children and to clothe them well. Despite his physical distance from his family, it was obvious that Trowbridge was a responsible father. Although the Union army was not the most reliable paycheck in the nineteenth century world, Trowbridge knew that eventually, if late, his family would get money from his service. For many, the steady income (even if it was, at times, a bit unpredictable) was better than the subsistence realities of rural Ohio life.  

Another basic life necessity that soldiers wrote and complained about extensively was food. They did not often find the food offered by the army to be the most appealing or nourishing sustenance. Army food was a ration that typically consisted of hard tack, beans, raw meat, and dried vegetables of some sort. In addition to their own foraging adventures, soldiers relied upon the generosity of home front cooks to send them treats. From cake to quince jam, soldiers wrote with enthusiastic pleasure about the food they received from their support system at home. Emma Hudgel in a letter to Edwin Brown of the 36th Ohio, expressed, “I hope you boys will have a good feast over your new supplies from home.”  Though she did not give great detail of what they sent, her desire was for

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69 Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge, 117th Ohio Volunteers, to wife Ruth Trowbridge, Gallia County, Ohio, October 24, 1862, written from Camp Portsmouth, Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio. Caring for women and children from far away was difficult, but those on the home front were representations of soldier motivation, Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*, 74.

70 Emma Hudgel to Edwin Brown, 36th OVI, October 24, 1862, written from Lee, Athens County, Ohio, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 2, Folder 186, Athens, Ohio.
the boys to truly enjoy the gift. One of the problems with food requests was the difficulty of shipping the items to the men in a timely fashion. Soldiers often reported thanks for the efforts to send food to them. However, sometimes canning jars broke open and ruined entire boxes of goods. Captain James Barker explained to his supportive Aunt Charlotte that the butter she sent melted and was too salty.\textsuperscript{71} Barker mentioned several letters later that when the company received five cans of “superb fruit” from a “Mrs. Booth,” that she “Better believe there was one tickled soldier in the army of the Cumberland.”\textsuperscript{72} Soldiers appreciated the direct link between the home front and their own conditions of war by way of supplies. Soldiers did not like the government-provided food of the soldier, so the support from home gave them both a boost of morale and a treat for their taste buds.

Sometimes comments from home about food were negative influences. Though friends and family at home wrote about food to share their experiences with soldiers, occasionally it proved more torture than help. Van Brown, an Ohioan fighting with the 4\textsuperscript{th} West Virginia, explained to his mother with a bit of a joking tone, “Now I positively forbid your writing anymore such stuff to me about your having such good things to eat, such as yeast biscuits, baked potatoes, pigs feet, etc. for it will tempt me to desert or commit ‘susanside,’ or get mad and hurt somebody or get hurt. Now mind ye.”\textsuperscript{73}

Though Van did not desert, this testimony proved the real effect of letters from home to

\textsuperscript{71} Captain James G. Barker, 36\textsuperscript{th} OVI, to Aunt Charlotte, Washington County, Ohio, May 22, 1863, written from Carthage, Tennessee, Correspondence of Captain James G. Barker, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.

\textsuperscript{72} Captain James G. Barker, 36\textsuperscript{th} OVI, to Aunt Charlotte, Washington County, Ohio, January 1, 1864, location not given but context clues imply that they were somewhere near the Chickamauga battlefield building a monument, Correspondence of Captain James G. Barker, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.

\textsuperscript{73} Van Brown, 4\textsuperscript{th} West Virginia, December 21, 1862, written from Fayette County, Virginia, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 2, Folder 207, Athens, Ohio.
soldiers; the men who read the letters were emotional, including this sarcastic response
toward a loving mother. In a subsequent letter, however, Van was less sardonic in his
tone and wrote, “What I wouldn’t give to be at home a few days and help you devour
some of that fresh pork and a few of those apples, to say nothing of the other good
things.” Van appreciated the comforts of home and wanted to enjoy them once again.

In addition to the physical support from home, soldiers relied heavily on the moral
and emotional encouragement that their home communities provided. Community
members had to provide news and positive messages to soldiers to reinforce ideals
regarding the purpose of the war. People at home provided the basis of honor that
ultimately proved to motivate many of the soldiers to cope with the terrible conditions of
the war. Without the support of those at home through the language of encouragement
and honor, soldiers may not have kept fighting. To receive a local newspaper or story of
a mutual friend lifted the spirits of the soldiers in the field. While this was not a
quantifiable or tangible asset in winning the war for the Union, it certainly played a role
in the sustenance of the Union army as evidenced by the testimonies of soldiers from
southeastern Ohio.

The people at home wrote to the soldiers to encourage them to behave with honor
and good conduct. This point cannot be overstated for Civil War soldiers. For nineteenth
century Americans, honor was an extremely important virtue. No one wanted to under
perform in duty or in battle, for fear that it would reflect poorly on friends and families
back home. Honorable conduct meant following orders, bravery in battle, staying awake

74 Van Brown, 4th West Virginia, February 18, 1863, written from Cairo, Illinois, Ohio University, Mahn
Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 3, Folder 226, Athens, Ohio.
on guard duty, and maintaining equipment and appearance. Honorable service as a soldier reflected the world from which they came; it was a way to make their home communities proud of them.

Soldiers wanted to represent their communities when serving, and especially when fighting. Cowardice was no small charge during the Civil War and soldiers went to great lengths to quell any rumors or reports that they, or their comrades, took part in cowardly behavior. Similarly, soldiers applauded one another for meritorious action in combat, writing home about fellow soldiers or the unit as a whole standing firm in the battle. These types of depictions brought honor not just to the men fighting, but also to their communities. They were the boys of Athens, Marietta, or Portsmouth and their performance in battle, at least in popular conception was extremely important.

Along with the expectations of honor that came from home, soldiers reminded their families that they would conduct themselves with honor. Promises of courage under fire and devotion to the Union occasionally appeared in letters. George Kidwell defended himself, “Now Dear Father remember this that you have a Son in the 77th that will never run and desert the flag of his country I would rather die at the point of Bayonet than have the name of running or of cowardice when you hear the 77th Regt run just think that you have a son that did not run (for run I never will).”75 This reputation was extremely important for Civil War soldiers, both for the individual and the regiment. In particular, Kidwell wanted his father to know that no matter what reports made it home, he did not run in battle. There was a significant point of contact here between the larger meaning of

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75 George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, to father B.F. Kidwell, Washington County, July 22, 1862, written from Memphis, Tennessee, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.
the war and the service of the soldiers. These men wanted to be known for their bravery or else the sacrifices would not have been worth making. A few weeks later George Kidwell added in a letter to his parents, “I seem to have a good name at home dont think too much of me for I only am a true soldier and do my duty as a soldier which I always do.”

After setting the record straight regarding cowardice, Kidwell emphasized the humility with which he should do his duty.

“Honorable” conduct in the Civil War was based on nineteenth century conceptions of identity and the importance of localism. People lived for the most part in relatively small confines of local communities. Although there were thousands who migrated across the nation and even from other nations, by and large many people thought of themselves in localized terms. As the soldiers went off to fight, they enlisted in companies with groups of friends and local associates. Regiments were occasionally comprised of men from neighboring counties. Although the soldiers may not have known people from a few counties over, the local connections were strong and important because it meant that conduct in the ranks could return back home through letters or word of mouth. When soldiers heard, either through letters or word of mouth, about the efforts of their home communities to help in the war effort, they were encouraged. As Ferdinand Cowee wrote in July 1862, “I am glad to see Washington County making efforts to carry

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76 George Kidwell, Co. D, 77th OVI, to parents B.F. and Maria Kidwell, Washington County, August 5, 1862, written from Fort Pickering, Memphis, Tennessee, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.

on the war. Hope she will do her part.”

The soldiers were proud that their home communities helped them win the war. This helped to spur them on in the fight and it was not just generalized home front; it mattered for Cowee that it was his home county.

Social connections between soldiers and their associates at home were essential to localism during the Civil War. Soldiers often gave updates on their “friends,” which generically meant people whom they knew or could even refer to family members. Soldiers might bump into a soldier from the same town who was with a different unit and would write home these status updates that the mutual friend was “looking well” or some other point. Nearly every soldier wrote home about someone that they knew in the unit. Van Brown regularly gave his mother updates about his comrades in arms. Edwin Brown often told his parents about the condition of his uncle Nelson Van Vorhes, who also happened to be the colonel of the 92nd Ohio. These types of personal connections were quite common.

For some of these young men, particularly single young men, their service in the military was an opportunity to prove their mettle as men and make themselves more attractive (according to their own understanding) to women. Even this carried with it a localized bent, as evidenced from Edwin B. North of Company A of the 87th Ohio State Guard who wrote to his friend, “I shall nerve my courage for battle in part by the desire for the approbation of the ‘fair’ of Marietta.” By the “fair” he most certainly meant the

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78 Ferdinand P. Cowee, 36th OVI, to Julia M. Sprague, Washington County, Ohio, September 3, 1862, written from the mouth of Antietam Creek, F.P. Cowee Collection, Box 500, Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio.
79 Edwin B. North, Co. A, 87th Ohio State Guard, to “Friend Bosworth,” written from Port Hudson, Virginia, March 23, 1864, Marietta College Special Collections, Civil War Box 1, Marietta, Ohio.
ladies of the city. He risked his life not necessarily for “cause and comrades” or even for his own honor, but because courage under fire might make him more desirable as a man. Similarly, George Kidwell’s mother bragged about his reputation among the local girls. She wrote, “The girls around here is tickled all most to death when they get a letter from George Kidwell and I hope it will not be many months until they can have the pleasure of seeing his fair face in person.”

Localism in Civil War units also helped with communicating from home to the soldiers. The people at home could tell one or two soldiers a message via letter or while home on furlough and that soldier would spread the message among his comrades in arms. This communication was extremely important when it came to communicating the unrest throughout the north. Soldiers clung together amid reports from home communities such as Noble County in the summer of 1863, who reported resistance to the draft. Localism meant a collective decision by soldiers to, at times, work together to stay in the ranks and fight the war despite a strong desire to go home. The localized connection between soldiers reinforced their motivation to fight for a particular way of life. Hearing stories about family and friends on the home front served as a sustaining force amid the trials of nineteenth century common soldiers.

Family was very important for both soldier and civilians during the Civil War. It was why soldiers fought and it was why those at home supported those fighting. Jacob Shively wrote to his wife, “I am concerned more about you and the children than I am

about any thing else on earth."\textsuperscript{81} Family ties remained strong for the people of southeastern Ohio throughout the war. Though historians often understand the Civil War through the lens of “brother against brother,” it was the exception more than the norm. In fact, in most cases brothers fought alongside brothers, not against them. This oversight has created a mythology about the Civil War that not only romanticizes it, but it fails to grasp the reality of localism and family ties in perpetuating the war. In this study, there were the Brown brothers, the Dalrymple brothers, and the McLin brothers who all fought this “brothers’ war” together.

Despite the connections with home throughout the war, sometimes writing and thinking about home just frustrated the soldiers and made the distance feel even more alienating.\textsuperscript{82} John M. Benedict of the 18\textsuperscript{th} Ohio, expressed his frustration in a letter to his mother in March 1863 regarding the reality of being stuck in the war. He wrote that the pleasant weather in Tennessee, “…makes me think of mowing briars, building fences and getting ready to plow for corn and oats. Oh, how I would like to go to the barn tomorrow morning, hitch up Jim and John and go to the upper place.”\textsuperscript{83} He interrupted his fantasy, reminding his family, “But’shaw, what’s the use of talking about something that I know I cannot do; that is not my trade now. I made a contract to work for Uncle Sam and I mean to serve out my apprenticeship.”\textsuperscript{84} Unwilling to label his condition as homesickness,

\textsuperscript{81} Sgt Jacob Shively, 89\textsuperscript{th} OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, July 2, 1864, written on the Chattahoochee Rive, Georgia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, \textit{Dear Companion... Yours until death Jacob Shively 89\textsuperscript{th} Regt. O.V.I.}, (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 61.
\textsuperscript{82} Wiley, \textit{The Life of Billy Yank}, 289.
\textsuperscript{83} John M. Benedict, 18\textsuperscript{th} OVI, to his mother Clarissa Benedict, Meigs County, Ohio, March 15, 1863, written from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Letters of John M. Benedict, Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
Benedict coyly remained true to his work when he wrote, “Dont understand that I am tired of soldiering, for I am not. Only, I would like to slip in on you some of those times just to see if things look anything like they used to.”85 Benedict attempted to be subtle, writing that he wished he could just look in to see how things were going. Clearly his heart remained connected to home and he longed for the people and the life he left behind.

Benedict’s career as a soldier was a bit more remarkable than most. He rose through the ranks from a private to an eventual brevet colonel. He wrote that soldiering came naturally to him. These men who left their homes in southeastern Ohio did not just go on a great adventure; they went off to war. The next chapter examines the most startling disconnection between their new lives and home, which was the death and destruction of the war. While canned goods and encouraging letters made soldiers feel close to their loved ones, witnessing death and destruction made them feel exceedingly distant. The horror of the war led Benjamin Stone, Jr. to lament, “Oh, that our people could feel the crisis and push this war with vigor to its end.”86

85 Ibid.
Chapter 6

Disease, Suffering, and Death: The Cost of War

In their letters home the soldiers from southeastern Ohio wrote about the suffering they faced while at war. Whether the anguish was literal, due to physical ailments, or psychological, due to the remarkable strain of military life, soldiers wrote home to their friends and family members about their suffering. Sick and dying soldiers including those in hospitals, found ways to express to their loved ones the pain they experienced through letters home. Also, soldiers reflected upon the realities of death that they saw around them and consequently wrote about their own fate. Some of the most common topics of the soldiers and their readers were health, death, and survival.

This chapter examines the connection between the home and battle fronts in the shared experience of death. What made war unique to soldiers’ other life events was the sheer magnitude of death and destruction. Even those at home, who did not see the carnage firsthand shared in the psychological and emotional pain of death. This chapter explores that final and most important point of connection that the pain of the war hit most closely to home because of the reality of the cost of the war.

Drew Gilpin Faust’s recent work This Republic of Suffering is perhaps the most applicable book to this chapter. This chapter supplements Faust’s work focusing her broad-sweeping conclusions about death to a more intimate setting of a rural region. The people of southeastern Ohio endured suffering and when soldiers died they coped with the sting of death. Although nineteenth century Americans were used to seeing death around them, the pain of losing loved ones as a result of war was difficult. Whether
complicated by distance, suddenness, or in the case of disease gruesomeness, the Civil War caused Americans to question the necessity of the war and to evaluate the price of patriotism.1

Though the soldiers suffered on the field of battle, away from their friends and families at home, the pain affected all of them. This chapter offers a unique perspective on the way in which a rural region experienced the war together surrounding the immense pain of civil war. It was at times a region ripped apart by the politics of the Civil War, but largely unified over the plight of their men of war. How the community rallied around their soldiers in times of need, including the grieving process, represented the key point of how they fought the war together. Families especially endured the pain of death and dying together.2

Along riverbanks in camps across the South young Union men died of diseases or the shot of an enemy picket. Those losses resonated with the people fighting the war and their home front support. Death was a reality of the Civil War as with any war and its cost cannot be overstated. To better understand the sacrifices of the soldiers during the Civil War, it is imperative to recognize how those losses were shared between the soldiers and the home front community. By placing these soldiers in the midst of the

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1 The most significant book on death and the Civil War is Drew G. Faust This Republic of Suffering, (New York: Knopf, 2008). For more on memory of the Civil War dead, see John Neff, Honoring of the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005). Mark S. Shantz’s assessment of the 19th century as a “death-embracing culture” is important to this conversation as well. Mark S. Schantz, Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America’s Culture of Death, (Itaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 4.

2 The historiography of disease in the Civil War is extensive. See Paul E. Steiner, PhD, MD, Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-65, (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1968); Lisa A. Long, Rehabilitating Bodies: Health, History, and the American Civil War, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Andrew McIlwaine Bell, Mosquito Soldiers: Malaria, Yellow Fever, and the Course of the American Civil War, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2010).
social worlds of home and military, it is easier to see the humanity of these soldiers beyond the sanitized basics of the casualty list.

The cost of the war in southeastern Ohio was below national average, yet still considerable. Though there are multiple ways to calculate this value, through total number of deaths and service, the data remains difficult and largely unreliable. Utilizing a representative sample from the region by focusing on the regimental books of the 36th, 73rd, and 92nd Ohio, units all raised primarily in southeastern Ohio, Table 1: Southeastern Ohio Cost of War details the breakdown of the casualties in these units. Of the 2,974 soldiers, 469 (or 16 percent) were casualties. When broken into unit affiliations, the 36th Ohio had an 11% casualty rate, the 73rd Ohio had a 21% casualty rate, and the 92nd Ohio had a 15% casualty rate. Though these numbers do not prove the cost of war in a specific way, they do help to illustrate the numbers and the scale of loss. Note that these were not the only soldiers from southeastern Ohio, but provide a representative statistical sample to consider. Though there was regional enlistment during the Civil War, far too many units had one or two companies from southeastern Ohio. Likewise, some soldiers from the region fought in Kentucky, Virginia, or even other Ohio regiments. It is impossible to “prove” exactly how many soldiers from a region in flux did any one particular thing, even fight in a war. These statistics are intended to be an approximation to provide scale. Just to put this into perspective, the overall Union cost of the war was roughly that one in four soldiers (25%) were killed or wounded. Faust explains that the scale of death in the Civil War was unprecedented for citizens of the United States. The nation needed to

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3 The chart is found at the end of the dissertation. Casualties were killed, wounded, or missing as the Union army defined them when they recorded these statistics in the regimental book.
learn how to deal with the volume of dead and the psychological ramifications of that reality.⁴

Though death was the ultimate sting of war, another aspect of suffering in the Civil War was the emotional and psychological pain of being separated from loved ones. Though it was difficult for civilians to watch their loved ones go off to war, it was extremely difficult for soldiers as well.⁵ Homesickness, a term loosely used to describe the pain of missing home, often made it onto the pages of Civil War letters. Soldiers wrote of a desire to slip home just for a few days, or for a moment to feel the touch of a loved one or an instant with them. Though heartbreaking in some sense, these letters reinforced the nature of the war and the human side of it. These men were not robots, whose losses could be replicated on an assembly line. They were men, with families and friends at home, people who mourned their losses, suffered with them throughout the war, and prayed for their return. Homesickness explicitly showed the importance of the connection between the home and battle front. The soldiers definitely needed the sustaining assistance of their loved ones at home. The existing historiography on homesickness, spearheaded by Francis Clark and David Anderson, seems to miss the main point of what soldiers said in their own words.⁶ While these historians are interested in applying labels of masculinity to the emotional struggles of distance from home, the soldiers themselves expressed a sincere desire to be home with family. To

⁴ Faust, This Republic of Suffering, xviii.
⁵ Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 137.
miss the direct connection of love, support, and morale between soldier and family is to miss the inherent mechanism, which motivated many soldiers to leave in the first place.

John A. Brown wrote to his wife in the summer of 1864 regarding homesickness, “Now, the fact is, Isaac (it is true) was very sick for a few days but never was considered dangerous. He thought himself sicker than he was. He was homesick, and that was the worst kind of sickness. He was gaining finally when he was sent away, but how he is now, I cannot say.” Brown lost track of the homesick soldier, but knew that there was nothing physically wrong with him. However, the homesickness was the “worst kind” and apparently was debilitating for the affected soldier. William McKnight, while suffering from a bout of homesickness, offered the only possible cure in his mind. He wrote to his wife Samaria, “I am very homesick and fear it wil get me down if I dont get some proper remedy soon. The only thing that I can think of that will do any good is to come home the first opportunity that presents its self which I am fully determined on.”

Homesickness was actually common and soldiers observed it often in their comrades. Samuel Putnam of the 1st Ohio Cavalry wrote about it to his friend and future wife, Abbie Mixer. He described, “Some of the boys looked slightly blue Sunday. I think from their looks they thought of Home Sweet Home more than usual that day as

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8 Private William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria McKnight (Meigs County), May 19, 1864, written in Nicholasville, Kentucky, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 179.
there was moving around in the muddy tents." Sometimes the experience of being in the army seemed a great adventure for the soldiers, but quite often it was a hindrance and kept them away from those whom they loved. A day of thinking about “Home Sweet Home” caused the soldiers Putnam observed to hang their heads. Not only did this quote draw a direct connection between morale and isolation from home, it also highlighted the fact that the soldiers wanted to share their concerns, no matter how seemingly mundane with their loved ones. The only way for those at home to close the distance was to write letters, barely a substitute for a warm embrace. Nonetheless, thinking of home kept the motivation to win the war at the forefront of the soldiers’ minds.

Soldiers worked to overcome the hindrance of homesickness because they counted the service as their duty. Ferguson Trowbridge of the 117th Ohio Volunteer Infantry explained in a letter to his wife Ruth, “I am too much a lover of home and family for a soldier but never the less I will do my duty as a soldier.” Trowbridge’s comments accented the fact that he was, indeed, a volunteer soldier. He did not consider himself a natural soldier though, because he preferred to be with his family. However, in time of crisis he was willing to do his duty. This type of understanding of service was common. Few soldiers embraced this attitude in the same way that Trowbridge did in a letter home to his family.

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9 Samuel H. Putnam, 1st Ohio Cavalry, to Miss Abbie Mixer, Unionville, Washington County, Ohio, September 23, 1861, written from Camp Chase, Ohio, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio, Samuel H. Putnam Collection.
10 Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge, 117th OVI, to wife Ruth Trowbridge, Gallia County, Ohio, October 17, 1862, written from Camp Portsmouth, Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
When soldiers wrote home, they expected the family or community to pass the letters around for all to read. This communal aspect led soldier John Benedict to address his letters “To the Dear Ones at home.” He most likely did this because his letters were intended for his entire family, not just his parents, and it was an uncomplicated yet pragmatic catchall phrase. However, it connoted an important point about the way Benedict approached the war. The letters were written to “Dear Ones” and there was a direct link between home and what was dear to him. They were, though he did not write directly, what he fought for. They were his highest priority.

Sometimes the people at home wanted their soldiers to return, but did not fully grasp the desertion policies of the Union army. William Mc Knight gave a response to one such request from his wife in early 1863. “You seem to think that if I was homesick I could come home but you are not aware of the difficult of getting out of the service. If a man Deserts and is caught he is punished even unto death for it.” 11 Although getting home appealed to him, he put his service in the perspective of his life, explaining, “Rather would I have my Dear little children Dear as they are to me say that Pa was killed in War rather than have it thrown up to them that your father was a Deserter and had to wear the chain and ball for three years as many are paying for the same crime here.” 12 This was an extremely important point for Mc Knight, his wife, and his family that he remained willing to risk his life for the sake of family honor. It was not a lofty ideal or

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11 Private William Mc Knight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his wife Samaria Mc Knight (Meigs County), January 24, 1863, written in Camp Ella Bishop near Lexington, Kentucky, in eds. Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs, Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William Mc Knight, 7th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 46.

12 Ibid.
disconnected “cause” that kept him in the service. Clearly his personal honor and that of his children mattered utmost. This was an explicit connection not only between homesickness and the soldier, but also between a soldier and the necessity of honor and family.

McKnight’s frustrated tone in the previously cited letter communicated several perspectives on northern soldiers worth noting. Importantly he did not describe a devotion to the Union or a desire to end slavery. What was utmost to him was to survive the war and return to his family, but he would only do so under honorable terms. He noted at the end of the passage that “many” were paying for the crime there. The punishment for desertion, including the possibility of death, was a powerful deterrent for McKnight. It seemed evident that the most powerful motivator to keep McKnight in the ranks and from running home to his family had everything to do with wanting them to be proud of him and his service.

The connection with home made the distance from them hurt much more. Soldiers and their home front associates were involved in attempting to hold the Union together in a bloody and confusing war. Although none of them wanted to fight the war, they understood it as a necessary evil. The letters that served to bridge the gap between home and battle fronts were integral to helping the soldiers feel closer to their supporters at home. The simplest phrases of support and love gave the soldiers the power to continue fighting. They relayed the reality of that support time and time again in letters home.
Sometimes the cost of war was more personal and emotional than physical. An excellent example of this was Emma Hudgel, a young lady from Perry County, who experienced the loss of her stepfather. As a result of this traumatic loss, Emma eventually ended her relationship with her de facto fiancé Edwin Brown of the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The war had a tangible influence on their lives by breaking up their planned marriage.\(^\text{13}\)

Emma and Edwin, the two young lovers, apparently had in place a plan to get married upon the close of the war. During that long and difficult wait for him to return, Emma faced considerable trials. She expressed the sense of missing her beaux in early January 1864, mentioning that she thought of him all day on Christmas and New Year’s Day. Though this may not seem like an especially profound or unique sentiment, it was definitely a contributing factor in Emma’s later change of heart regarding Edwin. She did not want to be in a relationship with a man who would not be there during the most important times of the year. Later in the same letter she mentioned spending time with another couple, mutual friends of theirs, and possibly moving to Albany, Ohio, together after the war. Clearly Emma was looking forward to getting together with Edwin Brown.\(^\text{14}\)

While looking forward to the day that Edwin would come home, Emma wrote to him stating, “Ed I look forward to the end of that six months when you will be a free man.

\(^{\text{13}}\) To put Emma’s story in a larger context of women’s dissent in the north, see Judith Giesberg. *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 119-142, 164.

\(^{\text{14}}\) Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, Jan. 17, 1864, Brown Family Collection, Ohio University Special Collections, Mahn Center, Athens, Ohio, MSS 18, Box 4, Folder 308. Hereafter referred to as Brown Collection.
and I want you to stay free while you can they dare not draft you = and I know you wont volunteer.”

Interestingly, Emma did not stop at the hope of Edwin’s return. She also added the point that he would certainly not volunteer. Perhaps that was a genuine thought, knowing that he would not volunteer. Emma may have been concerned that her patriotic serviceman might have wanted to continue fighting, so she chose to remind him that he was wanted back home. At this point in early 1864, Emma remained hopeful for her man’s return from the war.

When the reality of war struck families, it sometimes changed their understanding of hardship and sacrifice. After receiving some terrible news in the spring of 1864, the war changed for Emma. She wrote, “Ed I have bad new to tell you= Father was killed last week in a battle on the Potomic also half or nearly all his company were cut to pieces. We all feel very badly over it.” She later added that the bullet passed through her stepfather’s lung and leg. He died in the field hospital. They talked of going to get him, but Emma feared he had been “plumped into a hole among the rest of his boys.” She added that his “little children grieve a great deal about him.”

This traumatic event brought the war into Emma’s home. Knowing that her future husband was still fighting in the war upset her.

Emma Hudgel after hearing of her stepfather’s death at the Battle of the Wilderness, realized the ramifications of war were larger than just her own family. She

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15 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, Jan. 17, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 308.
16 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, May 20, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 338. Emma never gives her stepfather’s name, so to this point his identity remains a mystery.
wrote to Edwin, “...our country is drenching with the blood of her own people... it is an awful thought to think of the American people fighting her own people brother fighting another when is their folly going to cease.”\textsuperscript{17} Hudgel’s comments went beyond sadness over her stepfather’s death and into a criticism of the war itself. Emma sympathized with many common people in southeastern Ohio, who saw the war as an unnecessary waste of life based on an argument that did not concern them. In the letter Emma wrote to Edwin informing him of her father’s death, she included the comment that, “Ed I dont know now if I am writing to a dead man or a living one the soldiers have been fighting every place.”\textsuperscript{18} Obviously upset by the news of her stepfather’s death, Emma’s concern for Edwin transformed from worried girl back home to a very sincere frustration with the war. Her stepfather’s death seemed to be the catalyst for Emma’s conversion from supporter to antiwar letter writer.

In a letter two days later, Hudgel wrote to her friends the Browns (her fiancé’s parents) about local sacrifice. She pointed out that in her home town, “...nearly all the Thomville boys are killed or wounded...”\textsuperscript{19} For Emma Hudgel, the war was not about ideological conflicts between politicians in Washington and Richmond. The war took her boyfriend away, took her stepfather, and a number of her friends. Echoing Hudgel’s frustration about the war, Henry Hannan of Athens, who had friends and neighbors fighting in the war, expressed a similar sentiment, calling those prosecuting the war

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, May 22, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 341.
“misguided wretches.”20 Both Hudgel and Hannan exemplify the regional antiwar movement. Dissent was heavy in southeastern Ohio. Even later in 1864, when the national Peace Movement seemed all but dead, these local movements continued to announce their discontent with the war.21

Emma’s letters to Edwin criticized the war. Emma wrote, “Abolitionists in the town are mean enough to get Soldiers to vol[unteer] and then work their cards so as to make 15 and $20 per head on them... enough to make any body hate the whole tribe.”22 In this letter, Hudgel alluded to the complexity of the war’s origins and those who appeared, from her perspective, to be gaining considerable profit from the sacrifice of others. Emma specifically found it deplorable that abolitionists instigated the war, yet left it the business of others, her friends and family, to fight the war. She clearly articulated Peace Democratic ideology and her letters, whether Brown enjoyed reading them or not, had a direct influence on him.

While Emma’s sympathies moved toward peace, Edwin did not agree. He was fighting with the 36th Ohio, but remained in constant communication throughout the first half of 1864 with her. Though the collection lacks Edwin’s responses to Emma directly, some insights can be gathered from his correspondence with his parents. For example, in April 1864, Edwin sent home an original poem titled “Butternut” that commented, in no

20 Henry Hannan, from Athens, OH, to Mother, Feb. 13, 1864, Letter transcribed by Doug McCabe, Henry Hannan Collection, Ohio University Special Collections, Mahn Center, Athens, Ohio, MSS 294.
21 Jennifer L. Weber, Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 195. Throughout this study, terms such as “Peace Democrats,” “Peace Movement,” and “dissenters” are used interchangeably in reference to anti-war citizens and politicians. Chapter four on the antivar movement elaborates on this discussion.
22 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, Apr. 21, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 333.
uncertain terms, his (and other soldiers’) frustration with the class of people in the north supporting the rebellion. It was unclear at this point whether Edwin considered his girlfriend to be one of those sympathizers. The last line of Edwin’s poem was, describing his opinion of the Butternuts, “Best to express my feeling, I wish them all to hell.”

Between the month of January, when Emma expressed her deep feelings of connection and desire for Edwin to be home and the summer of 1864, Emma decided it was no longer worth the pain. Whether it was her stepfather’s death or a sense of disconnection from Edwin, historians may never know. However, it was a difficult spring and early summer for Emma and she decided to call off the post-war wedding.

Emma wrote, explaining their break up to Edwin:

Ed we have about run to the end of our Chain I have changed my mind within a month or two in fact my love for you has been dying for a year Ed I have tried to love you harder but it is out of the question it has been so long since I seen you and it is against my nature to love any one and be in other company all the time there was a time I would have married you any day but that time is past and gone the closer our time come for getting married the worse I felt.

She mentioned the thought of his parents being upset, but believed it better to be honest about their relationship and feelings towards one another. She enlightened Edwin, “I know I dont love you enough to marry you.” After mentioning what a good friend he had been to her, she wrote, “I never want to see you again it will only bring back all old feelings and make us both feel miserable.”

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24 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, July 4, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 352.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
were ill, hers being a problem with her liver. Just when it seemed the difference was not at all linked to their differences of political opinion, she writes, “...an other thing we dont hitch any more on politics and would quarrel.”

The follow up letters also reveal a bit more about the nature of their break up. Emma notes that she was not treated in the way she wanted. In a note addressed coolly to “Mr. Brown,” (unlike the others to “Dear Ed”), she writes that he promised he would come home to marry her, but did not ask if she wanted to get married. She adds, “...you thought you was doing me a favor.” Though this might be post-breakup spite, it does read a bit like the roots of a frustrated relationship. This situation would have been very different had the war not interrupted their plans for marriage. Though many families fought the war together, for this couple the war pulled them apart. The story of Emma and Edwin is the exception that proves the rule. Amy Murrell Taylor writes, “...marriage and courtship, two institutions idealized for their distance from the rancor of politics, proved somewhat resilient to the intrusion of war.” This was true of all the other familial relationships explored in this study, but not the courtship of Emma and Edwin.

The wounding of soldiers in battle was a concomitant of the war. These injuries often incapacitated soldiers for some time, resulting in hospital stays. Edwin Brown got his finger blown off in a skirmish along the Kanawha River in western Virginia in the spring of 1862. He wrote home that “I would like to write to you all about the Battle but

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27 Ibid.
28 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, July 23, 1864, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 353.
my hand is so I cant.”

He even apologized to his family, “You must excuse my Bad writing for I am writing with my thumb and second finger and it hirts my hand to write.”

Brown made sure to contact his family about his injury, despite it being difficult to write. This accented the connection between the home and battle front.

Brown was still sore from the wound, yet he made a point to write home. Despite the distance, Brown wanted to make sure that his family knew about his condition at the time. This type of devotion and connection showed that home and battle fronts fought the war together. Brown was not off in an isolated war experience. His family suffered through the pain indirectly, yet with him.

There were daily reminders of the violence of the war for the residents of southeastern Ohio who lived near the military hospital in Gallipolis. The U. S. General Hospital in Gallipolis, Ohio, served the wounded Union soldiers fighting in Kentucky and western Virginia. This was another way in which the war came home to southeastern Ohio. The hospital was at the location of the former Camp Carrington. It held 350 beds and treated 769 soldiers at a time during its high point. The locals who volunteered at the hospital or helped to raise funds and supplies for the hospital realized the cost of war through the work and sacrifices of the people there.

30 Edwin Brown, 36th OVI, to parents, Athens County, Ohio, May 29, 1862, written from the hospital at Gauley, Ohio, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 2, Folder 152, Athens, Ohio.

31 Ibid.

One of the patients at the hospital in Gallipolis was William A. Tall, a Gallia County soldier who fought with the 2nd West Virginia Cavalry. He described the event that caused him to have to go to the hospital in a letter to his mother. “I have a verry severe wound through the right ankle and foot. I was wounded accidentally at Liberty as we were coming back. The point of the ankle bone is fractured and so is the bone in the bottom of my foot. It is verry painful but I guess not dangerous.” These were the kinds of wounds that limited the soldiers’ ability to perform and when they arrived home, often hindered their work as well. Tall’s next letter responded to his mother’s concern for him. He wrote, “It is not necessary Mother for you to come and take care of me. I am well taken care of, kind and attentive nurses and good Doctors. If I get worse I will send for you Mother.” This comment was important for several reasons. Most obvious was the connection between the home front and the battle front. Tall’s mother wanted to help nurse her son back to health. Also, the proximity of the hospital made it a much more practical possibility than if he had been in a hospital in the Deep South. These interactions though, sharing in his wound and her willingness to help him back to health, show the direct link between the soldiers and their homes as they fought the war. His suffering was hers as well.

33 William A. Tall, 2nd WV Cavalry, to “Mother and Sisters” in Gallia County, Ohio, June 30, 1864, written from General Hospital, Gallipolis, Ohio. Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, William A. Tall Collection.
34 William A. Tall, 2nd WV Cavalry, to “Mother and Sisters” in Gallia County, Ohio, July 6, 1864, written from General Hospital, Gallipolis, Ohio. Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, William A. Tall Collection.
Those at home writing about the war acknowledged that they occasionally failed to fully grasp the pain of death. In an appropriately named article from *The Portsmouth Times*, “Only One Killed,” the author sought to encourage writers to maintain a sense of perspective on the real cost of the war. The article read:

Only one killed. That’s all. Only one vigorous young life suddenly cut short; only one happy household shrouded in gloom; only one home chain broken, only one wife made a widow, one group of little ones made fatherless; or perhaps one fond mother’s heart robbed of its idol; one tender sister made brotherless; one loving young heart stricken in its first great agony. How many times within the last few months have faithful comrades broken the turf and deposited underneath the form of the ‘only one killed.’

The article’s tone was almost over the top in making its point. However, the reality of the flippancy with which people reported low casualties mattered. The author highlighted the family influenced, “one wife made a widow, one group of little ones made fatherless.” The same article continued, giving a larger perspective on the argument, “We do not realize the vast amount of sorrow this war is creating.—None but those from whose hearth-stones have been taken the ‘only one killed’ can realize it.”

For individual families who faced the loss of a loved one, the “only one killed” was catastrophic. Death was the harshest of the hardships faced on the home front.

Soldiers reported home about the awful conditions of war and the dreadful diseases that the men in the ranks contracted. These ailments included many familiar illnesses like diarrhea, cholera, smallpox, measles, and others. The most common cause of death for Civil War soldiers was not the enemy’s bullet or artillery shell; it was the

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36 “Only One Killed,” *The Portsmouth Times* (Portsmouth, Scioto County, Ohio), November 6, 1862, Portsmouth Public Library Microfilm Collection, Portsmouth Public Library, Portsmouth, Ohio.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
invisible germs that crept into immune systems. The men were ill prepared for the exposure of service and many were unexposed to the diseases in their home communities. The deadly combination of stress, exposure, and the lack of immunity created ideal conditions for an epidemic. Soldiers were often not aware of the necessity for sanitation and therefore spread the diseases at an alarming rate.39

Soldiers wrote home about the specific diseases that bothered them and at times completely incapacitated them. Joseph Hoffhines informed his wife Nancy, “There are a great many sick souldiers in the Hospital at this time some with fever, but most of them has the Diareah and the most that dies, dies with this last complaint five died here since yesterday morning or in about twenty four hours.”40 Sad and morbid, Hoffhines’ description vivified how simple diseases caused the death of thousands of soldiers. This report, which made it home to his wife, must have been unsettling for her to hear. Many of the soldiers did not receive the diet they needed or conditions to stay healthy while in the military. These conditions resulted in a high mortality rate due to diseases.41

Soldiers and their families shared in the unprecedented cost and loss of war through the death of their comrades in arms. Soldiers had to bury their friends and wrote home about that traumatic experience. When a soldier died, if his comrades had the time and opportunity, they would bury him and mark the location so that the family could

39 For more on diseases, see Alfred J. Bollet, Civil War Medicine: Challenges and Triumphs, (Tucson, AZ: Galen Press, 2002).
40 Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33rd OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Savannah, Georgia, December 19, 1864, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.
41 Numerous other soldiers made passing references to personal health or complaints among comrades due to poor health. For example, John Benedict’s brother George spent several months back and forth between his regiment and the hospital. This was a common theme throughout different correspondence, but seems a bit redundant to mention every case.
exhume and transport the body. Often, soldiers’ whereabouts were unknown so officers wrote letters home to family members explaining that the soldier was “missing in action.” This uncertainty lingered until another soldier could attest to the fate of the soldier or on rare occasions he turned up in a hospital or a prison. This cost, though, was extremely high and was not merely a loss for the armies at war. James Barker described the emotions of the moment of burying soldiers. He wrote to his cousin, “Tis a solemn site to witness the burial of a soldier, when the volley is fired over the graves it makes the cold chills course through ones veins.”

The death of a comrade hit soldiers very hard. Soldiers confronted the loss of their comrades with great emotion. As Madison Dalyrmple wrote to his mother, “My Bunkey [mess mate] got killed his name was James hashberger, he was the best fellow in our company.” Though for many, Hashberger was just another casualty in an increasingly bloody war, for Dalrymple, he was a close friend. It changed his life and his war. Unfortunately, for the soldiers of southeastern Ohio, the experience of death surrounded their experience of war. In the case of Dalrymple and Barker it was important to them to share in the loss with their loved ones at home. The sacrifice of war was not simply among the soldiers off fighting, or the folks at home canning peaches for the “cause.” The Civil War was a shared experience, including the shared cost of the war through the loss of friends and loved ones.

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42 Captain James G. Barker, 36th OVI, to his cousin “Birtha”, Washington County, Ohio, November 16, 1861, written from Summerville, VA, Washington County Historical Society, Box 500, Marietta, Ohio.
43 Madison Dalrymple, 18th OVI, to his mother Sophia Dalrymple, Gallia County, Ohio, September 4, 1864, written from Atlanta, Georgia, Dalrymple Family Civil War Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
Soldiers sometimes specified what they wanted in the event of their death. Jacob Shively noted in a letter to his wife Mary, “There are men enough here that wil do me a favor if I ask it and I shall not ask unless I know I nead it and if it is my mysfortune to die or get killed I ask no better place to be buried than on the battlefield.” It was evident from this comment that Shively contemplated his own mortality. He did not provide a reason why, but he preferred to be buried on the battlefield. This note, to his “companion” and wife Mary, expressed a desire to stay on the field of battle rather than have his remains taken home. Nevertheless, Shively and his wife confronted the possibility of his death. He noted in a later letter that “But should it be my lot to fall in this most noble cause of our country it wil be my last request of my friends as wel as my last prayr to the all mercifull Creator that you may never come to want or sorrow.”

Shively put the war in a larger perspective, calling it a “noble cause.” He gave his own death a transcendent meaning for his wife and friends, should he happen to die.

In letters home, soldiers eulogized their fallen comrades as they reported the sad news to friends and families. Solomon Denius mentioned the death of his brother John in a letter home to their friend David Perry. He wrote, “David it was hard to part with him as he was allways good and kind to me.” He was quick to emphasize death’s finality, “But he is now gone and we should not grieve we received a letter from you to him the

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44 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, October 18, 1863, written from Chattanooga, Tennessee, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, Dear Companion... Yours untill death Jacob Shively 89th Regt. O.V.I., (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 27.
45 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, November 17, 1863, written from Chattanooga, Tennessee, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, Dear Companion... Yours untill death Jacob Shively 89th Regt. O.V.I., (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 30.
46 Solomon Denius, Co. G, 78th OVI, to friend David Perry (spelling varied, Parry) of Noble County, Ohio, March 29, 1863, written from undefined location, most likely Vicksburg, Mississippi. Denius Family Civil War Correspondence, Ohio Historical Collection, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 5568.
same Day he was Buried But letters cant reach him anymore.” Denius then detailed the circumstances of his brother’s death, “He was taken sick a few Days after we came to lake providence and what was tomarther I Cant tell He died on the morning of the 20 of March after Being in the Hospital But a few Days He was Buried near lake providence we would have sent him home but that was out of the question.” The tone of the letter was sad, yet a bit reserved as if to carry the sentiment “we did our best.” Solomon continued on in the letter connecting his brother’s death to a larger struggle of the war, namely that more and more brave boys would fall before the war would end. There was no end in sight, it seemed, and Solomon shared his exasperation with his friend. Though he lost his brother, he kept his connection with his home front associates to help sustain him through the remainder of his war.

Soldiers did not always know what happened to their fellow comrades in arms during or after a battle. Unfortunately, for the Dalrymple family one of the young men from their family did not return from the war. His sergeant sent the following notice home to Sophia Dalrymple, the soldier’s mother, by way of Lorenzo Dalrymple, his brother. “Your Brother Madison was taken prisoner, or killed in action about 5 miles from pulaski Tenn. On the road leading to Rogersville Ala. he was dropped from the rolls of this company as missing in action, and as nothing has ever been heard from him official, or otherwise, we suppose him dead; but, can not forward his final papers to

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
Washington.” The notice was a bit cold. Madison had transferred from the 18th Ohio to the 4th US Cavalry and, as a regular army soldier had made himself a professional. Perhaps he considered death a possibility in his line of work. However, the most important part of this quotation was the uncertainty with which it left the family. The sergeant wrote “we suppose him dead” but offered no final closure for the family. The sting of death and the horror of uncertainty struck the families of southeastern Ohio repeatedly throughout the war.

When soldiers died in battle or in a hospital, their families and friends at home received the grim news via the same system of correspondence that maintained their connections. After a consistent correspondence throughout the latter part of the war, Martin Andrews, a veteran of the 62nd Ohio, received the news of the death of his dear friend Lemon Devol. A fellow comrade, A. H. Strong, detailed that Sergeant Devol was shot dead on the picket line. He wrote, “He was a kind and generous comrade, and a braver better soldier has never sacrificed his life to his country’s cause.” Strong noted that other friends and soldiers sent their regards as well. It was for a final statement on a life, blunt and a bit disturbing. His life represented merely a “sacrifice in his country’s cause.” To Martin Andrews, the friend who kept the letters and gave them to the archive where they remain, the pain of that sacrifice must have been horrific. He had lost a dear friend.

49 Thomas W. Giles, 1st Sergeant 4th US Cavalry, to Lorenzo Dalrymple, who forwarded the letter to Sophia Dalymple, Gallia County, Ohio, October 26, 1865, written from unknown location, Dalrymple Family Civil War Letters, Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio.
50 A. H. Strong to Martin Andrews, 62nd Ohio, included in undated letter probably summer 1864, written from unknown location but probably not far from City Point, Lemon Devol Collection, Washington County Historical Society, Box 504, Marietta, Ohio.
Much of the violence and pain during the Civil War was not even the direct result of fighting between the combatants. In addition to diseases, other causes for death or injuries were accidents. There were numerous examples of these types of mishaps that soldiers narrated in their letters home. John A. Brown wrote to his wife Isa about an accident in their camp. “One of the Barlow boys got badly wounded this morning. They built a fire and found an old musket barrel and put it in the fire. It happened to be loaded, and when it got hot it went off and shot him through the leg.”51 Though a seemingly innocent action, the tossing of the musket barrel on the fire caused a serious wound. The fact that Brown wrote this story home to his wife showed how he intended to share in his trials and experiences of war with her. She then, could relay the story to others in their community about the status of the “Barlow” boys. They were, if not friends, at least acquainted and that connection allowed Isa to spread the news at home, further deepening the embrace between soldier and home.

Part of the network of communication involved civilians writing to soldiers about the events, including accidents that happened in other regiments. In particular, news traveled fast regarding the units that had soldiers from the home community. Emma Hudgel, passed on the story of a tragic death in the 18th Ohio. She wrote that a soldier was accidentally shot in the temple while intervening between a drunken man and another man. She saw the dead man while visiting her cousin in Union County and added the unnerving detail, “He looked red in the face after he had been dead 8 days the

blood and brains had run down the side of his face it looked awful I can’t forget it.”\textsuperscript{52}

Soldiers and civilians shared in these cruel moments brought on by the war. Though drunken men scuffle in peacetime, the circumstances in this case were created due to the war.

Another accident involving a local connection included a devastating explosion. Lemon Devol relayed the story of this tragedy to his friend Martin Andrews. He wrote, “Two barges and a store-house full of ammunition blew up down at City Point a few days ago, dealing death and destruction to about two hundred and fifty men who were engaged unloading it. We could easily see the ascending smoke, and the shock was tremendous, but those who saw the explosion say it was terrifying in the extreme. Most of the men were blown to atoms and could never have been recognized; pieces of human flesh were gathered up nearly half a mile from the scene of the disaster.”\textsuperscript{53}

This sad and terrible story conveyed the reality of the war in gruesome terms. Devol shared this story with his former military comrade. Perhaps he may not have written the story to someone else, but nevertheless it was part of how those at home and those at war coped with the war together. It was a different context than those who suffered wounds on the battlefield. Often soldiers died in these horrifying and unromanticized ways, making it difficult for friends and family to understand the necessity of their sacrifice.

\textsuperscript{52} Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36\textsuperscript{th} Ohio, December 14, 1862, Brown Collection, Box 2, Folder 203.

\textsuperscript{53} Lemon Devol, 62\textsuperscript{nd} OVI, to friend Martin Andrews, 62\textsuperscript{nd} OVI, undated, but probably summer 1864, written from unknown location but probably not far from City Point, Lemon Devol Collection, Washington County Historical Society, Box 504, Marietta, Ohio.
For some soldiers, the horror of war was losing the use of a limb. Some were maimed or brutally wounded and lived the rest of their lives dealing with those disfigurations. When Joseph Hoffhines was wounded and attempting to get to the convalescent camp he wrote to his wife, “While I lay so helpless on the boat I was much trouble about how I would get from the boat to the convalescent camp two miles and a half with my knapsack and accoutrements...”\(^5^4\) He demonstrated how significant the experience was to him psychologically, “...but I shall never forget that day soon as we left the boat I was left in the rear I had gone but a short distance when my anxious care about how I was to get along passed away and my heart was so filled with peace and comfort that I could hardly contain myself in the streets of Alexander. While hobbling along with my gun for a cane I allmost forgot that I was a cripple.”\(^5^5\) The town “Alexander” that Hoffhines referenced was probably Alexandria, Virginia, which by May 1865 was in the control of the Union army. To make it there marked safety for Hoffhines. This story, which he shared with his wife showed their connection regarding his injury and his ultimate well-being. Though she may have hurt for him, his story assured her that he survived his ordeal and was eager to tell her about his difficult experience. In this injury, Hoffhines and his wife shared in the suffering of the war.

Soldiers routinely and privately reflected on death. When they wrote home about their feelings regarding death, they did so often with an optimistic or religious connotation. However, Andrew Jones of the 76\(^{th}\) Ohio left a journal entry in early 1865

\(^5^4\) Private Joseph Hoffhines, 33\(^{rd}\) OVI, to wife Nancy Hoffhines, written from Alexander, [Virginia], May 17, 1865, Joseph Hoffhines Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 2596.

\(^5^5\) Ibid.
that synthesized many of the issues regarding death, the war, and the connection with the home front. He wrote, “After dark I received a letter from my wife, and one from my oldest daughter – the first she has ever written. I felt happy then- my loved ones at home were well, thinking of me. But letters enclosed two photographs of my youngest son and youngest daughter. How proud I felt of them.”  

He described the effect the note had on him. “What a redeeming influence these little memorials have on the soldier, surrounded as he is by evil influences. These make him wish to outlive his present dangers that he may see them once more. And he will sometimes turn his thoughts to heaven and breath a silent but sincere prayer for their welfare.”  

Jones continued in explaining the reality of his own experience of war. “But how natural these little pictures looked; and O how carefully I shall keep; and if a vicious rebel bullet should lay me low in death, will some kind of friend take and send home to my wife? whoever does that deed of kindness, a soldier dying blessing shall ever be his.”

Jones reflected candidly on the possibility of his death. Mortality held such great meaning to him because of the preceding comments about his family and especially children. This may not have been unique to Jones, but it did make a perfect connection between his fate, in this case contemplating death, and what mattered most to him. Though some soldiers suggested in glorious terms dying for God and country, Jones hoped that someone would make sure that his body could be returned to his family. Jones did not write of fighting to be a hero or to preserve the Union. He just hoped that

56 Andrew Jones, Co. D, 76th Ohio, Washington County, Ohio, diary entry dated January 30, 1865, Washington County Historical Society, Box 505, Marietta, Ohio.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
what was most important to him, his family would get the honor of knowing his body was safe.

Similar to Jones’s private reflection on death, Benjamin F. Stone, Jr. expressed a fear of dying away from his loved ones. He wrote in a letter to his friends Ollie and Lena, “It is the saddest part of the soldier’s life, for him to die away from his relatives and amidst strangers. Who is there by their side to give them a cheering word. There is none to deal so gently as a Mother or Sister. None whose care is as soothing.” The letter moved into a religious diatribe about the comfort of the savior, but nonetheless the disconnection from loved ones was powerful for Stone. For him it was the “saddest part” of the soldier’s life to die without loved ones nearby. In some ways the soldiers viewed their comrades in arms as close, like brothers, and they preferred to have sensitive women such as mothers and sisters with them. Even in reflecting on death, Stone desired the connection with those at home to sustain him.

Some soldiers found it difficult to deal with the psychological strain of war. In the case of Charles Boomer, the stress proved too difficult for him to handle and he committed suicide while in camp. In this graphic description, George Kidwell shared the tragic story with his father. “He has not been sober since we was paid off and he had the delerious tremeons day before yesterday and in the night at 4’oclock he came to my bunk and told me to write a letter to his mother for him he said he was going to leave and she

would never hear from him again.” Kidwell described the brutal cause of death, “I talked to him and persuaded him to lay down and go to sleep and he said he would and laid down but did not lay but a few minutes when he got up and went into the office and got my razor which was laying on the desk and come out looked out of the window then went to his bunk lay down but had not lain down two minutes until he cut his throat. Me and one of the corporals was awake all the time and when he cut his throat we heard the blood and he began to choke then the corporal spoke to me and said he believed Boomer had killed himself.” The soldiers attempted to help their comrade, but it was too late. “Then we jumped out of bed and got a light and by the time I got the lamp lit up he had got out on the floor and was trying to walk but when I came out with the light he layed down on the floor and died. It was the most horrible sight I have witnessed since I have been in the service it had more effect on my feelings than the dead and wounded at Shiloh.”

The events of Boomer’s suicide raised several important points. It specifically showed the sense of community among the soldiers and how they shared that with those at home. Kidwell felt the need to share this particular event with his father. Likewise, the event had a profound impact on how Kidwell viewed and experienced the war. The men may not have been close friends, but they certainly knew one another. These types of losses go beyond the typical understanding of any war, particularly the Civil War.

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid. The Battle of Shiloh was an important conflict in April 6-7, 1862 in southwest Tennessee. With over 23,000 combined casualties, it was the costliest battle in the war up to that point.
However, the cost of war and its shared experience went beyond the gunshot wounds on glorious battlefields. The real cost of war was deep and powerful, especially for the family of Charles Boomer, who could not even claim virtuous sacrifice on the battlefield for their loved one.

George Kidwell’s family received the news of his death in a letter from one of George’s comrades. The note described a bit about George’s death and the location of his remains. Lieutenant R.L. Richner wrote to Kidwell’s family, “Geo was buried in it was a pine one far better than what thousands get. I know he a deserved better one but it was the best I could get for him in this Godforsaken country.”\(^{63}\) Showing his personal concern for Kidwell and his desire for the family to recover the body. He continued, “I was not with him the night he died so it is impossible for me to state what or wether he had anything to say about home I burried him about one and a half mile East of Little Rock. I placed a board at his head with the proper inscription on it so that if ever you visit this place it will be an easy matter for you to find his grave.”\(^{64}\) The news must have been horrifying for George’s family. Their son’s correspondence throughout the war had been detailed and exciting. It must have seemed extremely unlikely that war would ever catch up with him. Without warning, without notice, and without pause their son, George Kidwell, died under unknown circumstances. The cost of war for the Kidwell family was the highest it could be.

\(^{63}\) Lieutenant M. L. Richner, Co. D 77\(^{th}\) OVI, to B.F. Kidwell, Washington County, November 28, 1863, Headquarters 77\(^{th}\) Ohio, Little Rock, Arkansas, Ohio, Correspondence of George Kidwell, Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
After receiving a report that her suitor was almost killed at the Battle of Gettysburg, Olivia Allston replied to Benjamin Stone, Jr., “Oh, how thankful I am that you are once more preserved. What a wonderful escape yours was. I shudder to think how near death you [were] if that shell had exploded. I cannot bear to think of it.”

Ollie’s comforting assurance that she cared for his well-being must have been an encouraging sentiment. Though Benjamin faced the danger, both dealt with the possibility of his death each and every day of the war. Historians often fail to capture that emotional element to the war. The focus lies on the logistics of war, the volunteer societies and political conditions, but the reality of war for many northern families involved receiving letters about death or near death as they worried, prayed, and mourned the war.

Another sad reality of death in the Civil War was that so many soldiers observed it or suffered through it. Jacob Shively discussed what it was like watching and hearing soldiers die. “I have been pained more than once to see promising and intelligent looking young men dieing on the battlefield,” he wrote to his wife Mary, “and uttering the most profain and bitter othes with almost their last breath.” He put the observation in the context of the brutality of the war. He continued, “But such are apparently the legitimate consequences of war and it is truly one of the greatest evils.”

Shively was attempting to understand the cost of war in an explicit way. He remained dismissive of it, all the while

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66 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, March 11, 1864, written from Ringgold, Georgia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, *Dear Companion... Yours untill death Jacob Shively 89th Regt. O.V.I.*, (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 49.

67 Ibid.
clearly acknowledging that it did not seem worthwhile. This was an important element, almost coyly tucked away in Shively’s letter, that helps historians better comprehend the extent to which soldiers realized the sacrifices of their comrades.

Losses were difficult for the soldiers to comprehend. Solomon Denius of the 78th Ohio, explained to his friend David Perry, “I am sorry to tel you that we ar a loosing our good and brave boys but that we must expect amongst cannon and heavy musketry and war I hope to see the day when this ware will cease and soldiers return to thair pleasant homes them at home dont no what hard times ar...”68 He experienced a different sort of homesickness, wishing to be with his friend and away from the horrors of war. He continued, “I would like to be at your house this morning and talk with you but I am far away I would like to have some of that good honey to eat I think when I come home I will come and see you.”69 These Noble County men were clearly good friends who suffered through the war together. Though Denius faced privations and exposure to terrible conditions, he maintained a connection through his friend on the home front. His subtle, yet important note, about “them at home dont no what hard times ar” put into context the draft resistance and Copperheadism noted in Noble County. Denius, however, did not react violently. He maintained a humble tone, wishing the folks at

68 Solomon Denius, Co. G, 78th OVI, to friend David Perry (spelling varied, Parry) of Noble County, Ohio, June 8, 1863, written from near Vicksburg, Mississippi. Denius Family Civil War Correspondence, Ohio Historical Collection, Columbus, Ohio, VFM 5568.
69 Ibid.
home would understand what he and his comrades really had to endure for the cause of the Union. 70

Soldiers did not always die alone. They died with their comrades in arms or hospital aides by their sides. Edwin Brown relayed one such story to his family about holding a fellow soldier as he passed away. Brown wrote, “I have stood ove the death Bead of a nother Brother Soldier held his pulse while they grew week and weeker Slower and Slower till at last they were gon to beat no more his name was Parker that wounded man his mother wife and brothers stood around his Bead til he Breathed his last, he Mortyfyed befor dying worsted Corps I laid out.” 71 Brown had this experience while at the Post Hospital in Carthage, Tennessee. His account was relatively devoid of personal emotion, but the important point was that the man’s mother, wife, and brothers were with him. Even though he was off at war, the home community maintained their connection with the soldier. Brown, likewise, thought it important to pass on the experience to his own family in an expression of enduring the war together.

Some soldiers wrote about death frequently in their correspondence home. Jacob Shively described the death of a dear friend to his family at home, thusly: “I am pained to give you and the friends at home the sad news that poor Levi Hennis is killed. He was shot yesterday while on the skirmish line. He was killed about 2 oclock in the afternoon. A musket ball struck him just below the right corner of his mouth and lodged in the lower

71 Edwin Brown, 36th OVI, to parents, Athens County, Ohio, August 2, 1863, written from Post Hospital, Carthage, Tennessee, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 4, Folder 285, Athens, Ohio.
part of the back of his head. He died almost instantly. He only crossed his arms over
his face and exclaimed Oh!" The letter noted that Shively ensured that Hennis received a
proper burial. He also wrote that Hennis fired about 75 rounds before dying, so the man
died fighting. Shively mentioned that Hennis knew he would die soon. He lamented,
“Poor Levi had appeared to have some foreboding of his misfortune and at different
times he has spoke of it. The morning before he was killed he remarked that he had a
new shirt that he sent to him while at Ringgold. He put it on and said he would put it on
or it would not do him any good as he expected to be killed. He was killed with it on.”
Levi’s prophetic notion about his shirt may have seemed a small point to his comrades in
arms, or perhaps it was merely a coping mechanism for him. Nevertheless, this was an
important story that Shively passed to his home front associates about the realities of war
on the battle front and the death of someone they knew.

Overall, the cost of war was high for the residents of southeastern Ohio and
civilians communicated about it. Almyra Brown’s sister Jane wrote to her consistently
throughout the war, often providing brilliant salvos about the larger meaning of the war
and the pain of sacrifice. She grieved to her sister Almyra, who months later lost her son
Van, “I scarcely press the hand of a friend any more, but tears of sorrow gush forth- a
Son Husband or Father has been killed or wounded- and the end is not yet... the anguish

72 Sgt Jacob Shively, 89th OVI, to wife Mary Shively, Ross County, Ohio, June 21, 1864, written from
battlefield near Marietta, Georgia, in ed. Patricia Fife Medart, Dear Companion... Yours untill death Jacob
Shively 89th Regt. O.V.I., (Chillicothe, Ohio: Ross County Historical Society, 2001), 55.
73 Ibid.
is untold- my heart sickens at the thought.”

Though Jane Cole did not live in southeastern Ohio, her sentiments were a powerful foreshadow for Almyra Brown, who had two sons fighting in the Union army at the time. This type of commiseration between those at home was necessary though, because it helped them to cope with the costs of the war. Cole’s emotional response that she could barely even write any more without crying displayed the sheer influence of the war upon the people at home. The cost of war was extremely high for the soldiers and civilians alike.

Emma Hudgel communicated her frustration about the cost of the war to her boyfriend Edwin Brown. She wrote about her own observations of the war, “I have seen the effects of war since I came out here there have several been killed and sent home and a great many killed and not sent home in our neighborhood.” She gave an example of the local impact of the war. “One poor woman who lives out a short ways from here her husband was killed at the battle of Vicksburg she has 7 children to take care of and no one to help her she is very poor, they neighbors do all they can for her. War leaves little consolation in its devastating march.” In a final scathing comment, Emma pointed out the lasting effect of the war on those at home, “A lonely nameless grave is the soldiers and desolate hearth and broken hearts are at home.”

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74 Jane Cole, South Lebanon, Ohio [not in southeastern Ohio], to Almyra Brown, Athens County, Ohio, September 21, 1862, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 2, Folder 174, Athens, Ohio.
75 Emma Hudgel to the Brown Family, Athens County, Ohio, February 15, 1863, written from Cedar Grove, Ohio, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 3, Folder 228, Athens, Ohio.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
Roughly one month before his own death, Van Brown reflected on the carnage that he witnessed as a soldier. He wrote to his parents, “I have not seen much fighting, none in fact, except artillery fighting, but I have seen men buried by hundreds, seen a hole dug 4 feet deep and 6 or 8 men tumbled in like hogs, with nothing on except their clothes, the dirt thrown in on them, and before night the wagons had run over them till they had cut the ground up and their feet were sticking out.”

Van described the scenes in a matter-of-fact way, but they seemed to bother him deeply. He continued, “It was no uncommon thing when we first came here to see them wheeled men off of the hospital boats on a wheelbarrow and dump them into a hole and cover them up and that was the last of them. In fact a person can seen enough here in a week to make him wish he never had volunteered.”

Franny Nudelman writes in her book *John Brown’s Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* that the decaying corpses, such as those witnessed by Van Brown, created a direct connection with larger themes in United States history such as racial injustices and violence. While Brown did not make any of those types of connections, Nudelman’s emphasis on demythologizing war certainly seemed relevant to Brown’s own interpretation. He did not glorify the corpses of his comrades, but rather showed sympathy for not only their demise, but their treatment after death.

Little did Van Brown know in a month he would be one of those unfortunate victims. Van seemed struck by the brutality of the war. Although he knew what war

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78 Van Brown, *4th West Virginia, February 18, 1863*, written from Young’s Point, Louisville, Kentucky, Ohio University, Mahn Center, Special Collections, Brown Family Collection, Box 3, Folder 226, Athens, Ohio. Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 77-78 provides an intriguing discussion of “decent burial” for 19th century Americans.

79 Ibid.

was, the sheer magnitude of the dead stunned him. The cost of the war was extremely high and Van Brown witnessed that fact first hand as an observer and then experienced it himself. The case of Van Brown’s death exhibited the ways in which different people learned about and coped with the death of a loved one. The Brown family correspondence with Van was often light hearted even while he endured the terrible conditions of the war. Though little evidence remained between the brothers, it seemed that the two were close. They often inquired of the whereabouts of one another and even visited a few times. The family was ill prepared for Van’s death.

Austin and Almyra Brown, the parents of Van and Edwin Brown, received the notification of their son’s death via a letter from his captain. Captain Arza M. Goodspeed eulogized the young man with the following words, “dear parents of so noble, brave and true hearted a son as Van who has always been obedient and faithful and has never given me a moments trouble or vexation since he enlisted under my charge to fight for his country, near two years ago, in this the worst and most wicked war the world ever knew.”

Van died of small pox, a malady the family only learned about a few days prior. According to Goodspeed’s letter, the disease killed him quickly. The captain intended, as his letter indicated to inform them so they would not worry when they did not receive letters from their son. Goodspeed’s comments honored Van’s service as being both brave and obedient, forever the marks of a good soldier. The cost of the war, from a soldier to a family, was evident in the description of the war as the “most wicked war the world ever knew.”

81 Captain Arza M. Goodspeed to Austin and Almyra Brown, Athens County, Ohio, March 2, 1863, written from camp opposite Vicksburg, Mississippi, Brown Family Collection, Box 3, Folder 234.
Edwin Brown, Van’s brother, was still with the 36th Ohio at Camp Carthage when his brother died. He received word of his brother’s death from one of Van’s comrades. The account of Van’s death to his brother was a bit more detailed and much more unsettling. Robert W. Davis explained to Edwin Brown, “I feel endebted this morning to send you a few lines to inform you that own Brother soldier William V. Brown died this morning about 5 o’clock on last evening began to be deranged V was vary troublesom and had to be held all night to keep him from tareing himself to peases he was the hardest sight I ever saw and I think was taken care of.” With those terse and terrifying words, Edwin Brown knew he would never see his brother again. Van did not die charging valiantly across a field. He died in tremors, trying to tear himself apart. This was the Civil War. Brother with brother, confronting the realities of pain and death through vain glorious and awful pursuits.

A few weeks later the Browns received a letter from Robert W. Davis, the man who informed Edwin of Van’s death. In the letter, Davis detailed the report of Van’s death. The account provided awful details, including when Van first got small pox and how his face became one solid scab with his eyes swollen shut. Davis added that Van must have been in great pain and that he died the following morning. The surgeon encouraged them not to look for Van’s body because the disease was “catching.” He noted that Van’s mind was rational within a few hours of his death, but he said nothing of his parents. The end of the letter included some softer comments about Van’s reputation.

82 Robert W. Davis to “Captain” [probably Edwin’s commander], intended for Edwin Brown, 36th OVI, March 9, 1863, written from Post Hospital, near Vicksburg, Mississippi, Brown Family Collection, Box 3, Folder 234.
among the soldiers. He wrote, “I thought that he was so kind to all of his Brothers Soldiers he seemed like a A brother to me it hirt my feelings very much to have to part with him in such a way.”

Though these comments must have been difficult to read, perhaps they gave the Brown family some sense of closure to know just what happened to their son. The letter, in many ways a gesture of kindness from Davis, must have been difficult to read, but helped to answer some of the difficult questions. The powerful connection between the home front and battle front allowed the family to suffer with his comrades in arms as they all lost a loved one.

Once Edwin and his parents both found out about Van’s death they wrote about their feelings of grief. Due to the delay in information travel, it took a few weeks for the correspondence between Edwin and his parents to address Van’s death. Edwin encouraged his mother and cautiously hoped she could survive. He wrote, “Mother I know it will almost kill you. Mother you must bare it the best you can it is no more than we could expect we will all have to die. Van Poor Boy his troubles is all over on this Earth he will have no more hardships to goe threw on this Earth he will neaver have to stand guard on a cold night or when the rain is pouring down in torrents he has gon to rest in heaving trust we all shall meet him thare.”

These encouraging words put Van’s death in the perspective of an end to suffering. Edwin’s comments included the experience of soldiering as part of Van’s pain. He ended his comment with the measured assurance of meeting his brother again in “rest.” Later in the same letter Edwin noted his desire to be

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83 Robert W. Davis to Almyra Brown, Athens County, Ohio, April 19, 1863, written from Young’s Point, Louisiana, Brown Family Collection, Box 4, Folder 253.
84 Edwin Brown, 36th OVI, to parents, Athens County, Ohio, April 1, 1863, written from Camp Carthage, Tennessee, Brown Family Collection, Box 4, Folder 246.
with his family to console his mother. He wrote, “My hart is almost breaking I would love to be with you now I could consoal you some and I trust I will. I am going to try. I wrote to John to day to save Vans things and send them home the first chance he got.”\textsuperscript{85}

This was extremely important as it connected several of the important points of contact between the home and battle fronts. In this case, the family shared in the death of their loved one via their letters. Edwin felt his mother’s pain as she felt his. The real cost of war for the Brown family was one of their own, yet they united to bear the loss together.

Edwin, whose initial letter about Van’s death related more to comforting his mother, finally released his own emotions in a letter over a month after his brother’s death. He explained to his parents, “I don’t feel mutch like wrighting since that had (il) came of the death of my Dear Brother Van it seames as if I cant give him up cant maik it seam as he was gon forever that I shall neaver more see him in this earth...”\textsuperscript{86} He also added, “…Mother it will almost kill her she thought the world and all of Van.”\textsuperscript{87} He wrote that he could not “give him up,” which was an interesting way of saying he was grieving and it hurt. He had a difficult time letting his brother’s death not get to him. The raw emotion in this passage was striking. He finished the comment with a commiseration statement, noting that it must be difficult for his mother as well. Clearly they shared in their grief, not only as family, but as soldier and family separated by hundreds of miles. Their letters were the only medium by which they could connect in their dire struggle with grief. The cost of war was physical in the loss of a family

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Edwin Brown, 36\textsuperscript{th} OVI, to parents, Athens County, Ohio, April 20, 1863, written from Camp Carthage, Tennessee, Brown Family Collection, Box 4, Folder 257.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
member and extremely strenuous emotionally as the family remained separated for the grieving process.

As it turned out, Edwin’s suspicions regarding his mother were true. Emma Hudgel, Edwin’s girlfriend at the time, kept in contact with the Brown family and maintained correspondence with Edwin until their breakup. She wrote, “Ed your Ma is almost crazy about Van – poor woman hear heart is forever broken and will remain so till she ceases to live.” These were less-than-comforting words, but sadly probably true. It must have broken Edwin’s heart to read these words about his mother’s grief, yet it seemed as though he thought it already. Emma’s account simply confirmed the suspicions that Edwin expressed. Their family’s loss not only altered the physical composition of the family; it altered the way Almyra Brown functioned in her world forever.

The unfolding of Van Brown’s death was the manifestation of familial sacrifice in southeastern Ohio in which his family suffered through the grief and pain of his loss. Robbed of the glory of war, Van died from an awful disease that made his body rebel against itself. The family, left in southeastern Ohio, could only grieve and wait for Edwin to return home. To endure, they rallied as a community and a family to survive the rest of the war.89

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88 Emma Hudgel, Athens Co. to Private Edwin Brown, Co. C, 36th Ohio, June 8, 1863, Brown Collection, Box 4, Folder 275.
89 One of the difficult realities that Linderman discovered was that soldiers, by the end of the war, changed how they felt about the war itself but those at home did not. Gerald F. Linderman, Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War, (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 296.
By studying soldiers’ understanding of death, historians can get a better sense of their conception of life itself. While it is easy to discuss soldiers’ notions of sacrifice, it is an entirely new category to examine these types of case studies in which soldiers confronted the reality of their friends’ deaths. Drew G. Faust’s valuable insight into the concept of the “good death” in 19th century America is important here. The soldiers and their home communities supported the perceived necessary sacrifice of war in that a death for country meant a holy death that would avoid the afterlife suffering of Hell. The earthly pain and mourning for some soldiers created an even greater sense of purpose to fight harder toward those noble afterlife ends. As Abraham Lincoln mentioned famously at the Gettysburg Address, the death of some soldiers encouraged other soldiers to persevere and ensure the war was not fought in vain. While other soldiers found the sense of loss alienating, increasing their desire to be home among friends and family.

The cost of war in southeastern Ohio as with other regions throughout the nation, was unknowable. There were thousands killed in combat or who died from wounds and disease months and years after the war. The war caused immeasurable pain on the people who fought it as well as those who supported them. The tenor of many letter writers changed once personal pain crept into their experience of war. The pain of sacrifice dripped from the pages of southeastern Ohio’s soldiers and civilians. What seemed as a glorious opportunity to save the Union early in the war grew into a bitterly painful fight to the death from which thousands would not emerge.

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90 Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 20-21.
Conclusion

The themes of *They Fought the War Together* help to explain the multiple points of sustaining relationship between the home and war fronts. The Civil War devastated the world of the people at home in a way that far too seldom do historians explore in the North. The home influences served as a support system for the soldiers amid their war. Taken together, it was evident that the soldiers and civilians relied upon one another to survive and ultimately win the war. This explanation is not to limit other reasons such as industrial and technological success, but it merely contributes to those details with another human element.

Southeastern Ohio’s families like the Benedicts, Browns, Kidwells, Stones, and others experienced an arduous war. These families showed that southeastern Ohio was a unique region in the Civil War. Its proximity to the Confederacy characterized it as a place of mistrust at times. The Confederate raid of John Morgan further entrenched this idea. Yet this analysis also shows the numerous men who fought in a variety of locations throughout the South under the star spangled banner. In that service, with the support of their loved ones, these southeastern Ohioans resisted the connotations of the Noble County draft resisters or the southern sympathizers who aided Morgan. Instead the contested nature on a national scale found itself evident within the confines of southeastern Ohio. Understanding the reciprocal relationship between soldiers and their families shows the necessity of connection to the sustenance of a popular war effort. The correspondence of the people from southeastern Ohio reveals an incessant and difficult struggle.
The point of exchange, in this case letters between families and friends in the context of the Civil War, tells historians much about what was on the minds of the nineteenth century Americans who fought and lived through the war. Examining this correspondence provides insight into the Union war effort in ways that had not been explored before. Family drama, local politics, and the logistics of war were prevalent in numerous pages of letters. But still the overall focus of the war and overwhelming purpose behind their actions permeated their correspondence. Soldiers and their home front associates shared in the sufferings. They encouraged one another to fight, to sustain, and to persevere. From quoting scripture to telling jokes, the people represented here lived lives of distinction not just for the lives that were ended.

The research presented here demonstrates that Civil War soldiers were representatives of their home communities with a direct connection. From letters home to friends on furlough, soldiers in the ranks were able to stay informed about the home front. Likewise, through the same channels, people at home were able to keep track of their soldiers regarding health, welfare, and death throughout the war. The Civil War as evidenced through the lives and stories of these individuals from southeastern Ohio was not fought far off, with a disconnected sense. The battles were in familiar towns. The leaders were people that many common Americans had read about in newspapers. Common American men fought the battles with the support of their loved ones on the home front.

When the soldiers left their communities to fight for the Union army, they in effect took their communities with them. As soldiers corresponded with family or friends
on the home front, they reinforced the communal cultural values of personal honor and integrity. The Civil War was a clash of community structures. The southern charge of fighting for a “way of life” was in no small measure met by an equally unique way of life in the North. The yeomen farmers of southeastern Ohio represented their homes, their families, their churches, and their riverside towns when they fought. They consciously reflected on those identities in their letters back to the home community. Likewise, the people from those home communities were proud of their soldiers and expressed concern, encouragement, and even at times excitement about the war. Without the reciprocal relationship between the soldiers and those at home, the northern way of life may not have had the success that it did in the Civil War. While the Lost Cause has perpetuated the explanation of Union industrial and manpower might, it is important also to remember that in a clash over “ways of life” one prevailed over the other, regardless of the statistical advantages and disadvantages. Historians of the 20th century certainly can attest to the viability of a numerically inferior force prevailing through the examples of other American wars, most significantly that of the Vietnam War. This dissertation does not say enough to prove that the relationship between the home front and the battle front produced Union victory, but it certainly shows an important contribution.

Another conclusion that the dissertation makes is that Morgan’s Raid was more important to the people at home than the soldiers fighting in the war. The soldiers that reflected on the attacks did not seem to react strongly to the assault. Instead, those at home were the ones who expressed frustration with the attack and the war overall. Rather than viewing the path of Morgan’s Raid as trivial Civil War lore, it instead was
evident that it was an extremely panicked moment for the people living in the region. Revisiting the letters of those who survived the raid makes the dots on the map come alive. The gallantry of the Confederate cavalier emerges more evident through the descriptions of those who saw him. When the people of southeastern Ohio described that moment of sheer terror to their soldiers at war, they shared in their sufferings.

Highlighting another locus of home front discord, the dissertation promotes a better understanding of the political relationship between war resisters and soldiers. While it is not surprising that soldiers and peace Democrats were contentious, this research provides evidence for the specific contexts in which they clashed. Showing the violence on the home front and the virulent rhetoric of the soldiers’ words brings the era into a new focus. Understanding the tumultuous relationship between the soldiers and some of the people they fought to defend helps scholars better understand not just the Civil War, but the culture of war more broadly. Families of soldiers not only actively maintained their homes in the absence of an adult male, but also faced regular political attacks either in person or via the local newspapers that questioned the very nature of the war. In sum, these families of soldiers had to fight as well, engaging in heated debates or walking away from potentially volatile situations for the greater good of supporting their soldier at war.

The significance of this dissertation is that it recaptures the memory of those brave Americans who sacrificed so much during that turbulent time in the country’s history. The soldiers and citizens of southeastern Ohio had done their part in helping to put down the rebellion, which guaranteed the indivisibility of the nation.  

*They Fought*
the War Together contributes to our understanding of the symbiotic relationship between
the home front and the battle front during America’s most devastating war. In a sense the
argument presented here redefines that heroism, emphasizing Van Brown’s parents as
historical actors whose role went beyond that of farmer and wife. Instead, these were
people who supported a soldier and grieved his death. By reading their letters and
entering into their world, this dissertation gives readers an opportunity to see the
significance of the Civil War in southeastern Ohio beyond casualties and battlefields; this
was a moment of collective American sacrifice, of contested democracy, and
unprecedented carnage that define a region and a nation.
Map 2: Southeastern Ohio Counties

Image courtesy www.dot.state.oh.us.

Counties included in this study are shaded gray.
Map 3: Southeastern Ohio Cities

Image courtesy www.dot.state.oh.us. City locations added by Gregory R. Jones.
Table 1: Cost of War
*Note: This is a representative sample.

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Data gathered at the National Archives and Records Administration, Regimental Books of the 36th, 73rd, and 92nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiments. RG-94: E112-115 PI-17, Vol. 1 and 7.
Table 2: Occupational Breakdown of Southeastern Ohio Soldiers
*Note: This is a representative sample.

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**Total Overall Soldiers**: 2933
**Percentage of Farmers**: 0.712
**Percentage of Skilled Laborers**: 0.174
Percentage of Merchants 0.014

Data gathered at the National Archives and Records Administration, Regimental Books of the 36th, 73rd, and 92nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiments. RG-94: E112-115 PI-17, Vol. 1 and 7.
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**Total Letters in Study**: 1064
Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Manuscripts
Ohio Historical Society, Columbus Ohio
  Annie Leah Dean Papers
  Catherine Fay Ewing Collection
  Eli Coulson Papers
  Chillicothe Business Directory, FCH 46
  Denius Family Civil War Correspondence
  Fannie E. Ford Letters
  John C. and Washington Ford Collection
  Joseph Hoffhines Collection
  Peyton Polly Case Transcripts
  Nelson Purdum Papers
  Nelson B. Sisson Papers
  Henry Stanberry Papers

Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, Ohio
  Dalyrmple Family Civil War Letters
  Lt. Col. David Dove Collection
  William A. Tall Collection
  Ferguson Hiland Trowbridge Letters

Marietta College Special Collections, Marietta, Ohio
  Civil War Box 1
  Civil War Letters of James Oliver
  Correspondence of George Kidwell
  Samuel H. Putnam Collection

Meigs County Historical Society, Pomeroy, Ohio
  Letters of John M. Benedict

National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC
  Pension Records
  Civil War Regimental Books

Ohio University Special Collections, Mahn Center, Athens, Ohio
  Brown Family Collection
  Henry Hannan Collection
  William McDonald Collection
  Samuel B. Pruden Collection
  Nelson Van Vorhes Collection
Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio
Benjamin F. Stone Collection

Washington County Historical Society, Marietta, Ohio
Andrew Jones Collection, Box 505
James Barker Collection, Box 500
F. P. Cowee Collection, Box 500
Lemon Devol Collection, Box 504
Miscellaneous Civil War, Box 500

Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio
Joseph Buell Family Papers
Matthew Scott Cook Papers
Abel Larkin Papers

**Periodicals**

**National Periodicals** ([www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com))

*American Railway Times*
*Christian Inquirer*
*Dwights American Magazine, and Family Newspaper, for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and Moral and Religious Principles*
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