

2009

# "The latent enmity of Georgia": Sherman's March and its effects on the social division of Georgia

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“THE LATENT ENMITY OF GEORGIA”: SHERMAN’S MARCH AND ITS  
EFFECTS ON THE SOCIAL DIVISION OF GEORGIA

by

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Bachelor of Arts  
Millersville University of Pennsylvania  
2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree in History  
Department of History  
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
August 2009**

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## ABSTRACT

### **“The Latent Enmity of Georgia”: Sherman’s March and its Effects on the Social Division of Georgia**

by

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In September 1864, Union General William T. Sherman’s Savannah Campaign targeted the growing animosity between wealthy and poor Georgians when he proposed that Union forces “arouse the latent enmity of Georgia.” This thesis continues the study of the March to the Sea by examining the effect of Sherman’s campaign as it pertained to the social divisions between Georgians. Sherman’s army alone did not ruin the state’s ability to remain a vital contributor to the war effort, but rather focused upon the already growing social disputes between Georgians over economic contributions, military sacrifice, and political support. Even before Sherman’s army arrived, Governor Joseph E. Brown’s attempts to address the economic and political needs of wealthy Georgians clashed with his efforts to provide relief and support to poor whites. Consequently, perceptions of the state government eroded as Brown continued to resist President Jefferson Davis and the Confederate government’s authority over issues of state defense and militia control. Although the march resulted in significant damage to the Georgia’s infrastructure, the greater effect of the March to the Sea emerged from the aggravation of social and political discord throughout the state and the Confederacy.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In a letter to President Abraham Lincoln on September 17, 1864, General William T. Sherman discussed the plan of action he had recently proposed to two Georgia politicians, serving as representatives of Governor Joseph Brown. Sherman told Lincoln, “I have said to them that some of the people of Georgia are engaged in rebellion . . . Georgia can now save herself from the devastation of war preparing for her, only by withdrawing her quota out of the Confederate Army. . .”<sup>1</sup> By suggesting that only “some of the people” were in rebellion against the Union, Sherman perceived growing tension within the state over support for the Confederacy. As the war continued through its third year, poor whites throughout Georgia faced desperate economic struggles, and support for the war effort diminished under the growing burden for families throughout the state. Sherman’s proposal offered Georgians a chance to remove themselves from the increasingly unpopular war. To close his letter to Lincoln, Sherman wrote, “It would be a magnificent stroke of policy if we could, without surrendering principle or a foot of ground, arouse the latent enmity of Georgia against Davis.”<sup>2</sup>

Although Governor Brown did not accept Sherman’s proposal, the letter to Lincoln provides significant insight into the general’s perceptions of Georgia prior to the Savannah Campaign. From Sherman’s offer and his observations to Lincoln, it is evident that the internal divisions of Georgia influenced Union military strategy as early as the Atlanta Campaign during the summer of 1864. Brown’s actions, along with the conditions of Georgians in the northern counties of the state, created the atmosphere of an

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from William T. Sherman to Abraham Lincoln, September 17, 1865. *Memoirs of William T. Sherman* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 2000), 507.

<sup>2</sup>*Memoirs*, 507.

already divided state being further pressured with direct military confrontations. More importantly, he recognized that this fragile loyalty could be exploited to hinder the larger Confederate war effort. From Sherman's perspective, Georgia's internal divisions between struggling and wealthy families provided the opportunity to attack the economic and military strength of the South, as well as undermine President Jefferson Davis' influence over the individual states of the Confederacy. Sherman's psychological warfare impacted not only the animosity between Georgian state politicians and the Confederate government, but also the resentment between Georgians themselves. Sherman's determination to exploit the social divisions within the state, as well as the Confederacy itself, contributed to the success of the March to the Sea by exacerbating the animosity between wealthy and poor Georgians.

The Southern, as well as Northern, reactions to the March to the Sea provide insights into the social conditions of Georgia during the Civil War. Although attention has been given to Sherman's campaign for its hard war tactics, examining the campaign from the perspective of the Georgians who experienced it exposes the internal divisions between Southerners. In a larger sense, an understanding of Sherman's psychological warfare must consider its effects on the wartime unity of Southerners. By mid-1864 the disproportionate burden on poor Georgians combined with the increasingly tense political relationships of Georgia's state government with Richmond. With the Savannah Campaign, Union forces created an insurmountable obstacle to the already divided state. This thesis demonstrates that Sherman's understanding of the South, as well as the conditions of Georgia leading up to 1864, exposed a weakness that the Union military was able to exploit through hard war tactics.

Until recently, the study of military history consisted primarily of research on military tactics and political actions. In 1991, Joseph T. Glatthaar published an article claiming that military studies, particularly on the American Civil War, benefited from the emergence of the “new” social history. By linking military forces to the “broader themes in society,” Glatthaar stated that historians gained a better understanding of the social and historical trends within the “new military history.”<sup>3</sup> In 2007, Mark Moyer continued Glatthaar’s observations by stating that the field of military history can offer insights into social, cultural, or intellectual history that other fields cannot.<sup>4</sup> Moyer wrote, “For instance, only a historian fluent in military history can properly assess the effects of social divisions on a nation’s ability to defend itself, for only such a historian knows which aspects of military power might be strongly affected by internal divisiveness . . .”<sup>5</sup> By viewing military history from social and cultural angles, the understanding of war and its participants becomes more detailed. By incorporating the social history of Georgians into the narrative of the Savannah Campaign, Sherman’s actions expose and illustrate the growing economic and political disputes within the state.

As Glatthaar expressed in his article, the study of the American Civil War has benefited greatly from the introduction of social and cultural interpretations. Civil War historians have used these methods to further the explanations for the North’s victory and the South’s defeat in 1865. In his book, *The South vs. The South*, William Freehling examines the importance of unionist Southerners throughout the Border States. He argues that the pro-Union whites hindered the Confederate cause by not engaging in

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<sup>3</sup>Joseph T. Glatthaar, “The ‘New’ Civil War History: An Overview,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 115, No. 3 (Jul., 1991), pp. 339-369.

<sup>4</sup>Mark Moyer, “The Current State of Military History,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No.1 (2007), 225-240.

<sup>5</sup> Moyer, 228.

guerrilla warfare and allowing the Union forces to establish military control.<sup>6</sup> Without this military foothold, the Union military would have been forced to invade and conquer the border regions, thereby wearing down military resources and testing the morale of Northerners. By basing his research on the actions of whites in the Border States, Freehling offers an important explanation for the military defeat of the Confederacy. Like Freehling, James McPherson uses the ideas of social and intellectual history to explain the actions of the Civil War. In his study, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865*, McPherson argues that northern and southern soldiers interpreted the ideals of the American Revolution of 1776 in various ways.<sup>7</sup> By examining the ideological motivations behind the war, McPherson offers explanations into the severity and duration of a war that found the Confederacy numerically and militarily outmatched. Both McPherson and Freehling succeed in developing the understanding of the South's eventual defeat beyond more traditional arguments about men and materiel.

With its unique military tactics and its vital importance to the defeat of the Confederacy, the March to the Sea also received attention from the new military history movement. In 1985, Joseph T. Glatthaar provided an important contribution to the study of the Savannah Campaign by examining the march through the experiences of Sherman's soldiers. Glatthaar argues that the hardships endured over three years of warfare motivated Sherman's troops to punish southern civilians. The Southerners "had caused this war and were fully culpable for all the sacrifices and suffering Union soldiers

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<sup>6</sup>William H. Freehling, *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 202.

<sup>7</sup>James McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).



had endured throughout the war.”<sup>8</sup> This reasoning allowed Sherman’s men to justify foraging raids of the Savannah Campaign and South Carolina.

Glatthaar’s research explains the personal experiences behind the march which provides insight into how the campaign was understood and carried out. For example, despite Sherman’s orders, many soldiers did not discriminate between the wealthy and poor civilians.<sup>9</sup> By showing the personal experiences of the Union soldiers, Glatthaar explains how destruction could be continued or rationalized, regardless of the orders from commanding officers. Glatthaar provides a significant contribution to the narrative of Sherman’s march by researching the campaign through the experiences and interpretations of the soldiers. Although his book remains one of the most important studies on the campaign, Glatthaar’s approach has yet to be applied to those on the other side of Sherman’s March, the Southern civilians. His exhaustive research on the Union soldiers, while important, provides little insight into the social conditions facing Georgians. It is time to tell the other side of this story. Glatthaar’s method of using the techniques of social history needs to be employed in a broader interpretation of the campaign.

Mark Grimsley’s study *The Hard Hand of War* places the Savannah Campaign within the larger context of the Union military policy throughout the war. According to Grimsley, the March to the Sea represented a tactic of “hard war.”<sup>10</sup> As the Union military under General Ulysses S. Grant recognized the continuing sacrifices of the war, it became evident that the Confederacy would not be defeated by open warfare on the

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<sup>8</sup>Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman’s Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985) 76.

<sup>9</sup>Glatthaar, 141.

<sup>10</sup>Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-4.

battlefield. Northern victory would require raids and attacks on the economic and industrial capabilities of the South. Grimsley writes, “Grant expected to combine destruction of Southern armies with the destruction of Southern war resources.”<sup>11</sup>

Another important aspect of Grimsley’s interpretation is that it considers the political and social influences on the Union’s military strategy. Under President Lincoln, the military strategy in the early war years emphasized conciliation and a three-way division of the southern population. With pressure from the government and the northern press, military leaders continued to differentiate between Unionist, passive, and secessionist civilians throughout the war.<sup>12</sup> While Grimsley’s study provides a significant contribution to the understanding of how the march fit into the Union policy, as well as how it was shaped by political and social expectations of the North, it ignores the developments of the social tensions within Georgia. Grimsley’s interpretation of Sherman’s campaign attributes the planning to Grant’s understandings of the need for hard war tactics. He views the civilians and state leaders of Georgia as powerless entities, waiting for the Union military to attack, rather than active participants in the development of the state’s war effort. Muting their role in the march’s history, he has little incentive to consider the South’s social conditions. Like Glatthaar, Grimsley contributes an intriguing study that furthers the military narrative, yet still downplays the importance of Georgia’s social tensions.

Recent scholarship on Sherman’s march continues with the emphasis on social and political history, established in the studies by Glatthaar and Grimsley. Anne J. Bailey’s *War and Ruin* provides an interpretation of the march that focuses on the decisions leading into the march, as well as the evolution of Savannah’s place within the war effort.

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<sup>11</sup>Grimsley, 166.

<sup>12</sup>Grimsley, 172.

Bailey argues that for Georgians during the Savannah Campaign, the march represented an episode “unparalleled in their immediate past.”<sup>13</sup> Bailey presents the culture and development of Savannah, arguing that the city’s inhabitants lived in an almost naïve isolation from the war prior to Sherman’s arrival.<sup>14</sup> Bailey’s examination of the social conditions throughout Georgia is important, yet she fails to address the growing social discord that hindered the state from as early as 1860. She relegates most of the social history to the beginning of the study, while the remaining chapters rely on political and military documents to construct a descriptive narrative of the march. Although more examination of Georgia’s social division is needed, Bailey’s work constitutes a study that successfully combines military narrative with an interesting, albeit brief, examination of Georgia’s social history.

Jacqueline Glass Campbell’s *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea* discusses the actions of Sherman’s army after the completion of the Savannah Campaign. Through personal diaries and letters Campbell presents Sherman’s completion of the Savannah Campaign and beginning of the Carolina Campaign through the experiences of civilians, soldiers, and slaves. Declaring that war is “culturally sanctioned violence,” Campbell advances the study of Sherman’s troops and their campaign through the issues of gender, race, and cultural understandings.<sup>15</sup> She credits southern white women for resistance against Sherman’s troops and argues that the destruction to homes and villages allowed women to perceived themselves as “political actors,” similar to their husbands who were

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<sup>13</sup>Anne J. Bailey, *War and Ruin: William T. Sherman and the Savannah Campaign*, (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2003), xiii.

<sup>14</sup>Bailey, 14.

<sup>15</sup>Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 5.

fighting on the battlefield.<sup>16</sup> Campbell offers a fascinating insight into the experiences of poor whites in North Carolina as Sherman's troops entered the state. Viewed as a threat to the social order and as proponents of desertion, the wives of yeomen farmers faced abuse from deserters and conscription officers.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Campbell argues that Sherman's arrival in North Carolina served to solidify resistance against the Union, despite the years of social discontent throughout the state.<sup>18</sup> She attributes most of the credit to Governor Zebulon's ability to inspire civilians through speeches that vilified the Union.<sup>19</sup> Most of her research, however, seems to come from the records of home guard units, various women who habitually chastised desertion in their home villages, and other patriotic civilians. It neglects the growing frustrations of women who faced desperate conditions prior to Sherman's invasion and encountered an even worse situation with the arrival of Union troops in the state. Although her study focuses predominantly on Sherman's troops after the Savannah Campaign, Campbell provides an impressive discussion on the social and cultural conditions of South Carolina and North Carolina in 1865. Through this narrative, the actions and decisions of Sherman's forces can be studied in the broader context of the war. This thesis will begin that process of reexamining the campaign through the social conflicts of Georgia during the Savannah Campaign.

The development of military history studies on Sherman's campaign suggests that the integration of social history into the narratives allows the march to be understood more thoroughly. The studies by Bailey and Campbell offer small insights into the social

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<sup>16</sup>Campbell, 74.

<sup>17</sup>Campbell, 83.

<sup>18</sup>Campbell, 85.

<sup>19</sup>Campbell, 85.

turmoil developing in the Confederacy. Georgia's social divisions, however, still remain a separate discussion for historians. While military studies use the accounts of civilians during the march to support or disprove the severity of Sherman's actions, little discussion is offered on the importance that animosity between slaveholders and nonslaveholders had upon the development and execution of the campaign. Studies on the class divisions within Georgia are few. In his research on the yeoman farmers of the northern counties that constituted the Upcountry, Steven Hahn argues that the war tested the social systems between rich and poor. He writes, "The cause of the Confederacy would bring rich and poor into closer quarters than ever before, demand an unprecedented level of discipline and sacrifice on the part of each, and exact devastating tolls on the battlefield and the home front."<sup>20</sup> Hahn continues by suggesting that the fundamental differences between slaveholders and nonslaveholders over economic systems and personal ideology of secession hindered the war effort. The lack of food supplies and manpower emanated from the animosity between rich and poor Georgians.<sup>21</sup> Hahn concludes his discussion on the war by stating that "The Confederacy 'died' largely under the weight of inherent contradictions and class conflict."<sup>22</sup>

Steven Hahn's study is not the first to attribute the Confederacy's defeat to the failure of interclass unity throughout the South.<sup>23</sup> Two recent studies continue the discussion of class conflict in the South by focusing on Georgia. In 2003, David Williams, Teresa Williams, and David Carlson's study, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War*, examined the

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<sup>20</sup>Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 116.

<sup>21</sup>Hahn, 123.

<sup>22</sup>Hahn, 132.

<sup>23</sup>See also Bell I. Willey, *The Plain People of the Confederacy*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943); Paul Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Richard E. Beringer, et. al *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986).

emergence of class division throughout the war. They argue that by studying Georgia's extensive economic and social diversification, it is possible to see that the Confederacy faced defeat as early as 1860.<sup>24</sup> The exhaustive research in Georgia's local newspapers and correspondence to Governor Brown from struggling whites portrays the image of the Confederacy's strongest manufacturing and agricultural state being weakened from the inside through incompetence by state politicians and ignorance from wealthy planters. Although the contribution made by this research into Georgia's social divisions is impressive, the authors go to great lengths to portray the image of a planting class that cared very little at all for the war effort. Few examples, if any, offer any insight into the ideology of planters who did serve in the war and contributed their economic materials. The study also gives little attention to the Savannah Campaign, offering only a paragraph of discussion into the most significant military event of the war for the state. Like the previously discussed military studies, the research presented in this study clings to one historical field, and fails to give attention to the military events that influenced the state.

In 2005, Mark Wetherington continued the discussion of Georgia's internal divisions by focusing on the lower counties of the Piney Woods region. Wetherington also suggests that the economic and social stratification of the state hindered the war effort. He argues, however, that previous historians of class made the mistake of relegating the war to a conflict over the property of slaveholders and nothing else. To Wetherington, the internal divisions of the state occurred between individuals rather than social classes.<sup>25</sup> By late 1864, the military threat of Sherman's forces caused many regions in

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<sup>24</sup>David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 7.

<sup>25</sup>Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 8.

the state to revert to the sentiments held in 1861. The slave belt towns produced more men than the nonslaveholding regions of the state, whose inhabitants largely remained home or deserted in the early years of the war.<sup>26</sup> Wetherington is successful in his portrayal of the importance that internal division held for the war effort. Unlike the previous study, *Plain Folk's Fight* gives greater agency to yeoman farmers and nonslaveholding whites. In both studies, the internal discord of Georgia presented an insurmountable challenge to the early unification of the state. By November 1864, the dissension created a weakness in the psychological and economic support for the Confederate war effort.

By observing Sherman's campaign within the context of Georgia's social experiences, this thesis presents the march as an attempt to exacerbate an already growing weakness. In combining the military actions of the war with the social developments of the state, the research presented in these chapters offers a shift in perspective. To do so it reconsiders familiar sources. The political correspondence of Governor Brown, military orders of General Sherman, and newspaper reports from throughout the state have been used for previous arguments on the social and military history of Georgia and the Civil War. This thesis reexamines these documents and provides a new understanding of the experiences of Georgians leading into Sherman's campaign. By doing this, Sherman's intentions for the campaign may be compared to the actual events of the march, thereby displaying that Sherman's understanding of social animosity played a vital role in the decision to continue through the state. Due to his descriptive writings, Sherman's memoirs and correspondence provides an important source for understanding life in Georgia prior to the campaign. Southern newspapers offer significant insight into how

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<sup>26</sup>Wetherington, 203.

the state interpreted the invasion and to what extent the discussion of social conflict emerged. Many of these documents, particularly from Sherman's papers, are familiar to the narrative of the war. By engaging them with an eye to class discord, these documents portray the effect Sherman's march created on the development of social animosity in Georgia.

Chapter Two discusses the political disputes between the state government of Georgia and the Confederacy during the war. Governor Joseph Brown's reputation as a strong advocate for state's rights has been already been examined by scholars. However, his arguments with Jefferson Davis throughout the war offer insight into the development of Georgia's social tensions. Brown recognized the division taking place throughout the state during the early debates over secession and worked to provide a unified state by claiming that both slaveholders and nonslaveholders benefited from the protection of slavery. As the war continued, Brown's constant arguing with President Jefferson Davis hindered the state's defenses by complicating the control over state militia units. This strained relationship demoralized Georgians, who felt Brown's attention was too directed towards high-level political arguments and away from more pressing state issues.

Chapter Three examines the internal disputes between poor and wealthy Georgians during the initial years of the war. Throughout Georgia, frustrations emerged over the continuing cotton production of planters despite the growing need for military and civilian aid by 1863. With supplies decreasing and food shortages affecting poor whites, Georgians also faced increased prices on goods from speculators. Although Governor Brown recognized the increasingly desperate economic situation developing throughout the state, the government could do little to provide relief to struggling regions and



counties. By 1864, frustrations over the rising prices and short supplies would convince many poor Georgians that the war required deep sacrifice from them but with little benefit or relief from the planting class. By the beginning of Sherman's Savannah Campaign, the state's disputes over the war and the necessary sacrifices were clearly established.

Chapter Four examines the reasons leading to the decision of the Union army to exploit Georgia's internal dissension. For General William T. Sherman, the Savannah Campaign emerged from his earlier experiences with hard war tactics. While recognizing that the Union forces could damage the South's most industrial state, Sherman also observed the potential destruction that might result from exploiting the internal discord throughout the state. Sherman's understanding of the situation developing among Georgians by 1864 suggests that the psychological targets of his campaign went beyond the basic fear of invasion and destruction. A Union army foraging on the Georgia home front placed a difficult burden on wealthy planters and simultaneously created insurmountable difficulties for poor whites. The chapter continues the discussion of the social tensions within Georgia by observing its role within the Union military policy under General Sherman.

In Chapter Five, the effects of Sherman's Savannah Campaign demonstrate that the previous weaknesses developed into disastrous problems for the Georgia home front. The foraging done by the Union Army, while leaving many planting families in difficult situations, created dire conditions for poor families, mostly through direct foraging and confiscating food, as well as through the lack of relief efforts that emerged after the campaign. Many wealthy planters continued to plant cotton, and wealthier regions of the

state criticized desperate whites for appealing to the Union forces for aid. The desperate situation on the home front resulted in desertions from the Confederate armies and the formation of guerilla and unionist groups in the northern and southwestern regions of the state. By early 1865, many Georgians blamed the state government and Governor Brown for its inability to act. The social divisions from the early years of the war could no longer be ignored. The social cohesion that leaders like Brown worked to establish never materialized, and by 1864 provided the Union military with a vital weakness to exploit the Confederacy.

For Sherman, the “latent enmity” of Georgia appeared to come from two levels of contention. Initially, the internal frustrations between Georgians from as early as 1860 offered the Union army the immediate goal of exploiting the already broken home front. Sherman’s application of psychological warfare not only created fear throughout the state but also intensified the growing animosity for poor whites against the wealthy elites. In a larger sense, however, the discord also applied to Georgia’s role in the Confederacy. Governor Joseph Brown’s strained relationship with the Confederacy created a weakness that Sherman hoped to take advantage of by bringing the war to the defenseless state. The March to the Sea in 1864 represented not just an invasion to destroy the South’s most important supplier of men and materiel, but an attack on the social and political weaknesses of the Confederacy.

## CHAPTER 2

### “THOU CANST SAY WE DID IT!”: EARLY POLITICAL DEBATES AND THE SOCIAL DIVISIONS OF GEORGIA

Governor Joseph E. Brown’s decision, in 1863, to fill unit vacancies rather than leave the decisions to President Jefferson Davis, became the latest in a series of debates between Brown and the Confederate government over military authority. General Cobb hinted at the devastating effect of Brown’s argumentative behavior when he ordered Brown to “issue no commissions to fill vacancies unless they are forwarded through these headquarters; otherwise you destroy all military rule and discipline and demoralize the troops under my command.”<sup>27</sup> Cobb warned that “I need not say to you the course you propose to pursue will bring the Confederate and State authorities into direct conflict, and endangers, if it does not destroy, the efficiency of the State Guard service.”<sup>28</sup> Between 1860 and 1864, the Georgia governor continually resisted and argued with Confederate leaders over matters of state defense, militia control, and weapons contributions. While attempting to preserve his state’s control over its soldiers, Joseph Brown ultimately hindered Georgia’s ability to provide the Confederacy with military support. Although Brown considered his emphatic support of state’s rights to be beneficial, the constant struggle between the state and national government damaged the Confederacy’s ability to supply its troops and eventually weakened Georgia’s state defense in the latter years of the war.

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<sup>27</sup>Letter from Howell Cobb to Joseph E. Brown, October 18, 1863, *The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia: Volume III*. (Chase P. Byrd, State Printer: Atlanta, Georgia, 1910), 425.

<sup>28</sup>Letter from Howell Cobb to Joseph E. Brown, October 18, 1863, *The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia: Volume III*. (Chas P. Byrd, State Printer: Atlanta, Georgia, 1910), 425.

By contesting Confederate authority over Georgia's military contributions to the broader war effort, Brown exemplified the internal problems of developing Confederate nationalism. Closer examination of Governor Brown's resistance to the national government adds to our understanding of the complex events that contributed to the Confederate defeat in 1865. Scholars have shown that the sentiments of southern nationalism remained fragile throughout the war. In 1978, Paul D. Escott argued that the failure of the Confederacy to establish a unified sense of identity fell on Jefferson Davis.<sup>29</sup> Escott argued that because of Davis' inability to work effectively with members of the Confederate Congress or state governments, Davis isolated and demoralized southern political leaders, as well as southerners on the home front and in the armies. Cobb's letter, however, demonstrates that the demoralizing nature of the conflict between Brown and Davis resulted from the decisions of the state government, as well.

Another interpretation of Confederate nationalism argues that the southern states possessed little, if any, nationalistic pride and as the burdens of war grew heavier, the support for a centralized government failed to emerge.<sup>30</sup> The government under Davis represented the central government that many state political leaders hoped to avoid with the newly formed Confederacy. As the conflict continued, Davis' attempts to facilitate the necessary political and military decisions only convinced state leaders that their fears of a strong central government were being realized. This interpretation appears to explain the conflicts between Brown and Davis, but it fails to consider the internal economic and social struggles influencing the Confederacy on the state level. In her study, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, Drew Gilpin Faust argues that the

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<sup>29</sup>Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

<sup>30</sup>Emory Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

Confederacy attempted to establish a sense of nationalism by “incorporating both the powerful and the comparatively powerless into a negation of the terms under which all might work together for the Confederate cause.”<sup>31</sup> According to Faust, the war forced Southerners to address previously ignored issues of wealth and social status. With the war, however, poor Southerners experienced increasingly disproportionate burdens that brought forth the realization that economic and social hierarchies were not as strong as previously thought. As the sacrifices of poor whites continued to swell, the political arguments for the benefits of slavery increasingly failed to convince poor Southerners of the costs. Ultimately, the Confederacy faced the dilemma of producing class interests that were synonymous with national interests.<sup>32</sup>

In order to explore how the political disputes between the state and national government in Richmond developed, it is important to consider the social developments within Georgia during the early years of the war. Brown’s actions demonstrate that the political leadership of Georgia recognized clear divisions in the population’s support for the war. The war needed to be portrayed as a beneficial endeavor to all Georgians, despite the difference in sacrifice and potential gain. While he attempted to garner support among wealthy Georgians by disputing Confederate authority over conscription, officer enrollment, and troop deployment, Brown developed frustrations among the poor whites of Georgia, who witnessed increasingly favorable conditions for the rich. Ultimately, Brown’s disputes succeeded only in delaying troop movements and withholding precious weaponry for the Confederacy. His political decisions hindered the involvement of the Confederate military in the state’s defense and demoralized the poor

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<sup>31</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 7.

<sup>32</sup>Faust, 16.

whites of Georgia, who viewed the governor as being focused on political disputes rather than the defense of the state. Because of the political arguments put forth by Governor Brown, by late 1864 Sherman's forces encounter a state that possessed little defense and a demoralized population.

The research in this chapter adds to the understanding of social animosity in Georgia by showing that morale within the state decreased as the disputes between the state and national government hindered state defense. Although the disputes between Brown and the national government, as well as between Brown and the state legislature, have been examined in prior scholarship, the arguments over political authority offer a new way to examine the social make-up of Georgia. The debates about secession, Brown's arguments with Richmond, and the failure to coordinate early military actions increased disappointment and frustration with the state government. Several regions of the state offered serious opposition to possibility of secession as early as 1859; the state government needed to unify Georgians at the beginning of the war.<sup>33</sup> With the attention of politicians going towards the establishment of new national policies and preparing for defense, the efforts to develop social unity suffered.<sup>34</sup> In Georgia, isolation from the main theatres of the war offered a temporary reprieve for the state. As Sherman's forces advanced in 1864, however, the failure of Brown and the state government in Milledgeville became obvious.

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<sup>33</sup>For studies on the development of Georgia's social divisions, see David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); also see, Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>34</sup>Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), 24.

Political division in Georgia emerged before the state seceded from the Union. During debates in the capital of Milledgeville, representatives continued to disagree over whether to approve a call for secession. On November 13, 1860, Robert Toombs urged the legislature to avoid any further delay and approve the secession ordinances immediately. Claiming that “nothing but ruin will follow delay,” Toombs anxiously tried to convey the urgency for quick action.<sup>35</sup> The following evening, Alexander Stephens delivered an address calling for a sense of honor and preservation. A supporter of continued unionist efforts, Stephens declared, “Whatever fate is to befall this country, let it never be laid to the charge of the people of the South, and especially to the people of Georgia, that we were untrue to our national engagements.”<sup>36</sup> This was soon followed by a near riot as secessionists hurried to take the podium in response to Stephens. Anti-secessionists, known throughout Georgia as “cooperationists,” were satisfied with the success of Stephens’s speech, as well as a similar message delivered by Benjamin Hill. According to historian William Freehling, this early success became highly detrimental to the Unionist cause because it galvanized supporters for secession, who claimed that the dilemma of northern superiority could not be solved through passive resistance.<sup>37</sup>

The debates show that Georgia remained intensely divided over the idea of secession going into 1861. For Governor Joseph Brown, the political divisions symbolized a separation of social groups that needed to be unified if the state was to secede successfully. Originally a Democratic lawyer from northern Georgia, Brown published a

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<sup>35</sup>John D. Fowler, *The Confederate Experience reader: Selected Documents and Essays*. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 92.

<sup>36</sup>Alexander Stephens *Speech before the Legislature of Georgia. Delivered at Milledgeville, November 14, 1860*. As found in William Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds. *Secession Debated: Georgia’s Showdown in 1860*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). pp. 54.

<sup>37</sup>William Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds. *Secession Debated: Georgia’s Showdown in 1860*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), xix.

response to Alexander Stephens' speech. Popular with poor whites because of his promises of economic development, and with plantation owners because of the protection of slavery and state's rights, he declared that resistance against Republican control needed to be solidified:<sup>38</sup>

We all, rich and poor, have a common enemy. It is no time to be wrangling about old party lines. Our common enemy, the Black Republican Party, is united and triumphant. Let us all unite.<sup>39</sup>

Brown continued by warning against the dangers attendant to the abolition of slavery, arguing that the "poor, honest laborers of Georgia can never consent to see slavery abolished, and submit to all the taxation, vassalage, low wages, and downright degradation, which must follow."<sup>40</sup> For the Governor, all Georgians possessed a vested interest in protecting the current labor system. By appealing to the social changes that abolition would bring, Brown's speech portrays the dilemma that faced secessionist leaders throughout the South. Political leaders needed to develop a sense of unity against the Union while convincing poor whites to sacrifice for the preservation of an economic system that favored wealthy slaveholders- but potentially offered the possibility of social advancement for nonslaveholding whites. The General Assembly eventually approved a bill authorizing the election of delegates for January 2, 1861, with a convention to be held on January 16.

For many Georgians, the decision to hold a convention only intensified divisions throughout the state. By early 1861 secessionist supporters still lacked the majority needed to carry the convention. Cooperationists throughout Georgia faced intense

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<sup>38</sup>Wetherington, 61.

<sup>39</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, December 11, 1860.

<sup>40</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, December 11, 1860.



scrutiny from local newspapers.<sup>41</sup> On January 14, 1861, the *Macon Daily Telegraph* published an article suggesting that cooperationists submit to the overwhelming majority of Georgians who favored secession. The article asked “Cooperationists of Georgia, will you not heed these suggestions, and let the Empire State of the South, in her convention next Wednesday, stand as a unit on the great question of Independence? Our cause is one in the same, and so let our action be.”<sup>42</sup> Many sections of the state, however, continued to resist the calls for southern independence. Another article from Upson County, located in western Georgia, claimed that any warfare resulting from secession would cause little guilt among the citizens of Upson. The article declared:

If the demon of civil war is to ravage our fields only to fertilize them with blood—we know our Upson Delegates will be able, at the last dread account, to stand up with clean hands and pure hearts and exclaim through no chattering teeth from coward consciences:--‘*Thou canst say we did it!*’”<sup>43</sup>

As the convention drew closer, Brown continued to emphasize the importance that slavery held for both slaveholders and nonslaveholding Georgians. On December 7, he delivered another address demonstrating his unyielding support for the secessionist movement. In it, Brown displayed many of the qualities and ideas that would characterize his positions as governor throughout the Civil War. Referring to President Lincoln and the Republican Party as “our enemies,” Brown stated that the election only promoted the rise of northern unity against southern rights. The institution of slavery was in imminent danger, and the elimination of slavery would only harm the social fabric of the state. Brown suggested that freed blacks would become socially and economically desperate, resulting in the hindrance of white society. He wrote, “They [freed slaves],

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<sup>41</sup>David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man’s War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 13.

<sup>42</sup>*The Macon Daily Telegraph*, “Three Cheers for Hardeman,” January 14, 1861.

<sup>43</sup>*Thomaston Upson Pilot*, February 2, 1861.

too, must become tenants, with the poor white people for they would not be able to own lands. A large portion of them would spend their time in idleness and vice, and would live by stealing, robbing, and plundering.”<sup>44</sup> Brown’s statements continually referred to the decline of social morality that would result from freed slaves continuing throughout the South.

By late 1860, as movement for secession increased, the hesitancy by Georgia’s politicians became apparent throughout the South. States with strong secessionist movements, such as Mississippi and Alabama, sent representatives to every southern state.<sup>45</sup> To quell cooperationist groups, particularly in Georgia and North Carolina, secession commissioners were sent in November and December with the purpose of persuading the remaining politicians who questioned secession as a viable option. William L. Harris, who had been sent by the governor of Mississippi to speak to the divided Georgia legislature, championed the cause of secession. A former Georgian, Harris was known for his ability as an orator and was considered by many to be the authority in creating support for secession. On Monday, December 17, Harris spoke to the Georgia General Assembly. He referenced the numerous “atrocities” committed by the Northern government, and described the current discrepancies with the United States government, including a conspiracy to change the racial hierarchy of southern society by including blacks. Northern abolitionist groups, he observed, felt empowered with the recent election of Abraham Lincoln and were planning not only to abolish slavery, but also promote equality among southern whites and freed slaves. He proclaimed, “Our

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<sup>44</sup>Joseph E. Brown, “Letter to A.H.Colquitt. et.al., December 7, 1860,” in *The Federal Union (Milledgeville Weekly)*. As found in *Secession Debated*. (New York, 1992), 152.

<sup>45</sup>Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War*. (Charlottesville, 2001), 18.

fathers made this a government for the white man, rejecting the negro, as an ignorant, inferior, barbarian race, incapable of self-government, and not, therefore, entitled to be associated with the white man upon terms of civil, political, or social equality.”<sup>46</sup>

According to descriptions from the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, the Assembly received the message with great enthusiasm.<sup>47</sup>

Although regions of the state remained unconvinced of the need to secede, Harris’s speech embodied a growing tension developing between whites throughout the state. Heightening this tension, and raising the volume on urgent calls for secession, was the threat of slave uprising. Beginning in October 1860, reports of slave plots within the plantation sections of the state increased.<sup>48</sup> Josiah Hilsman, the head of a local investigative committee in Hickory Grove, Georgia, wrote to the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, describing an incident in which a Pennsylvania native attempted to inspire local slaves to revolt. According to Hilsman, “With regard to the whole event, no regular plans were formed, no active demonstrations were made, and though mischief was *manifestly* intended, all was happily prevented by an accidental discovery.”<sup>49</sup> The article, although stating that nothing occurred in regards to a slave uprising, served as a warning of the precarious situation throughout the state. Lynch mobs formed in Savannah and attacked freed blacks, slaves, and even poor whites accused of encouraging revolts. One free black, Joseph W. Ribero, was whipped twenty-eight times by a mob for apparently

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<sup>46</sup>Address of William L. Harris, commissioner from Mississippi, to the Georgia General Assembly, Dec. 17, 1860. As found in Appendix, Document 1 of *Apostles of Disunion*.

<sup>47</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, December 19, 1860.

<sup>48</sup>Clarence L. Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia*. (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1986), 43.

<sup>49</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, November 16, 1860.

convincing slaves to revolt on the day of Lincoln's inauguration.<sup>50</sup> The fear of slave insurrection served as a catalyst for the argument that secession was the only means of preserving public safety.

Although the anxiety about slave revolts increased dramatically, citizens in the remote areas of the state remained unconvinced that secession was a necessity. Anti-secession rallies were held in the northern and southwestern portions of the state, including Fayette, Gordon, Chattooga, Talbot, and Meriwether counties.<sup>51</sup> For poor whites in these regions, secession symbolized a defense against the loss of property and wealth for slaveholders, rather than the entire white population. This realization coincided with a change in the way supporters articulated their defense of slavery. In an article from the *Macon Daily Telegraph* on January 18, 1861, the movement to oppose slavery was criticized for its inability to cooperate with the secession fervor. The article suggested that "Surely they [anti-secessionists] need not be told that since secession is a measure settled, their interests, along with ours, lie in making it a strong a movement as possible."<sup>52</sup> The language of the article shows that two definite groups emerged by early 1861 and that public perceptions of secession differed over the economic and political interests of Georgians.

Despite the rise in anxiety over possible slave revolts, the belief that poor whites fought to preserve the racial hierarchy is difficult to completely justify in Georgia's economically and socially diverse population. Historian Clarence Mohr suggests that,

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 43. In *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia, 1750-1860*, Julia Smith suggests that the threat and occurrences of slave insurrections were far greater during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With an emphasis on new factors such as religion and healthcare, acquired by slaveholders from contemporary journals, the overt resistance from slaves decreased. Smith's assertions seem questionable, however, since she offers this very broad assumption to only the coastal regions of the state and with little factual support. (Smith, 192-193)

<sup>51</sup>Williams, 13.

<sup>52</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, January 18, 1861.

beginning in 1860, there was a shift from the consideration of slavery as an economic vehicle to one of scientific significance for the continuation of social norms.<sup>53</sup> Freed blacks and slaves were considered racially inferior, socially inept, and detrimental to the continuation of decent society. With this scientific “evidence”, Mohr argues that the idea of secession effectively engaged working-class whites by appealing to the possible horrors of introducing an inferior race into society. However, Mark Wetherington argues that 51% of the common folk of southwestern Georgia voted for secessionist delegates only after careful consideration of economic and personal situations.<sup>54</sup> Other poor whites agreed with Hinton Helper’s 1857 book, *The Impending Crisis of the South*, in which he argued that slavery held down wages for working-class whites and eliminated economic progress for the South.<sup>55</sup> Although fears over slave insurrections did produce an increase in secessionist attitudes, poor whites in Georgia remained unconvinced and hesitated to vote for secession in order to defend the racial hierarchy.

As Governor Brown’s correspondence with other southern politicians shows, he recognized the opposition that secession faced from groups of Georgians. In a letter to John Gill Shorter, a commissioner from Alabama, Brown acknowledged the presence of possible anti-secession sentiments throughout the state. He observed:

While many of our most patriotic and intelligent citizens in both States have doubted the propriety of immediate secession, I feel quite confident that recent

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<sup>53</sup>Mohr., 47.

<sup>54</sup>Wetherington, 46.

<sup>55</sup>Hinton Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* (New York: A.B. Burdick, 1857); In *Plain Folk in a Rich Man’s War*, Williams discusses the reaction of several Georgians in the late 1840s and 1850s against slavery. Further discussion is also found in William Barney *Secessionist Impulse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

developments have dispelled those doubts from the minds of most men who have, till within the last few days, honestly entertained them.<sup>56</sup>

The passing of another ordinance of secession, Brown went on to suggest, would aid in the belief that the “Black Republican” party of the North under Lincoln will prove fatal to the continuation of state’s rights. Brown warned that “other Southern State should not be deceived to trusting to such a government in future.”<sup>57</sup> Later, Brown expressed his enthusiastic support for the decision of the Alabama state government to organize a convention to approve secession. Brown wrote, “I trust that Alabama will not hesitate, but will act promptly and independently, relying, as I know she may, upon the cordial cooperation of Georgia in every hour of trial.”<sup>58</sup> Even in Brown’s attempts to glorify the passage of the secession ordinances throughout the South, the very real prospect of incomplete political support continued to threaten the South.

Georgia voters decided upon delegates to the secession convention on January 2, 1861, and continued to display an obvious division over the idea of secession. During the delegate election, anti-secessionists controlled the popular vote by a count of 42,474 against the 41,717 votes in support of separation.<sup>59</sup> While the popular vote reflected a significant resistance to secession, the results of the elected delegates portrayed a different idea. Officials in twenty-eight counties conspired to change their votes against the initial platform for which they were elected. While less than a third of the population of Georgia owned slaves, eighty-seven percent of the delegates in Milledgeville were

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<sup>56</sup>Letter from Governor Joseph E. Brown to John Gill Shorter, January 5, 1861, in *Official Correspondence of Governor Joseph E. Brown, 1861-1865, Inclusive*, Atlanta, GA: C.P. Byrd State Printer, 1910, pp. 746

<sup>57</sup>Letter from Governor Joseph E. Brown to John Gill Shorter, January 5, 1861.

<sup>58</sup>Letter from Governor Joseph E. Brown to John Gill Shorter, January 5, 1861.

<sup>59</sup>David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson. *Plain Folk in a Rich Man’s War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia*. (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2002), 15.

slaveholders.<sup>60</sup> For these delegates, the economic and social benefits of secession outweighed any consideration for the non slaveholding population. On January 18, 1861, the ordinance for secession was passed by a vote of 208 to 89.<sup>61</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust argues that because southern politics rested in the “carefully balanced equilibrium” between slavery and widespread prosperity, “many ruling-class Southerners anticipated strategic advantages in challenging this equilibrium on behalf of their own particular political goals.”<sup>62</sup> With the states facing drastic changes, both politically and socially, secession conventions provided wealthy leaders with the opportunity to establish a Confederate nation based on their economic and political agendas.

Despite the divisions leading into the convention, Georgia needed to prepare for the possible conflict with Union military forces. Initially, the Georgia state government instituted military preparations for the state. While the State Assembly and Governor Brown disagreed over economic affairs, both parties acknowledged the importance of maintaining Georgia’s military defenses. In late 1860, before the vote for secession, Brown authorized the state to raise ten thousand troops for the state militia. The General Assembly also appropriated \$1 million for military defense spending.<sup>63</sup> During this time, Brown established a powerful role in the formation and control of the state militia units. Brown selected Henry C. Wayne as the state’s adjutant and inspector general. Three separate state armies were established and strategically placed throughout the state.<sup>64</sup> As historians William Scaife and William Bragg suggest, Brown’s interest in the early

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>62</sup>Faust, 34.

<sup>63</sup>Parks, 123.

<sup>64</sup>Scaife, 3. These forces were named the Georgia Army; the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Georgia Volunteers; and the Georgia State Troops. As Scaife states, these forces largely represented Brown’s early interest in obtaining high recruiting numbers for the state.

formation of the state's defense allowed him to exercise his control over state's rights and power. By involving himself in the early organization of the state militia, Brown established a leadership role that would be tested as Confederate military needs increased throughout the war.

The first major issue to confront Brown's authority as the commander of Georgia's militia, and in a larger sense the role of state's rights, was the question over the authority of military operations. On March 1, 1861 Confederate Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker described the latest measure passed by the Confederate Congress. Walker informed Brown that Confederate President Jefferson Davis was now "authorized and directed to assume control of all military operations in every State. . ." <sup>65</sup> The act stated in several sections that direct military authority, including the troops, arms, and ammunition produced within the states, fell under the control of Davis.

Despite a perceived usurpation of power, Brown agreed to the government's request to protect against the Union forts on the coastline. Having been ordered by the General Assembly to organize two regiments for the state's defense, he immediately sent the newly enlisted troops to Fort Pulaski and Pensacola. <sup>66</sup> Although Brown supplied the regiments to Walker, he sought to ensure that the regiments would continue to operate with the officers he had selected. According to Brown, the soldiers who enlisted in the state's militia units did so with the understanding that state appointed officers would be given to the regiments. <sup>67</sup> He complained to Walker that, "I cannot, in justice to the

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<sup>65</sup> Act of Confederate Congress, February 28, 1861, as found in Letter from L.P. Walker to Joseph E. Brown, March 1, 1861, in *Official Correspondance of Joseph E. Brown, 1861-1865, Inclusive*, Atlanta, GA: C.P. Byrd State Printer, 1910, pp. 746.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from L.P. Walker to Joseph E. Brown, March 9, 1861, in *Official Correspondance of Joseph E. Brown, 1861-1865, Inclusive*, Atlanta, GA: C.P. Byrd State Printer, 1910

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Joseph E. Brown to L.P. Walker, March 12, 1861, in *Official Correspondance of Joseph E. Brown, 1861-1865, Inclusive*, Atlanta, GA: C.P. Byrd State Printer, 1910, pp. 746.



privates that have enlisted, tender the regiments unless they are received with the officers I have appointed. . .”<sup>68</sup> While the War Department did accept these regiments, the rejection of several lists of state officers, many without any troops or formal regiments for service, angered Brown.<sup>69</sup> After sending another three thousand troops on April 8 to Pensacola, Brown informed Secretary Walker that, “Georgia will at all times be ready to do her part, but she will insist on having her rights and wishes respected when she is claiming the recognition of a principle of justice to her troops, as well as of obvious propriety.”<sup>70</sup> While still supplying the Confederacy with regiments, the perceived infringements on Georgia’s rights reinforced Brown’s concern over potential abuses by the national government.

With the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, concerns over the coastal defense along the shores of Savannah provided another reason for Brown to insist that troops remain in the state. After fulfilling another request for 3,000 troops, Brown wrote a letter to Secretary Walker, describing the urgent situation facing wealthy Georgians. Brown declared that “There are a vast number of negroes along the coast, and there are several inlets where the vessels of the enemy can enter without hindrance and carry off this kind of property in large quantities . . . If you will make the requisition, I will furnish the troops promptly.”<sup>71</sup> For Brown, the presence of slaves and property for wealthy Georgians justified the use of immediate military action, with little argument over troop authority. He continued by reminding Walker that “I have met promptly every

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid, 746.

<sup>69</sup>Joseph H. Parks, “States Rights in a Crisis: Governor Joseph E. Brown vs. President Jefferson Davis,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb., 1966), pg. 4.

<sup>70</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to L.P. Walker, April 11, 1861, in *Official Correspondance of Joseph E. Brown, 1861-1865, Inclusive*, Atlanta, GA: C.P. Byrd State Printer, 1910.

<sup>71</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to L.P. Walker, May 4, 1861 in *The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia: Volume III*. (Chas P. Byrd, State Printer: Atlanta, Georgia, 1910), 74.

requisition made on me for troops for the defense of our cause in other States. . .” Brown also sent the letter to Alexander Stephens and Howell Cobb in an effort to convince the Confederate government of the dangers facing the Georgian coast.<sup>72</sup> Walker eventually responded by extending the troops under General Lawton towards the Savannah coastline but withheld major reinforcements.

The early decisions of Joseph Brown display the untested role of state’s rights within the new Confederacy. The immediate issue of war with the Union influenced Jefferson Davis in his decision to engage all executive authority in order to solidify political control and military defense.<sup>73</sup> By establishing his role early in the war, Davis created concern among state’s rights proponents, who feared the Confederate government developing the same abuses as the United States. As the war continued, further military needs became more difficult to meet as critics of Richmond feared for their state’s autonomy.<sup>74</sup> For Brown, the military isolation of Georgia allowed him to exercise greater opposition against Davis. This opposition, however, hindered military operations in the initial years of the war and complicated Georgia’s ability to obtain economic and military support by late 1864.

As Brown continued to resist national authority over Georgia’s military contributions, the Confederacy struggled to develop the military in response to the impending conflict. Another act, approved by the Confederate Congress on May 8, 1861, granted the President the power to organize, develop, and train militia units without a formal request

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<sup>72</sup>Joseph H. Parks, *Joseph E. Brown of Georgia*. (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, 1977), 144.

<sup>73</sup>Escott, 54.

<sup>74</sup>Charles Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 160. See also, Beringer, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, pg. 24 – 30.

to the state. In a letter to Secretary Walker, Brown regarded the act as a “very dangerous infringement of State rights.”<sup>75</sup> The numerous military units that Georgia provided led Governor Brown to declare that the Confederate government had no authority to claim control over state militia affairs.<sup>76</sup> To combat the requisition of his troops, Brown issued a proclamation stating that Georgia regiments could not leave the state with arms and ammunition previously reserved for the militia. Brown insisted that “I can in no degree increase dispatch in organizing regiments, as you have ordered from the Augusta Arsenal to Virginia all the new weapons, with which, I think Georgia troops should have been armed.”<sup>77</sup> Even Robert E. Lee, recently placed in command of the arriving units in Richmond, urged Brown to provide weapons after noticing that “many of the Volunteer companies from Your State have arrived at Richmond without arms.”<sup>78</sup> Despite the urgent situation facing the newly formed Confederacy in 1861, Brown’s concern over the authority of Georgia’s troops and supplies took precedence.

Brown’s message to the General Assembly on November 6, 1861, depicted the growing concerns he had about the government in Richmond. According to the Confederate Constitution, Brown argued, the control and selection of regular officers is “appointed by the government under whose authority it is raised.” With the state militia, however, “the same unrestrained power is not granted.”<sup>79</sup> Brown justified this reasoning by describing the possible dangers that might arise from an executive possessing

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<sup>75</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to L.P. Walker, May 17, 1861, in *Official Correspondance of Joseph E. Brown, 1861-1865, Inclusive*, Atlanta, GA: C.P. Byrd State Printer, 1910.

<sup>76</sup>See also: Charles Rable, *The Confederate Republic*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 282; William R. Scaife *Joe Brown’s Pets: The Georgia Militia, 1861-1865*. (Macon, 2004).

<sup>77</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to L.P. Walker, May 17, 1861.

<sup>78</sup>Letter from Robert E. Lee to Joseph E. Brown, May 26, 1861, in *The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia: Volume III*. (Chas P. Byrd, State Printer: Atlanta, Georgia, 1910), 89.

<sup>79</sup>Governor’s Message to the Georgia General Assembly, November 6, 1861. As accessed through “Document South Collection, University of North Carolina. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>, 12.

complete control over a country's armed forces. In times of political and economic chaos, civilians would submit to political and military leadership. The executive would therefore have a, "fearful advantage over those who might attempt to prevent the accomplishment of his designs."<sup>80</sup> Brown greatly feared the commissioning of officers by the President, again without the formal approval of the state executive.<sup>81</sup> Brown argued:

While the States have delegated to Congress the power of organizing, arming and disciplining the Militia, and of governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the Confederacy, they have *expressly reserved* to themselves the *appointment of officers*, and have therefore expressly denied to Congress the right to confer that power on the President or any other person.<sup>82</sup>

Brown continued by describing the perceived dangers facing the state. He attributed the naval blockade and the military invasions in Virginia to Lincoln's desire to punish Southerners. Because of these perceived attacks, Brown suggested that, "Our lives, our liberties, our wives, our children, our property, our all, are at stake in this contest."<sup>83</sup>

Brown also stated that the defenses around the state needed to be improved, and Confederate resources were not being given. As early as 1861, he proclaimed that since the Confederate government failed to provide adequate support, "I am of opinion that the State will be compelled in a very great degree to take her own defences into her own hands . . ."<sup>84</sup> For Brown, frustration emerged over the constant supplies and contributions

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<sup>80</sup>Governor's Message to the Georgia General Assembly, November 6, 1861 15.

<sup>81</sup>Governor's Message to the Georgia General Assembly. November 6, 1861. pg 12. Prior to Brown's critique of Item 16, Section 8, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Article of the Constitution of the Confederate States of America, he acknowledges that the Constitution is taken largely from the United States counterpart, yet improved in several areas. His overall attitude is that the new Confederate Constitution is, "in successful operation and is maintaining itself with great ability both in the Cabinet and in the field."

<sup>82</sup>Governor's Message to the Georgia General Assembly, November 6, 1861. 13. The italicized words are emphasized from the original document's font. Grammar and punctuation was also replicated.

<sup>83</sup>Governor's Message to the Georgia General Assembly, November 6, 1861. 11.

<sup>84</sup>Governor's Message to the Georgia General Assembly. November 6, 1861. 18.

from the state but a perceived lack of effort from Richmond in promoting the state's defenses.

For Brown, the 1862 Conscription Act symbolized an even greater abuse of power by President Davis. With the expiration of one-year enlistments threatening to drain the southern armies of vital manpower, the Confederate Congress ordered all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five to serve for three years.<sup>85</sup> An article in the *Richmond Examiner* praised Davis and the Confederate Congress for dealing with the military necessity before desperate events forced the action, suggesting that "It is eminently proper that the regiments now in the field be filled up before new ones are formed."<sup>86</sup> Brown sent Davis an immediate response, claiming that the state had filled the required number of regiments and weapons. He wrote, "The Conscription Act not only puts it in the power of the Executive of the Confederacy to disorganize her [Georgia's] troops . . . but, also, places it in his power to destroy her State Government by disbanding her law-making power."<sup>87</sup> In several letters between April and July 1862, Brown continued his defense of the unconstitutionality of the act. By the end of the debate, Davis claimed that "I cannot share the alarm and concern about State rights which you so evidently feel, but which to me seem quite unfounded."<sup>88</sup>

Beginning in 1861, the political actions and reputations of Georgia politicians convinced many in the Confederacy that the state, despite its impressive industrial and economic output, provided weak support for the cause. In May 1861, Howell Cobb informed his wife that "there is a fair prospect of a quarrel between President Davis and

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<sup>85</sup>James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1988), 430.

<sup>86</sup>*Richmond Enquirer*, "Increasing Our Military," September 5, 1862.

<sup>87</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to Jefferson Davis, April 22, 1862.

<sup>88</sup>Letter from Jefferson Davis to Joseph E. Brown, July 10, 1862.

our *worthy* Joe Brown. The latter is trying to ride the high horse about certain acts of Congress which take out of his hands all control of the Georgia troops.”<sup>89</sup> Cobb’s sarcastic remarks show that even in early 1861, Brown’s reputation as a political hindrance to the Confederacy already established itself in the opinions of southern leaders. Later, on November 30, 1862 John Beauchamp Jones, a clerk for the Confederate government in Richmond, wrote in his diary about the election of Hershel V. Johnson, a unionist from Georgia, to the Senate. Jones commented that “The election of Graham, Confederate State Senator in North Carolina, and of H. V. Johnson in Georgia, causes some uneasiness. These men were not original secessionists, and have been the objects of aversion, if not of proscription. . .”<sup>90</sup> Jones also noted the growing frustrations developing, not just in Georgia but throughout the Confederacy. He continued in his entry to admit that “From all sections of the Confederacy complaints are coming in that the military agents of the bureaus are oppressing the people; and the belief is expressed by many, that a sentiment is prevailing inimical to the government itself.”<sup>91</sup> Jones’ observations show that throughout the Confederacy, frustrations towards the government in Richmond and its military officers surfaced. In addition to the widespread reports of animosity developing as a result of the Confederate officers, Jones acknowledged the election of men from Georgia caused uneasiness because of their reputations as being hesitant supporters of secession.

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<sup>89</sup>Letter from Howell Cobb to wife, May 18, 1861, in Ulrich B. Phillips (ed.), *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb, Volume II*, American Historical Association. (Washington, 1913), 568.

<sup>90</sup>Diary of John Beauchamp Jones, November 30, 1862, as found in *A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary in the Confederate States Capitol, vol. I* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866).

<sup>91</sup>Diary of John Beauchamp Jones, November 30, 1862.

As the war continued, Georgia's military isolation eventually ended and led to further disputes between Brown and the Confederate government. In June 1863, Davis requested that the states develop home guard regiments. The Confederate War Department suggested that these state units would allow Confederate regiments to move to the front lines and replace the growing number of casualties, rather than guard supply lines or riverways.<sup>92</sup> Although Georgia had been asked to produce 8,000 volunteers, Governor Brown, thrilled by the prospect of raising more militia regiments that could defend the state, eventually organized 10,000 by September 1863.<sup>93</sup> As the state guard units developed vacancies from enlistment terms and exemptions, however, Brown again argued with the War Department over the authority to institute replacements. Brown insisted that the authority to assign vacancies in state regiments went to the state governor.<sup>94</sup> As suggested in General Cobb's letter<sup>94</sup> to Brown, urging him to reconsider his proclamation on the issue, the public dispute between Brown and Davis demoralized the state militia. Brown's criticism of the Confederacy received notice throughout the various parts of the state. In her diary, Katie Cummings, a Confederate nurse in northern Georgia, discussed the recent proclamation from Brown that warned Georgians against taking in "refugees and runaway negroes." She wrote that there "is no good reason why the good and patriotic people, who have been driven from their quiet homes by the ruthless foe, should be insulted in this manner. I really think that the character of the good people of Georgia has suffered from this half-distracted governor."<sup>95</sup> As Brown

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<sup>92</sup>Parks, 16.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>95</sup>Diary of Kate Cummings, September 19, 1864, in *Kate: The Journal of a Confederate Nurse*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 321. As accessed through "The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries."

continued to demonstrate animosity towards Richmond, the problems of militia appointments and helpless refugees convinced many Georgians that Brown placed more emphasis on political disputes than state organization and defense.

With the growing threat of Sherman's forces in mid-1864, Brown anticipated the end of the State Guard enlistments by encouraging the State General Assembly to order all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty into the militia.<sup>96</sup> During this time, however, the Confederate Congress passed another act requiring all men between seventeen and fifty to return to Confederate military service. The state legislature possessed the power to dictate which officers would be exempt from service and under the direction of Brown. The legislature declared that all civil and military officers excused from Confederate service would be offered positions in the state militia. General Cobb wrote to the Adjutant-General, Samuel Cooper, informing that "If Governor Brown had complied with the requirements of the law of Congress . . . we should have had several thousand more men in the service than we can get under his proclamation."<sup>97</sup> Rather than adhering to the Confederate legislation, Brown excused precious manpower from serving in the Confederate armies.

While the state government continued to quarrel with the Confederacy over officer appointments, Georgia's defenses suffered. In an effort to solidify the defense of the coastal town, Major General Lafayette McLaws attempted to organize militia units for Confederate service. Brown, convinced that any Confederate use of militia units be under his orders and commanded by his appointed officers, only offered the regiments if

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<sup>96</sup>Parks, 20.

<sup>97</sup>Letter from Major General Cobb to Adjutant-General Samuel Cooper, April 28, 1864, as found in *Official Correspondence of Governor Joseph E. Brown, Inclusive*, (Atlanta: C.P.Boyd State Printer, 1910), 746. Accessed through "The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries," 2009.



McLaws would agree. McLaws complained that “A great objection to Governor Brown’s organization is that they are controlled by very incompetent persons. . .”<sup>98</sup> With Sherman’s capture of Atlanta, the militia units under General John B. Hood were sent to Griffin, where numerous men were ordered to return home after being viewed as physically unfit for military duty.<sup>99</sup>

The disputes between Brown and Richmond came to a head over the discharge of state militia units on the eve of Sherman’s march. The anticipated march through the state caused Secretary of War Seddon to request that Brown’s 10,000 militiamen, currently serving in the defense of Atlanta, be placed under the command of General Hood. Brown, however, ordered that the militiamen be sent home after the fall of Atlanta and perceived Davis’ order to be yet another attempt to remove control from the state. In a letter to Secretary Seddon in November, Brown deflected the blame for Georgians’ growing frustration by writing the following:

Your assertion, that my past action and public expressions have given encouragement to our enemies, to the mortification of many patriotic citizens of the Confederacy, may be properly disposed of by the single remark, that if we may judge of the encouragement of our enemies by the general expression of their public journals, the President gave them more delight, hope and encouragement. .

<sup>100</sup>

Brown refused to acknowledge the effect that his public confrontation with Confederate government. Instead, as the public perceptions of Brown worsened with his release of the militia units, Brown defended himself by suggesting that the northern newspapers placed the blame on Davis. The important aspect of Brown’s letter to Seddon is that the

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<sup>98</sup>Letter from Major General Lafayette McLaws to Major C.S. Stringfellow, August 14, 1864, as found in *Official Correspondence of Governor Joseph E. Brown, Inclusive*, (Atlanta: C.P.Boyd State Printer, 1910), 746. Accessed through “The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries,” 2009.

<sup>99</sup>William R. Scaife and William Harris Bragg, *Joe Brown’s Pets: The Georgia Militia, 1861-1865*. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 39.

<sup>100</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to Secretary of War James A. Seddon, November 16, 1864, as found in *Official Correspondence of Joseph E. Brown, 1861-1865, Inclusive*, 643.

constant disputes over troop authority, public morale, and state authority still remained, despite Georgia's precarious situation with Sherman.

With the onset of Sherman's Savannah Campaign, Governor Brown's inability to adequately work with the Confederate government hindered the state's defenses. In his diary, Confederate clerk John Jones remarked that the Senate had passed a resolution that required Davis to produce "a statement on the number of exemptions granted by the Governors . . . Perhaps it will hit Governor Brown, of Georgia, also; but Sherman will hit him hardest. He must call out all of his fighting people now, or see his State ravaged with impunity."<sup>101</sup> To Jones, Davis' report on the number of exemptions would force Brown to use all of his militia units. If it failed to do so, Jones expressed confidence that Sherman's march would convince Brown to employ all of his resources. It is important to recognize that Jones' comments display a public perception of Brown withholding fighting units, which by late 1864 were badly needed by the Confederate armies. By early 1865, the feud between Brown and Davis convinced Georgians that the governor placed personal arguments before the state's defense. In an anonymous letter to General Cobb, a citizen of Georgia claimed that "If our Governor could know the feeling of the people he would assemble the Legislature and have a large army of negroes in the field . . . The Governor will be however satisfied if he can get a chance to abuse President Davis. . ."<sup>102</sup> Brown's constant disagreements with Davis convinced the author that a factor in Brown's refusal to arm slaves emanated from a desire to resist Davis' recent approval of incorporating slaves into the Confederate forces. Brown's decisions and errors created the atmosphere of a national government struggling to unite under the pressures of war.

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<sup>101</sup>Diary of John Beauchamp Jones, November 18, 1864.

<sup>102</sup>Anonymous letter to Major General Cobb, January 3, 1865, as found in *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb*. (Washington, 1913), 657.

As social and economic weariness furthered the divisions between wealthy and poor Georgians, Governor Joseph E. Brown's resistance to the military policies of the Confederacy created the military weaknesses that would hinder Georgia's defense against Sherman in 1864.

## CHAPTER 3

### “IF WE DO NOT, IN MY OPINION, WE ARE RUINED”: THE EARLY DIVISIONS BETWEEN PLANTERS AND POOR WHITES

On March 25, 1862, the *Macon Daily Telegraph* published an editorial discussing the “secrets” southerners needed to discover before achieving independence. Largely directed at “the rich man”, the article implored wealthy planters throughout Georgia to resist selling crops at high prices while poor families starved. “You must throw open your corn cribs and meat houses to the poor,” the author argued, “you must open your pocket books and generously shell out your dimes to the families of poor men fighting for you.” Southern independence was unattainable without support for poor farmers. The author continued by declaring that “This desire of one half of our people to make fortunes out of the war by eating up the other half must stop.” The newspaper concluded by reminding planters of Proverbs 11:26; “He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that *selleth* it.”<sup>103</sup>

The article demonstrated the growing perception in Georgia that wealthy planters hindered the war effort by placing economic gain before the state. Furthermore, the idea that poor whites fought the war for the benefit of slaveholders was emerging by early 1862. For Georgians, the attempts by political leaders and slaveholders to promote a unified war effort faltered in the intense unionist counties of the north and southwest. Many poor whites remained unconvinced by the arguments for secession. As animosity over speculation and failing relief policies hindered what little early war enthusiasm did emerge, the unity of Georgians grew increasingly strained. By 1864, this division

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<sup>103</sup> *Macon Daily Telegraph*, “A Couple of Secrets,” and “To Planters,” March 25, 1862.

provided the Union military with an opportunity to exploit the home front. Exploring the process of social division allows for a deeper understanding of the events leading to Sherman's Savannah Campaign.

This chapter continues the discussion of Georgia's social divisions by observing the growing tensions that developed as the war continued. As discussed in the previous chapter, Brown's public disagreements with Davis hindered the defenses of the state and demoralized Georgians, who grew frustrated with the state government's inability to aid its citizens. In addition to the political frustrations, Georgians experienced worsening divisions over issues of the continuation of cotton production despite the needs for agricultural production, speculators and their influences on food prices, as well as the inability of the state government to provide relief. As the war continued, these issues provoked the realization that the war placed an increasingly disproportionate burden on poor whites, with the perception that planters did little to provide aid and relief to their struggling neighbors. By late 1864, the social divisions that emerged from the economic disparity provided Sherman with a clear opportunity to exploit the tense relationships between wealthy and struggling Georgians.

Scholars of Sherman's march have paid little attention to the social and economic struggles between poor and wealthy Georgians. Previous military studies focus on the campaign's destruction and significance in the Union's strategy, with the only discussion of civilians added to further the understanding of the devastation's magnitude.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>John Bennett Walters, *Merchant of Terror: General Sherman and Total War* (New York, 1973); Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (Baton Rouge, 1985); Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War* (Cambridge, 1995); Anne J. Baily, *War and Ruin: William T. Sherman and the Savannah Campaign* (Wilmington, 2003); Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North From the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill, 2003).

Likewise, research on class divisions in the South neglects the direct impact of military engagements on the social unity of Southerners, and often portrays campaigns as being separate from the social context. In many studies, only the high number of casualties and the ensuing burden on economic and military resources are significant aspects of warfare. Even studies of class in the war-weary regions of Virginia only examine such factors as family loyalty, class within the Confederate army ranks, and political control by Unionists.<sup>105</sup> The situation in Georgia by late 1864, however, offers a vital opportunity to view class relations among southerner civilians and their direct effect on the Union military strategy. Sherman observed that the early war animosities between wealthy and poor Georgians created weaknesses that the Union army could exploit.

From the beginning of the war, the internal divisions of Georgia provided Sherman's forces with an opportunity to exploit the home front of the state. This goes against the understanding that southerners suffered from gradual "war weariness." Previous scholarship on the issue of class conflict within the Confederacy suggests that the South's internal division emerged as the conflict worsened.<sup>106</sup> According to this theory, poor white southerners sacrificed in greater numbers on the battlefield and suffered desperate economic conditions as the war continued. Faced with insurmountable burdens, many poor whites deserted the Confederate forces, stole food to feed starving families, or refused to give supplies to military officers. The research on class in the Confederacy

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<sup>105</sup>For studies on class tensions in Virginia, see Rand Dotson, "'The Grave and Scandalous Evil Infected in Your People': The Erosion of Loyalty in Floyd County, Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 108, No. 4 (2000); Aaron Sheehan-Dean, "Justice Has Something To Do With It," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2005).

<sup>106</sup>Charles H. Wesley, *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (New York, 1937); Bell I. Wiley, *The Plain People of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge, 1943); Charles Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy* (Baton Rouge, 1944); Richard Beringer et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, Ga., 1988); David Williams, *Rich Man's War: Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* (Athens, Ga., 1998); William Freehling, *The South vs. The South* (Oxford, 2001);

focuses on the emergence of frustration and demoralization as a result of a war that benefited the wealthy but required the overwhelming sacrifice of poor whites.

Although Sherman's campaign is credited by scholars for employing an effective psychological attack on Georgians, a deeper understanding of the specific impacts of this warfare need to be understood. Recent social histories studies of Georgia suggest that poor whites displayed opposition to the Confederacy at the earliest discussions of secession.<sup>107</sup> These historians, although contributing valuable information to the field, fail to consider the ways in which these social divisions provided an opportunity for Sherman to exploit the state's social weakness. To be sure, Sherman's decision to strike into the heart of the state largely resulted from the importance of Georgia's manufacturing to the South.<sup>108</sup> But, Sherman understood the tensions within the state and recognized the possible advantage for the Union war effort by convincing Georgians, "who are not overly loyal to the South," that the war was lost.<sup>109</sup>

Georgia presents a useful case study of wartime social animosity because of its uniquely diverse economic and social system. In order to understand the divisions between wealthy and poor whites in Georgia, however, the social relationships of the Civil War South need to be examined. Various definitions of "poor whites" have been offered by historians. Frank Owsley describes "plain folk" as people who formed a social group behind planters but above poor whites. Owsley argues that poor whites constituted a small portion of the southern population and that the South held a large

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<sup>107</sup>David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville, Fla., 2002); Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight: The Civil War & Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 2005).

<sup>108</sup>See, Bailey, 24-33; Grimsley, 172-175. Both Bailey and Grimsley discuss Sherman's correspondence to Grant and Lincoln, which suggest that Sherman believed the Confederacy to be ruined with the loss and destruction of Georgia.

<sup>109</sup>Letter from William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, September 20, 1864, *Memoirs of William T. Sherman* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 483.

middle class made up of small slaveholding farms, as well as tenants, squatters, and farm laborers.<sup>110</sup> By 1860, nearly half of the one million residents in Georgia were slaves. Of the free inhabitants of the state, most were involved in agriculture, although only half owned three or more acres of land. The remaining whites were tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and day laborers on other lands. While most of the landholders did own slaves, only a third of them owned more than ten. On the eve of the war, the planter class made up only 3 percent of Georgia's population<sup>111</sup> Owsley's definition of poor whites was expanded by Edward Magdol and Jon L. Wakelyn in 1980 to include country store owners, urban mechanics, day laborers, and factory workers.<sup>112</sup> In two recent studies, Stephanie McCurry and Mark Wetherington define "plain folk" as white southerners who owned ten or fewer slaves and fewer than 150 acres of land.<sup>113</sup> This more inclusive definition fits this study because Sherman's planning depended on foraging from all civilians.

Although the number of plain folk greatly outnumbered slaveholders, maintaining the racial hierarchy remained an important aspect of life. For this reason, nonslaveholding whites supported the institution of slavery even with little direct economic benefit. As Mark Wetherington suggests in his study of southeastern Georgia, poor farmers respected slavery for its ability to elevate their own status within the state. However, poor whites did not give unyielding support to slavery. Many plain folk feared the expansion of slavery into the northwestern and southeastern regions because of the threat to cheap

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<sup>110</sup>Frank L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 7-8.

<sup>111</sup>Williams, et al., 8. Statistics compiled from the 1860 census.

<sup>112</sup>Edward Magdol and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *The Southern Common People: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Social History* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1980), xi-xii.

<sup>113</sup>Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 48-51; Wetherington, 4.



farmland and access to ranges for cattle.<sup>114</sup> Despite the agreement about racial equality among whites, tensions still developed over the role of planters and their influence. As William Freehling explains in The Road to Disunion, the South suffered from attempts to instill the idea of equality among whites, while planters held most of the political and economic influence.<sup>115</sup> In a larger sense, these antebellum tensions served as the foundation for war-time disputes over the benefit of planters at the expense of plain folk. Throughout the war, the early divisions between Georgians grew worse from the increasing burdens of war.

The early war enthusiasm that the historiography contends swept throughout the Confederacy failed to fully convince poor whites of the necessity of war. James McPherson argued in his study, What They Fought For, 1861-1865, many Confederates felt the desire to resist the perceived Union oppression. Indeed, many in Georgia did volunteer for service but several regions throughout the state provided few troops to the cause. In 1862, W.H. Byrd of Augusta complained to Governor Joseph E. Brown that his attempts to raise a regiment in “this ‘Yankee City’” had failed. The *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel* confirmed Byrd’s frustrations when it declared that “one who walks Broad street and sees the number of young men, would come to the conclusion that no war . . . was now waging.”<sup>116</sup> Throughout the state, other forms of resistance developed against the newly approved acts of secession. Vigilantes under the command of Harrison W. Riley threatened to seize the U.S. mint in Dahlonega and protect it from southern hands. In Pickens County, the U.S. flag remained flying above the courthouse for several weeks

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<sup>114</sup>Wetherington, 5.

<sup>115</sup>William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 39.

<sup>116</sup>Letter from W. H. Byrd to Joseph E. Brown, February 20, 1862; *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, February 12, 1862.

after Georgia's secession declaration.<sup>117</sup> Although the concern for property and political ideals did persuade many to enlist for the Confederacy, many regions throughout the state held firm to their anti-secessionist ideals.

For Georgia, the problems of convincing poor whites to leave their homes and serve in the military emerged in desertions during the first years of the war. In a report from the *Daily Columbus Enquirer* two men from Macon were accused of leaving their regiments and heading to Fort Monroe, held by Federal troops. The article produced information on the two men, offering explanations for their behavior. "Kimball is a tinner by trade, and professed to be a very sincere secessionist, but is really a hypocrite and capable of any mean act; that Hempstead was a clerk in Macon, but a northern man by birth. . ."<sup>118</sup> By portraying the men as a hypocrite and a traitor, the newspaper downplayed the possibility of working men refusing to continue in the war effort. By mid-1862, despite numerous Confederate victories in Virginia, Governor Brown issued a proclamation ordering all officers and soldiers of the state to be used for the "apprehension of deserters and of officers and soldiers absent from their commands without leave." Brown urged that "Public opinion must, therefore, frown upon those who, while in service, attempt to avoid their due proportion of labor and danger."<sup>119</sup>

Planters did attempt to promote their own contributions to the war effort. In the *Rome Southerner*, a report titled "A Wealthy Volunteer Corps," proclaimed that the Floyd Cavalry's forty soldiers held property valuing \$736,000. The article ended by suggesting that "We venture to say that there are few volunteer companies anywhere as wealthy in

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<sup>117</sup>Williams, et al., 18.

<sup>118</sup>*Daily Columbus Enquirer*, "Local News Items," June 26, 1861.

<sup>119</sup>Proclamation from Governor Joseph Brown, printed in the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, August 4, 1862.

proportion to numbers.”<sup>120</sup> Planters did serve in various regiments throughout the Confederacy. Their ability to acquire newer clothing and weaponry often distinguished them from other men serving in the ranks. In a letter to his friend, Colonel Alexander Hayes described his experiences as he led a Union regiment against Georgians at the battle of Fair Oaks in 1862. He wrote:

Then our boys pitched in again and in 15 minutes the Georgians were on the road to Richmond. The rout was complete. The quality, elegance, and taste of all their equipment bore evidence that they were all scions of the first families among the Georgian chivalry.<sup>121</sup>

These differences were not lost on the poorer Confederates and tension was evident within the ranks of the Confederate army, as well. The presence of class tensions did exist, notably in the relationships between officers and enlisted men. The paternalist attitude that many wealthy slaveholders held towards their social inferiors carried over into their commands.<sup>122</sup> The flexibility of officers to deal with issues of dissension and animosity allowed the Confederate forces to deal with direct class tensions, but the growing burden on poor families would drive many soldiers to desertion.

At the start of the war Northerners seized on reports of fragile southern morale. The *Cincinnati Gazette* printed reports that “Throughout Georgia, and some of the other southern states, the people were very much discouraged with the operations of their new government. . .” It continued:

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<sup>120</sup>*Rome Southerner*, “A Wealthy Volunteer Corps,” printed in the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, April 3, 1861.

<sup>121</sup>Letter from Alexander Hayes to John B. McFadden, June 26, 1862 in *Life and Letters of Alexander Hayes, Brevet Colonel United States Army* (Privately published: Pittsburgh, 1919), 708. Accessed through “American Civil War Letters and Diaries.”

<sup>122</sup>Aaron Sheehan-Dean, “Justice Has Something To Do With It: Class Relations and the Confederate Army,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 113, No. 4 (2005), 353.

Alexander H. Stephens and others were constantly traversing the State, endeavoring, by their speeches, to keep up the excitement against the North, and thereby to divert their attention from their own sufferings.<sup>123</sup>

In 1862, the *Philadelphia Enquirer* published a report from a Georgia deserter who claimed that “every man in his company will desert on the first opportunity that presents itself.”<sup>124</sup> Citing a lack of supplies and motivation, the article suggested that the soldier gladly left his post in the southern army. The *Wisconsin Daily Patriot* stated that a mutiny broke out in two Georgia regiments, ending with the shooting of six soldiers by the commanding officers. The troops had grown irritated with the lack of pay in six months.<sup>125</sup> All of the reports centered on the growing pressure from the lack of supplies, pay, and motivation. Although the accounts may have been exaggerated to display any possibility of southern dissension, the articles show that, even to northern states, the conditions of Georgia and its troops seemed to be growing increasingly desperate.

The accounts from Union newspapers reflect the initial belief by northerners that the planter class of the South bore the responsibility of the conflict. According to Mark Grimsley, this understanding influenced the Union’s early war military decisions to pursue a policy of “conciliation.”<sup>126</sup> Many military leaders including General Winfield Scott and George B. McClellan argued that with firm military action and no abuses against the poor civilians of the South, support for the war would decrease. Even Sherman embraced these tactics in the early years of the war, but Grimsley is quick to point out that this largely is the result of Sherman’s desire for military discipline and morally responsible soldiers, rather than of his hopes for the strategic benefits of

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<sup>123</sup>*Cincinnati Gazette*, “Interesting News from Georgia and Virginia,” August 5, 1861.

<sup>124</sup>*Philadelphia Enquirer*, “Arrival from Richmond,” June 12, 1862.

<sup>125</sup>*Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, “War News,” April 2, 1863.

<sup>126</sup>See Grimsley, 23-46.

executing a conciliatory policy towards the Confederacy.<sup>127</sup> As the war continued into 1863 and 1864, however, Union military commanders became increasingly frustrated with this policy as Southerners continued to refuse to surrender. It became clear that avoiding any confrontation with poor whites throughout the South provided little benefit to the Union war effort. The Union military eventually turned to “hard war” tactics, despite reports of the pro-Union sentiment in states like North Carolina and Georgia.

An important factor that added to the growing tensions between poor whites and planters was the desire to continue the profits gained from cotton during the war. By 1861, the Union blockade and the Confederate embargo on cotton sales resulted in massive economic losses for planters throughout Georgia. Europe and the northern states were the largest consumers of southern cotton and many planters hoped to capitalize on the renewal of cotton sales as soon as the conflict ended. Planters throughout the central counties of the Cotton Belt continued to plant cotton rather than food. To add to the already difficult situation, the food supplies of the South suffered from droughts in the years prior to the war. With the growth of cotton plantations in the 1850s, Georgia’s non-cotton agricultural production within the central region of the state suffered.<sup>128</sup>

The refusal of planters to grow crops rather than cotton hindered the enthusiasm for the war. Many poor whites already resisted the recent calls for volunteers in the Confederacy. The concern over food supplies for their families worried soldiers in the Confederate army. One soldier wrote to his local newspaper and pleaded “All that we want for our watchful nights and life, is for them to stop the cry of hunger that comes to

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<sup>127</sup>Grimsley, 63.

<sup>128</sup>Williams, et al., 26.

us from our families at home.”<sup>129</sup> At the beginning of the war, planters often attempted to aid their local communities through verbal or written bonds, yet little effort was made to follow through on the promises. With most of the soldiers in the Confederate forces coming from nonslaveholding households, many planters offered financial and personal aid to families, only to fall short or withhold supplies as the war continued.<sup>130</sup> In an editorial titled “What Shall Farmers Do?” the author criticized wealthy planters and warned that “the poor \$11-a month soldier cannot always be at the rich planter’s side to protect him in selling corn to his starving family at \$5 a bushel.”<sup>131</sup> The author urged that attention be given to the growing reality of poor whites fighting for the war while planters raised prices for families on the home front. The growing perception became that of a war in which poor whites fought while wealthy slaveholders exploited the state. As the war continued, the actions of planters brought increased attention to the perceived shortcomings in the war effort.

As the food shortages became more apparent, various towns and counties issued calls to planters urging them to aid poor families. An anonymous letter from Sumter County called on planters from every county to “hold a meeting, and determine not to plant more than four acres of cotton to the hand as a *maximum* . . .” The effect, the author argued, would be a tremendous boost of confidence to the troops in the Confederate armies by assuring them “of the amplitude of the provisions provided, not only for the support of dear loved ones at home, but their own support.”<sup>132</sup> To many, the refusal of planters to grow food symbolized a fatal shortcoming in the war effort and a reminder of the

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<sup>129</sup>Williams, et al., 27, *Turnwald Countryman*, May 10, 1864.

<sup>130</sup>As quoted in Paul Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1987), 100.

<sup>131</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “What Shall Farmers Do?” October 15, 1862.

<sup>132</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, Letter to the editor, February 28, 1862.

economic differences between a “united” people. The *Macon Daily Telegraph* printed a declaration on March 11, 1862, from the town of Perry. Stating that “the salvation of the Confederacy” rested in the decisions of planters, the article suggested that because Georgia possessed the agricultural capability and was free of direct warfare, the state held the responsibility to provide as much food as possible for the nation. The article also attempted to persuade planters of the economic benefits of planting corn by suggesting that “In any event, corn and all edibles will bear a good price and find a ready sale; where as if the war should continue, cotton can neither be sold, nor contribute anything to our cause.”<sup>133</sup>

Despite the need for food to continue the war effort, most planters failed to understand the dire situation developing throughout the state. Proclamations by Governor Joseph Brown urged regions of the state to eliminate cotton crops and begin growing food. In a letter to Linton Stephens, published in the local newspapers on March 7, 1862, Brown articulated his concerns over the unyielding production of cotton. Brown wrote that planters who continued to ignore the cries for more food were subject to the “charge of disloyalty to the South.” “No class of our society is so wealthy and powerful as the cotton planters,” Brown argued, “and no other class has as much at stake.” Brown put forth again the argument that losing the conflict would ruin any chances for profit from the cotton. Furthermore, Brown contended that the numbers of acres given to harvesting potatoes, beets, and grain needed to be doubled. He concluded by writing: “If we do not, in my opinion, we are ruined.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “To the Planters of Georgia and the Cotton States of the Confederacy,” March 11, 1862.

<sup>134</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to Linton Stephens, published March 7, 1862 in the *Macon Weekly Telegraph*.

In an effort to provide relief for the state, Brown ordered that the General Assembly approve measures to discourage cotton production. In November 1862, Brown's message to the state government explained his reasoning for a new tax on planters. "Without a supply of provisions it is impossible to sustain our army in the field and prevent the enemy from triumphing over us," Brown wrote. He asked the General Assembly to approve "a law imposing a tax on one hundred dollars upon each quantity of seed cotton . . . over what is actually necessary for a home supply."<sup>135</sup> The state legislature, largely consisting of planters, ignored the request. The legislature did approve, however, a law stating that landholders were forbidden to plant more than three acres of cotton for each slave or farmhand employed.<sup>136</sup> In a published letter to the citizens of the state, Brown discussed the potential threat against the state's defense if crops were not supplied. He wrote, "The army must be fed and their families at home supported, or the sun of liberty will soon set in darkness and blood, and the voice of freedom will be forever hushed in the silence of despotism."<sup>137</sup> For Brown, the lack of crops forced a confrontation between the military needs of the state and the economic profits of wealthy Georgians.

Despite Brown's pleas, the production of cotton continued to increase and eventually, the state government joined in making the problem worse by purchasing cotton and exporting it themselves.<sup>138</sup> According to his study, Stanley Lebergott states that during the war, 6.8 million bales of cotton were grown during the war. Many planters held onto their cotton with the hopes that blockade prices would offer a greater

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<sup>135</sup>Governor's Message to the Georgia State Assembly, November 1862, pg. 23.

<sup>136</sup>Williams, et al., 31.

<sup>137</sup>As found in Williams, et al., 33.

<sup>138</sup>Williams, et al., 34.



return and by 1865, 1.8 million bales remained for sale.<sup>139</sup> Lebergott also argues that planters continued with the growth of cotton, not only for the economic value, but for the chance to avoid conscription as a large-scale planter.<sup>140</sup> As planters avoided military service and placed personal profit before aiding the war effort, animosity between slaveholders and nonslaveholders continued to grow.

This was further exacerbated by speculators who inflated prices that made food almost impossible to obtain. As planters continued to ignore the pleas for more food production, prices throughout the Confederacy climbed as a result of the Union blockade and scarce supplies.<sup>141</sup> By 1862, speculators and planters throughout Georgia placed economic gain before the interests of plain folk throughout the state. Consequently, frustrations over the war mounted as poor whites observed the wealthy placing personal gain before the interests of burdened families, as well as the Confederacy itself.

Speculators often based prices on the recent military and political events of the Confederacy. By 1862, prices for food and supplies climbed after the shattering of expectations that the war would be over quickly. With the lack of food being produced in the state, prices for grain, bacon, potatoes, and beef reflected the fears of a prolonged war and the greed of speculators to capitalize from the market.<sup>142</sup> The *Daily Delta* from New Orleans printed a portion of a letter found on the body of a Georgian soldier. In it, the soldier complained of the growing prices of food and its effect on the morale of the country. “We have tuff times here at this time. We are hard to get enuff to eat,” he wrote, “a common steer, three years old, sells for twenty-five dollars. . . James, I tell you

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<sup>139</sup>Stanley Lebergott, “Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865,” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Dec., 1981), 883.

<sup>140</sup>Lebergott, 884.

<sup>141</sup>Williams, et al., 35.

<sup>142</sup>Williams, et al., 37

the people are getting tyred of this war hear. Union men are coming out everyday.”<sup>143</sup>

As the frustration over high prices and few supplies continued, the soldier witnessed a growth in unionist sentiment. A report in the *New York Herald* criticized the “Beauties of the Davis Despotism,” by reporting that bacon would reach \$1.25 a pound. It observed, “This, too, in the heart of Georgia, where the provisions are more abundant than along the frontiers of the rebellion, where the armies and guerillas of Davis for two years have been scouring the country and eating out or wasting its substance.”<sup>144</sup>

Poor whites throughout Georgia discovered that speculators represented the growing inequality that they feared at the start of the war. Katie Cumming, a nurse serving in Atlanta, observed that by 1863 speculators represented an almost insurmountable obstacle towards victory. She wrote:

Dr. Young's indignation was so great against the extortioners and speculators . . . He was bitter in the extreme . . . when we think of how he and others have given up homes, friends, and every thing dear to them for the cause, and find such Shylocks preying on the very heart-blood of our country; it is enough to make even the "stones cry out." Dr. Young told us that our money was more depreciated in Atlanta than in any place in the Confederacy. He said that for himself, "if the Confederacy fell, he would think it an honor to sink with it and its money in his pocket, rather than to have made his thousands.”<sup>145</sup>

Governor Brown recognized the damaging effect speculators were having on the morale of the state. He wrote to Alexander Stephens that “There seems to have settled on the mind of our people a sort of feeling of despondency which is stimulated by the constant croaking of a class of speculators,” he wrote, “These men put the worst face on every

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<sup>143</sup>*Daily Delta*, November 29, 1862.

<sup>144</sup>*New York Herald*, “A Specimen of the Beauties of the Davis Despotism,” March 29, 1863.

<sup>145</sup>Diary of Katie Cumming, September 9, 1863. *Kate: The Journal of a Confederate Nurse* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 140.

mishap of our arms. . . . They do all in their power to discourage our people.”<sup>146</sup> As the war continued, speculators and the rising prices of inflation appeared to many Georgians as a serious threat to the already precarious social unity of the state.

From the start of the war, Brown and state legislators attempted to provide poor whites with relief against speculators and the rising prices. As Governor Brown suggested in his message to the Assembly in 1861, the easiest way to aid the white families was to provide for the fair treatment in collection laws and ensure that property was protected. The Stay Law of 1861 stated that speculators could not purchase the land of poor debtors unable to meet collection demands. Brown explained his plan further:

This would enable a few heartless speculators, who happen to have funds at their command, to buy up the property of poor debtors; and would cause an immense amount of suffering among helpless women and children.”<sup>147</sup>

The passage of the Stay Law also coincided with the request that all property acquired from speculators after the law be appropriated by Georgia troops.<sup>148</sup> Brown presented this act in the same message to the legislature which reiterated the need for all whites to continue in the struggle. The “poor white laborer” had a vested interest in maintaining the current struggle in order to preserve his place within the economic and social frame of society.

In 1862, the General Assembly passed a law donating \$100 to the families of soldiers in the service of the Confederate armies. As Governor Brown stated in his message to the session of delegates, “Many of these privates are poor men, who have left behind

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<sup>146</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to Alexander Stephens, August 12, 1863. *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb*. (Washington, 1913), 621.

<sup>147</sup>Governor’s Message to the General Assembly, Milledgeville, Georgia, November 6, 1861. pg. 24.

<sup>148</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

them large families dependent upon their own exertions for a livelihood.”<sup>149</sup> Soldiers received exemption from the poll tax and were excluded from paying a \$1,000 tax on personal property.<sup>150</sup> By 1863, Brown attempted to again emphasize the importance of both social classes depending on each other for victory in the war. In his speech, he touched upon a point that would be referenced numerous times as the hostilities over nonslaveholding casualties grew. He wrote:

...No class of our people has so much at stake, as our slaveholders, who are generally our chief planters. They are dependent upon our white laborers in the field of battle, for the protection of their property; and in turn this army of white laborers and their families, are dependent upon the slave owners for a support, while thus engaged. The obligation is mutual and reciprocal, and neither party has the right to disregard it.<sup>151</sup>

As the war progressed into 1863 and 1864, states with war weary regions appropriated increasingly large funds for civilians. In February 1864, the Virginia General Assembly approved \$1 million for “needy families of soldiers and sailors in the confederate service from the state of Virginia, residing in counties within the lines or the power of the enemy under the control of Union forces.”<sup>152</sup> The journal from the House of Representatives in Mississippi shows that the 1864 session consisted mostly of relief acts. State officials heard proclamations for relief acts for individual families, businesses, churches, government officials, and town leaders.<sup>153</sup> The women of poor families attempted to work for the Confederate government in various positions. The Confederate Clothing

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<sup>149</sup>Message from the Governor to the General Assembly, Milledgeville, Georgia. November 6, 1861. pg. 19.

<sup>150</sup>Wallenstein, 20. The poll tax was administered to the men of the state between the ages of twenty-one and sixty. This fee was \$0.25 for every election. According to Wallenstein, all Georgians agreed to the tax with the expectation that it would be applied to the schools within the state. Free blacks were also taxed, although the fee rose to \$5.

<sup>151</sup>Message from the Governor to the General Assembly, Milledgeville, March 25, 1863. pg. 6, 7.

<sup>152</sup>Acts of the Virginia General Assembly, Passed at Session 1863-1864, as found in Documenting the American South Collection, University of North Carolina.

<sup>153</sup>See Journal of the House of Representatives for the State of Mississippi, August 1864, as found in Documenting the American South Collection, University of North Carolina.

Bureau in Richmond employed women as seamstresses, with the low wage of thirty cents for every shirt produced. In Georgia, poor women found work in Macon at the Georgia Soldiers' Bureau and the local arsenal.<sup>154</sup> As jobs from Savannah moved towards the central regions of the state in order to avoid the Union blockade and any threat of attack, a report in the *Savannah Republican* questioned how poor women would continue. It asked, "Cannot the work be distributed—a portion to Savannah as to other cities—and thus help those whose condition is rendered dependent exclusively on the patronage of the government?"<sup>155</sup> With the war being fought in more areas throughout the Confederacy, poor women faced the prospect of working in factories and arsenals to supplement the little, if any, state aid.

In Georgia, like other states throughout the South, relief efforts for the families of soldiers continued to be funded, despite the growing economic struggles. By March 1864, the relief fund for the families of Georgia troops, was approved at six million dollars as compared to the one million dollar appropriation in 1861.<sup>156</sup> By November, another six million dollars was appropriated for relief. Brown even suggested that the state needed to disregard any financial constraints to protect the welfare of soldiers' families. He wrote, "The wealth and property of the State must be taxed to any extent necessary to prevent the suffering among the families of our brave defenders."<sup>157</sup> Even the education fund of the state was eliminated in order to provide more money for the

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<sup>154</sup>Edward Campbell Jr. and Kym Rice, eds., *A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War, and the Confederate Legacy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 9.

<sup>155</sup>*The Savannah Republican*, May 26, 1863.

<sup>156</sup>Message from the Governor to the General Assembly, Milledgeville, March 25, 1863. pg. 6. In this declaration, Governor Brown admitted that the suffering by the civilian population was probably far more than he was aware of from county reports. This misinformation is attributed to the court systems and the various reports sent to the state delegates. Consequently, Brown requested legislation be created that would remove any judge or clerk that failed in his report on the economic situation of the various regions.

<sup>157</sup>Message from the Governor to the General Assembly. Milledgeville, Georgia. November 3, 1864, 24.

families of fallen Georgia troops.<sup>158</sup> Brown even pleaded with Davis to stop the Confederate conscription officers from taking food and supplies from the poor regions of the state. In his letter Brown wrote, “The little supplies of provisions in the hands of a few is being seized by Confederate officers, leaving none to distribute to relieve those likely to starve. If this continues the rebellion in that section will grow, and soldiers in service will desert to go to the relief of their suffering families.”<sup>159</sup>

Throughout counties in the state, local relief committees worked to aid the suffering of poor white families burdened by the war. Many of the committees formed in the early years of the war, and fell under the direction of local women. But, as supplies ran out and casualties climbed, more citizens in the central regions of the state tried to appeal to the patriotic ideals of planters and families. In one article, the citizens of Sumter County were asked by the relief committee, “I ask you whether the poor soldier has not given up home, family, luxury, comfort—all the ordinary necessities of life? You know he has. What for? For your protection, life, liberty, and property . . .”<sup>160</sup> Another article warned the citizens of Pulaski County that their failure to establish relief committees for their troops was “discouraging them.” The author worried that the soldiers would return home, only to say “I was in your own State fighting for your property, your liberty, and all that is dear unto you, and was hungered and you gave me no meat . . .”<sup>161</sup> Many demands for relief centered upon the growing realization that the war benefited wealthy planters but was being fought primarily by nonslaveholding whites.

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<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>159</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to Jefferson Davis, February 18, 1863, *Official Correspondence of Governor Joseph E. Brown* (Atlanta: C.P. Byrd State Printer, 1910), 328.

<sup>160</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “To the Patriotic People of Sumter County,” July 8, 1864.

<sup>161</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “Appeal to Pulaski County,” June 26, 1864.

The General Assembly attempted to establish an effective system of transportation for food and supplies to the mountainous counties within the state. Governor Brown ordered the Superintendent of the State to put the best trains on a project to deliver food to the southwestern portions of Georgia. Brown's intention was to send corn and bread supplies to "prevent if possible, suffering, on the part of the poor, or the families of soldiers, for want of bread."<sup>162</sup> This legislation faced difficulties, however, concerning the use of the railroad and other equipment as Confederate authorities had requested military control of the railroads. A few railroads did ship corn to the poor families in the state free of charge, but several others continued to ship cotton in order to obtain greater profits.<sup>163</sup> Brown was forced to ask for further legislation that would require the Quarter-Master General to confiscate the railroads.<sup>164</sup> Transportation became another source of frustration and resentment as economic conditions continued to decline.

As the threat of Sherman's army grew, newspaper editorials attempted to discuss the threats facing the invading forces. In a section titled, "The Crisis of the War," the contributor to the *Macon Daily Telegraph* predicted that the future campaigns by Federal forces in 1864 would result in failure. The author asserted that Union military plans were in a "exceedingly hazardous description, and if they are not fully frustrated, it will be due solely, as we believe, to a lack of spirit and enterprise on the part of Confederates."<sup>165</sup> Later, newspaper accounts of Sherman's impending campaigns often mocked the Union intentions. One article discussed a letter sent by Sherman on May 23, 1864, "so as to

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<sup>162</sup>Message from the Governor to the General Assembly. Milledgeville, Georgia, March 25, 1863. 8.

<sup>163</sup>Williams, et al., 68.

<sup>164</sup>Message from the Governor to the General Assembly. Milledgeville, Georgia. March 10, 1864, 6.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

‘prepare the people’ of Georgia,” but gave little consideration for any potential attack by remarking, “if he even comes at all.”<sup>166</sup> Southern confidence grew from accounts of Sherman’s difficulties around Atlanta. Reports from the *New York Herald* were printed in Macon, showing that northern journalists feared for the safety of Sherman’s troops, claiming that, “nothing but the exercise of a real genius on his part can save his army from disaster.”<sup>167</sup>

Attempts were made by journalists to develop the idea of sacrifice and determination by Georgians during the Union invasions. In his study on the influence of the Confederate media on public morale, J. Cutler Andrews argues that Confederate newspaper editors largely promoted the hope and energy of the early years and continued this optimism throughout the war. The growing internal disputes, however, influenced the public more than the constantly optimistic editors.<sup>168</sup> In the case of Georgia, Andrews’ argument is valid in the sense that most editors throughout the state did not print articles describing the dire military situations facing the South. The editorials critiquing government officials, social inequalities in conscription, and the state’s handling of relief efforts, however, displays the idea that morale in Georgia suffered early on in the conflict.

General Sherman’s understanding of the South and its reasons for war influenced his decisions in during the Savannah Campaign. According to his personal letters to friends, politicians, and fellow military commanders, Sherman displayed a thorough understanding of the class system existing throughout the southern states. Insisting that

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<sup>166</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, May 23, 1864. pg.1.

<sup>167</sup>*New York Herald*, December 15, 1864. pg.1.

<sup>168</sup>J. Cutler Andrews, “The Confederate Press and Public Morale,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Nov., 1966), 461.



the South is divided into four classes of men, Sherman came to the conclusion that the second class of “smaller farmers, mechanics, and laborers,” ultimately held “no real interest in the establishment of a Southern Confederacy, and have been led or driven into war, on the false theory that they were to be benefited somehow, they Knew not how.”<sup>169</sup> As the war continued, Sherman anticipated a growing resentment from the class of followers as the costs and sacrifices of war continued to accumulate. In a letter to Major Roswell Sawyer, Sherman observed that “My own belief, is that even now the non-slaveholding classes of the South are alienating from their associates in War. Already I hear crimination and recrimination. Those who have property left should take warning in time.”<sup>170</sup>

By May 1864, Sherman’s advancement through the northwest region of Georgia convinced him of the supplies available within the state. In a letter to his wife, Ellen, he wrote that “The Country is stripped of cattle, horses, hogs, and grand, but there are large fine fields of growing oats, wheat and corn, which our horses and mules devour as we advance. . . .”<sup>171</sup> From Sherman’s correspondence, the frustrations of poor whites are justified. Despite the increasingly desperate situations of poor whites, Sherman’s campaign succeeded due to the abundance of food and supplies in the central counties. After the capture of Atlanta in September, Sherman and Grant discussed the next movements for Sherman’s forces. Aware that the supplies through the state would support his forces, Sherman convinced Grant that any movement away from Georgia

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<sup>169</sup>Letter from William T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, September 17, 1863, as found in *Sherman’s Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>170</sup>Letter from William T. Sherman to Roswell Sawyer, January 31, 1864, as found in *Sherman’s Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865*.

<sup>171</sup>Letter from William T. Sherman to Ellen Sherman, June 12, 1864.

would negate his recent victory in Atlanta. Furthermore, Sherman insisted that the population needed to understand the burdens of war. He informed General Henry Halleck that “The poor people come to me and beg as for their lives, but my answer is, ‘Your friends have broken our railroads, which supplied us bountifully, and you cannot suppose our soldiers will suffer when there is abundance within reach.’”<sup>172</sup> The importance of Sherman’s observations lies in the realization that his campaign would produce further burdens upon an already dividing population. The “abundance” within the state would come from the group of southerners whom Sherman believed had followed the cry for secession. Sherman’s campaign would demonstrate to the Confederacy that its armies failed to withstand the Union forces, while simultaneously convincing the poor whites in Georgia that their desperate situation needed to be blamed on the planters of the South.

The abundance of supplies that fed Sherman’s forces outside of Atlanta justified the growing frustrations that poor whites held against the planters of Georgia. As the need for food supplies increased with the Confederate army and the home front, the cotton production for many planters continued. The state government under Governor Joseph Brown could do little to stop speculators and the rising prices. By 1864, relief efforts largely failed from the lack of supplies and many appealed to the planter class of the central counties for aid. The realization that the war benefited the wealthy but asked little sacrifice of them grew in the minds of poor Georgians. As Sherman prepared his forces in Atlanta to continue the march, the growing discontent offered the Union army an important opportunity to exploit the internal animosity of Georgians and effectively remove the state from being a factor in the Confederate war effort.

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<sup>172</sup>Letter from William T. Sherman to Henry Halleck, October 19, 1864.

## CHAPTER 4

“THEY MAY STAND THE FALL OF RICHMOND, BUT NOT ALL OF GEORGIA”:

### SOCIAL ANIMOSITY AND SHERMAN’S MARCH

The Savannah Campaign signified a dramatic change in the understanding of military tactics, as well as the war itself. By 1863, the Federal government recognized that the naval blockade and campaigns against Richmond were not providing a timely end to the war. Winfield Scott, George B. McClellan, Joseph Hooker, and other Union commanders attempted to defeat the Confederacy through superior numbers alone.<sup>173</sup> Early campaign strategies emphasized advancing upon Richmond with direct assaults and overwhelming numbers of soldiers. Under General Ulysses S. Grant, however, the Union military embraced a system of “hard war.” According to Mark Grimsley, this theory centered on Union forces attacking and destroying the South’s war-making capabilities through the use of raids and extended campaigns, in addition to attacking the Confederate forces repeatedly and taking advantage of their numerical superiority.<sup>174</sup> In the hard war approach, the Union military focused on destruction of the agricultural, economic, and military resources of the Confederacy, as a means of hindering the South’s ability to wage war. Sherman’s Savannah Campaign is considered to be one of the most significant examples of hard war tactics. By placing the campaign within the context of Georgia’s social history, however, the implications of the hard war tactics employed during the march go far beyond their destruction of the state’s military production capabilities. Sherman’s march, while attacking the economic and industrial centers of

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<sup>173</sup>Perhaps the best narrative of the Civil War in terms of military tactics, remains James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988);

<sup>174</sup>Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Towards Southern Civilians, 1861-1865*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142.

Georgia, also succeeded in bringing further burdens to the already strained social unity of Georgians.

In addition to destroying the Confederacy's main source of weaponry, Union forces also foraged in the rural areas of the state, creating heavier burdens on already suffering poor whites. It became an attack on the fragile relationship between planters and poor whites, many of whom now faced direct involvement in a war that increasingly favored the wealthy. Sherman's experiences in the South and his early campaigns had shown him, first hand, that the South experienced divisions between wealthy and poor whites. Through his correspondence, Sherman displayed a desire to exploit this internal separation when he was presented the opportunity to do so in Georgia. In a larger sense, the psychological impact of the campaign centered upon the already developing cracks in the social unity of Georgia. With the removal of the Confederate forces into Tennessee clearing the way for little resistance, Sherman recognized that a Union invasion would only worsen the already tenuous relationship between wealthy and poor Georgians. The organization and execution of the Savannah Campaign demonstrate that the Union military recognized and acted upon the social strains of Georgians in 1864.

Early scholarship on the Savannah Campaign largely focused on tactics and execution, with little consideration of the psychological effect on Georgians. Studies by James Ford Rhodes and J.G. Randall in the early Twentieth century produced important narratives that focused on the Union's destruction of Atlanta and the surrounding countryside as it related to the Confederacy's military surrender.<sup>175</sup> Ignoring the "Lost Cause" interpretations of post-war southern accounts and relying heavily on political

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<sup>175</sup>See: James Ford Rhodes, *History of the Civil War, 1861-1865*, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1917); J.G. Randall, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1937); Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, Vols. I-III, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1950);

documents and military correspondence, Rhodes determined that Sherman's troops had little effect on southern civilians. Most of the destruction, he argued, resulted from Confederate vandalism.<sup>176</sup> The nationalist sentiment in Rhodes' research continued into the later work of J.G. Randall. Although he expanded Rhodes' study by incorporating important, albeit minimal, evidence from Confederate military and political leaders, Randall still attributed the destruction of Sherman's campaign to various factors. He wrote, "Sherman's campaign is neither to be praised nor used as a text for sweeping generalization as to Northern barbarity. The offender was war itself."<sup>177</sup> Although these studies provided important research into the narrative of the campaign, the experiences of Georgians, notably how their understandings and perceptions of the war effort changed or remained untouched.

The understanding of Sherman's campaign changed with the developments in historical research. To 1950, Civil War studies remained focused on the narrative of the war, centering their research on government and military leaders. That changed when Allan Nevins' multivolume *Ordeal of the Union* provided a thorough discussion of the social, economic, and cultural aspects of the war.<sup>178</sup> Following Randall's research, Nevins contributed to the study of Sherman's march by describing the reaction of Southern leaders to the threat of Union forces in unprotected territory. However, Southern civilians are largely absent from the narrative of the march; instead, the strategy behind the campaign receives far more attention. More recent studies of Sherman's march have included a discussion of the social experience of Georgia's civilians that earlier studies failed to include. Joseph T. Glatthaar's *The March to the Sea and Beyond*

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<sup>176</sup>Rhodes, 407.

<sup>177</sup>Randall, 562.

<sup>178</sup>Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*. Volume III, viii.

provides a vital perspective into the campaign by focusing on the experiences and perceptions of Sherman's troops.<sup>179</sup> Other books by Mark Grimsley, Anne J. Bailey, and Jacqueline Glass Campbell focus on new interpretations of Sherman's campaign, ranging from Union military strategy to resistance on the home front after the capture of Savannah.<sup>180</sup> Their research provides significant analysis of Sherman's troops, the Confederate home front, and the overall significance of the campaign into Union military policy.

Although recent studies show interest in the experiences of Georgians during Sherman's march, the importance of southern social classes—as they relate to the history of the march—remains a neglected field. Military narratives often include the experiences of Georgia's civilians only as a means of depicting the severity of destruction to the state. The Georgian people are depicted and studied as a unified group.<sup>181</sup> For Sherman, social divisions served as an important factor into the planning and execution of the Savannah Campaign. Sherman acknowledged a distinct separation between southern planters and poor whites before even beginning the campaign. In Georgia, the arguments over economic relief, conscription, and supplies created a significant division between these two groups. Sherman's campaign ultimately found its greatest result by inflicting further pressure on already suffering poor whites.

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<sup>179</sup>Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 1985).

<sup>180</sup>See: Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Anne J. Bailey, *War and Ruin: William T. Sherman and the Savannah Campaign*, (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2003); Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home front*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003)

<sup>181</sup>Anne Bailey's study, *War and Ruin*, provides an excellent account of Georgia civilians during the Savannah campaign. Throughout her research, however, the importance of social class and the varying experiences from the march remain untouched. Bailey's study is still vital for its examination of women, newly freed slaves, and urban areas like Savannah and Milledgeville.

In order to understand the Savannah Campaign, it is important to recognize that the march was not Sherman's first experience with employing hard war tactics. In 1863, he aided in the siege of Vicksburg under General Ulysses S. Grant and was put in charge of a military force along the recently captured Mississippi River. With the intention of developing a campaign that would eliminate guerrilla attacks on nearby Union troops, Sherman embarked on the Meridian Campaign. With 25,000 troops, Sherman's forces destroyed railroads, seized livestock, and made the Mississippi region useless for Confederate troops under General Nathan Bedford Forrest.<sup>182</sup> The design of this campaign was shaped by the knowledge that Sherman had of possible frustrations developing within Meridian.<sup>183</sup> In a letter to Major Roswell M. Sawyer, Sherman declared, "Since I have come down here I have seen many Southern Planters, who now hire their own negroes & acknowledge that they were mistaken and know not the earthquake they were to make by appealing to secession."<sup>184</sup> Sherman continued in the letter to suggest to Sawyer that the rich planter class and poor whites were not to be held equally responsible for the war's destruction. Sherman stated:

I believe that some of the Rich & slave holding are prejudiced to an extent that nothing but death & ruin will ever extinguish, but I hope that as the poorer & industrial classes of the south realize their relative weakness, and their dependence upon the fruits of the earth & good will of their fellow men . . .<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Charles Royster, *The Destructive War*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1991), 324.

<sup>183</sup>Buck T. Foster, *Sherman's Mississippi Campaign*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 12. Also, Royster *The Destructive War*, 324. Both authors refer to this campaign as solidifying the 1864 Georgia campaigns and providing Sherman with evidence that the tactics would work against the southern population.

<sup>184</sup>Letter to Roswell M. Sawyer from William T. Sherman, January 31, 1864, as found in *Sherman's Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman*, Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>185</sup>Letter to Roswell M. Sawyer from William T. Sherman, January 31, 1864, as found in *Sherman's Civil War*.

Sherman's letter to Roswell displays recognition of a distinct separation between the planter and poor white citizen. He perceived the poorer class as being far too weak and driven into "hasty action." This also shows the early Union perceptions that not all Southerners agreed with secession; many followed the partisan leadership of wealthy slaveholders and politicians.<sup>186</sup> Sherman dramatically suggested that "No man could deny but that the United States would be benefited by dispossessing a single prejudiced, hard headed and disloyal planter and substituting in his place a dozen or more good industrious families. . ."<sup>187</sup> The march to Meridian in late 1863 also allowed Sherman to develop his unique theory of warfare. Historian Buck T. Foster writes, "The Meridian campaign convinced Sherman that he could travel deeper into the Confederacy, wreaking havoc on the interior, and thereby compelling the populace to end their fruitless support for a dying cause."<sup>188</sup> In Sherman's view, if the Union could make conditions unbearable for the poor population of the South, the discontented faction would develop enough pressure on southern leaders to end the conflict.

Throughout the South, the Union's actions at Meridian became the topic of intense speculation and discussion. For many, the rumors of Sherman's advance caused great concern. In her diary, Frances Woolfolk Wallace, the wife of a Kentucky lawyer, described her possible trip to Meridian after Sherman's campaign. She wrote, "Everyone says our trip to Meridian will be trouble--roads very bad, the same Sherman and his army passed over, houses all burned, have to camp out at night. The Torys and robbers are very

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<sup>186</sup>See Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 47-66.

<sup>187</sup>Letter to Roswell M. Sawyer from William T. Sherman, January 31, 1864, *Sherman's Civil War*.

<sup>188</sup>Foster, 105.



numerous, hope we will get through safely.”<sup>189</sup> From this description, Wallace displays the realization that Sherman’s actions coincided with the emergence, or at the very least continuation, of unionist groups and criminals. The military campaign not only brought destruction to the homes and roads of Meridian, but left social chaos and desperation in its wake. Newspaper reports throughout Georgia printed articles from the Alabama newspapers in an attempt to obtain any information on Sherman’s actions. The *Selma Dispatch* claimed that it “certainly is a magnificent Yankee programme. But a few weeks will dispel this glorious dream of Yankee occupation.”<sup>190</sup> It concluded by predicting that “To an unmilitary eye, at least half of the 32,000 Yankees under Sherman—with “Mobile or Hell” on their caps—will find a Confederate prison, or perhaps their next choice to Mobile.”<sup>191</sup> In another article, a report from the *Mobile Register* claimed that “Our informant states that the enemy committed few depredations upon private property beyond helping themselves to provisions.” The only property reported stolen in the town of Quinman were night clothes and around 800 slaves.<sup>192</sup> These articles downplay the military significance of Sherman’s forces and the destruction they supposedly implemented. In contrast to the rumors and worries discussed by Frances Wallace in her diary, the southern newspapers attempted to minimize the destruction and even hint at Sherman’s inescapable defeat.

Sherman’s Meridian campaign demonstrated his ability to distinguish between those he felt were responsible for the war and the poorer whites, whose discontent he hoped to

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<sup>189</sup>Diary of Frances Woolfolk Wallace, April 17, 1864, *Diary of Frances Woolfolk Wallace, March 19-August 25, 1864* (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) as accessed through The Document South Collection.

<sup>190</sup>*Selma Dispatch*, “The Design of Sherman,” as found in *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, February 20, 1864.

<sup>191</sup>*Selma Dispatch*, February 20, 1864.

<sup>192</sup>*The Mobile Register*, as found in *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, “Sherman’s Expedition,” February 29, 1864.

foment. Rather than engaging in total war tactics, his troops largely focused on the mills and factories of the town, with the damage to private homes largely resulting from foraging parties. For an invasion into enemy territory, the campaign displayed great discipline and restraint. Sherman's desire for order is often attributed to his preference for military and moral authority.<sup>193</sup> His actions after the capture of Atlanta further support the idea that Sherman wished to bring the war to the homes of those Southerners he deemed responsible for the conflict. In a letter to General Henry Halleck, Sherman hinted at the large number of poor families, claiming that "The residence here of a poor population would compel us, sooner or later, to feed them or to see them starve under our eyes."<sup>194</sup> He then ordered all Southerners out of Atlanta, and responded to complaints from Southerners with accusations that the Confederacy had failed to take care of its own civilians. He wrote:

In Memphis, Vicksburg, and Mississippi, we fed thousands upon thousands of the families of rebel soldiers left in our hands, and whom we could not see starve. Now that war comes home to you, you feel very different. You deprecate its horrors, but did not feel them when you sent car-loads of soldiers and ammunition, and moulded shells and shot, to carry war into Kentucky and Tennessee. . .<sup>195</sup>

From his letter, Sherman argued that the Confederacy suffered from a detached leadership. Southern elites, despite the continuing production of war supplies, did not understand the realities of war. Their unwillingness to provide for the families of Confederate soldiers only solidified the realization that wealthy Southerners gave little consideration for the sacrifice being offered by poor soldiers. To Sherman, this

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<sup>193</sup>See John Marszalek, *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1993).

<sup>194</sup>Letter from William T. Sherman to Henry Halleck, September 20, 1864, *Memoirs*.

<sup>195</sup>Letter to James M. Calhoun, E.E. Rawson, and S.C. Wells from William T. Sherman, September 12, 1864, *Memoirs*.

symbolized a deep split in the understanding of the war, as well as unity throughout the South.

Sherman's statements in Atlanta established the two perceptions that would shape the Savannah Campaign. First, Sherman continued to hold southern leaders and elites responsible for starting a war that served only their interests. Southern leaders essentially left poor whites to the mercy of Union forces, during a war that largely depended on lower class whites to fight. Second, the military isolation of the state had allowed Georgian elites to continue the production of supplies for the war effort. By striking through the central region of the state, Sherman anticipated that he could end the economic profits of the wealthy and simultaneously ruin the leadership of the southern elites by placing greater pressure on poor whites.

Sherman's forces demonstrated the potential impact of foraging on the countryside during the capture of Atlanta. William King, a Georgian who lived outside of Atlanta, described the harsh treatment towards the local families during the campaign. Insisting that the Union troops "commit many wanton and cruel depredations, keeping alive those bad feelings that will perpetuate this sad war," King described a foraging party that focused its raiding on the poor families outside of Atlanta. According to King, "A poor family Mrs. Rogers &c. about 7 miles from here . . . she gave me a terrible account of the sufferings of the families in her neighborhood from the Federal Foraging parties who are constantly coming among them, taking every little thing could find, and very often what was not wanted by them would be destroyed. . ." <sup>196</sup> King continued by describing the condition of life outside of Atlanta in September 1864. According to his experiences, the

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<sup>196</sup>Diary of William King, August 31, 1864, (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), accessed through the Document South Collection.

region became far too dangerous for travel. Union foraging parties, Confederate deserters, and local guerrilla units persuaded many to remain at home. He writes:

I heard in town that Smith, one of the Ros'l [Roswell] factory Wagoners, had been hung by our Scouts at Roswell for becoming a Union man, I cannot however believe the report, if he is hung at all I am sure it must be from additional cause, probably desertion . . . I learn that it is too unsafe for any one to try to go over to Roswell, even with a government pass, from the Scouts, deserters & Bushwhackers on the Way.<sup>197</sup>

Once the capture of Atlanta appeared imminent, King himself displayed great concern over his son and the war itself. “How anxious do I feel about my little Boy, if I could only hear that he was safe & well, how grateful would I feel,” King lamented, “What sad anguish & anxiety does this needless political war occasion. What a curse to a Nation are these professional Politicians.”<sup>198</sup> As the sacrifice grew heavier, the realization of who initiated the war emerged. Georgians like King began to recognize the disunity that was present from the beginning of the conflict. As Sherman’s forces moved closer to Atlanta, King again condemned the Confederate leadership as “miserable party politicians [who] care but little who suffers so . . . generally are careful to place themselves out of the way of danger.”<sup>199</sup> King’s comments demonstrated the growing frustration Georgians felt over the failure of the Confederate leadership and the disproportionate sacrifice made by ordinary Southerners for the war effort that became clear with the approach of Union forces.

King’s diary offers a useful insight into the horrors that faced poor whites along the route of Sherman’s invasion. Although foraging parties inflicted little damage to the property of poor families, the need for provisions often resulted in Union troops taking or

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<sup>197</sup>Diary of William King, September 1, 1864.

<sup>198</sup>Diary of William King, September 3, 1864.

<sup>199</sup>Diary of William King, September 8, 1864.

destroying everything available. This desperate situation combined with the already growing anti-Confederate sentiments throughout the region. Increasing numbers of deserter and guerilla groups made the already dangerous situation worse for families. The foraging by Sherman's troops also coincided with a decline in southern morale from General Joseph E. Johnston's inability to withstand Sherman.<sup>200</sup>

One explanation for Sherman's understanding of class in the South is that his experiences in Louisiana prior to the war allowed him to witness the class structure in the southern states. Prior to the war, he earned a reputation, like Ulysses S. Grant, for being unsuccessful at numerous jobs. Upset at his failed attempt as a lawyer in Kansas, Sherman accepted the position of superintendent at the Louisiana School of Learning.<sup>201</sup> During his time as the superintendent, Sherman often attended gatherings with local and state politicians, even going as far as to defend his brother, John Sherman's, speeches as an "abolitionist." He convinced many around him that although he served in the state, his first concern remained the defense of the Constitution, not slavery. In his memoirs he wrote, "I mingled freely with the members of the Board of Supervisors, and with the people of Rapides Parish generally, keeping aloof of all cliques and parties, and I certainly hoped that the threatened storm would blow over . . . ." <sup>202</sup> By the time of his invasion through Georgia, the southern press published accounts of his past as a means of creating the image of a traitor to the South. A report observed that "When it [war] broke

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<sup>200</sup>See Stephen Davis, *Atlanta Will Fall: Sherman, Joe Johnston, and Yankee Heavy Battalions* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2001).

<sup>201</sup>Stanley P. Hirshson, *The White Tecumseh: A Biography of General William T. Sherman* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 63.

<sup>202</sup>*Memoirs*, 143.

out, he was president of a college in Louisiana, enjoying a large salary, and professing undying devotion to the South, to its institutions, and to its people.”<sup>203</sup>

Sherman’s letters immediately following the Atlanta campaign demonstrate his belief that poor southern whites could convince national leaders and military commanders to end the conflict if pressured. In a message to Grant on September 20, 1864, Sherman discussed in detail his plans for a possible Georgia campaign. He wrote, “I can start east and make a circuit south and back, doing vast damage to the State, but resulting in no permanent good; but by mere threatening to do so I hold a rod over the Georgians who are not over loyal to the South.”<sup>204</sup> By placing the blame on the leadership of the Confederacy, this military tactic succeeded in portraying wealthy and elite politicians and planters as free from the burden of war, and largely responsible for the sacrifices of poor whites. In a larger sense, Sherman remained convinced that any attack through the state would result in a weakening of the poorer population and eventually strain the tenuous relationship with the southern leadership. His sentiment was shared by others in the Union military, particularly General Henry Halleck who argued for the implementation of hard war tactics. Halleck argued that “We certainly are not required to treat the so-called non-combatant rebels better than they themselves treat each other. . . We have fed this class of people long enough. Let them go with their husbands and fathers in the rebel ranks.”<sup>205</sup>

With the fall of Atlanta, the state government in Milledgeville faced a dire military situation. With the coastal islands under Federal control, Sherman’s capture of Atlanta,

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<sup>203</sup>*The Fayetteville Observer* “The Climax of Cruelty,” October 9, 1864.

<sup>204</sup>Letter to Ulysses S. Grant from William T. Sherman, September 20, 1864, as found in *Sherman’s Civil War*.

<sup>205</sup>Letter to William T. Sherman from Henry W. Halleck, September 28, 1864. *Memoirs*, 497.

and battles across the Florida border, the state no longer enjoyed the military isolation of the early war years. Governor Joseph E. Brown's decision to remove the militia units from the battlefields after the fall of Atlanta sparked interest from Sherman, who remained convinced that Brown wished to leave the Confederacy. Sherman recalled in his memoirs, "I have not the least doubt that Governor Brown, at that time, seriously entertained the proposition; but he hardly felt ready to act, and simply gave a furlough to his militia."<sup>206</sup> Nevertheless, Sherman's proposed meeting to discuss Georgia's independence caused anxiety among the Confederacy's elite. Concerned over Sherman's proposal, Robert Toombs anxiously wrote to Alexander Stephens urging him to not "by any means go see Sherman, whatever may be the form of his invitation . . . If Sherman means anything, he means to detach Georgia from the Confederacy."<sup>207</sup> Governor Zebulon Vance of North Carolina, worried that Georgia's participation in the Confederacy was wavering, contacted Brown to propose a conference that would address the need to eliminate desertion in the armies. Aware of the fact that "The great evil of desertion must be broken up, if possible; provision must be made to the poor. . . ." Vance called for a meeting of the southern governors in order to discuss how to avoid furthering the damage to the states' defense. Vance observed that "It would avoid much discontent for every man to know that he was required to do only that which every one else has to do, and that the burdens of the war are fairly distributed."<sup>208</sup> Eventually, Brown's reply to Sherman was printed in the local newspapers, stating Brown's view that "as he is only a General commanding an army in the field, and I the governor of a state, neither the Constitution of his country nor my own confers upon us any power to negotiate a peace."

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<sup>206</sup>*Memoirs*, 507.

<sup>207</sup>Letter from Robert Toombs to Alexander Stephens, September 23, 1864.

<sup>208</sup>Letter from Zebulon Vance to Joseph E. Brown, September 23, 1864.

Brown further explained to Sherman that “Georgia may possibly be overrun but can never be subjugated. . .”<sup>209</sup>

The anticipation of poor whites rebelling against government leaders was not the only motivation for the development of the Savannah campaign. Correspondence by Sherman after the fall of Atlanta in September 1864 suggests that Georgia’s economic capabilities also remained a tempting target for further Union attacks. In a letter to Grant on October 9, Sherman rejected Grant’s suggestion of a possible occupation or shortened advance. He wrote, “Until we can repopulate Georgia it is useless to occupy it, but the utter destruction of its roads, houses, and people will cripple their military resources. . . I can make the march and make Georgia howl.”<sup>210</sup> For Grant, the presence of numerous Confederate manufacturing centers throughout the state played an important role in legitimizing a military advance. The Columbus Iron Works and the local sword factory made the city a prime target. The Augusta Powder Works and the several ordnance factories in Macon supplied ammunition for Lee’s army.<sup>211</sup> As Sherman explained to Grant, “The possession of the Savannah River is more than fatal to the possibility of Southern Independence. They may stand the fall of Richmond, but not all of Georgia.”<sup>212</sup> Sherman hoped to convince Union leaders that not only would the campaign encourage the possibility of Georgia’s removal from the Confederacy, but that the economic advantages outweighed the risk.

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<sup>209</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, Governor Brown’s Reply to Gen. Sherman’s Message,” September 30, 1864.

<sup>210</sup>Letter to Ulysses S. Grant from William T. Sherman, October 9, 1864, as found in *Sherman’s Civil War*.

<sup>211</sup>Bailey, 40. Bailey’s account of the industrial capacity of the state is extremely thorough. Many accounts, such as James McPherson’s *The Battle Cry of Freedom* and Glatthaar’s *The March to the Sea and Beyond* only refer to a vague description of the numerous factories and capabilities of the state. See also, Stephen Davis *Atlanta Will Fall: Sherman, Joe Johnston, and Heavy Yankee Battalions*. (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2001).

<sup>212</sup>Letter to Ulysses S. Grant from William T. Sherman, September 20, 1864.



As Sherman prepared for his campaign throughout October 1864, northern newspapers hinted at the precarious situation developing in Georgia. Reports acknowledged the mounting pressure on Governor Joseph Brown and Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Although most of the information regarding the Confederacy was largely received through southern accounts, most of the articles reflected the northern perception of a state with little desire or motivation to resist Sherman. The *New York Herald* reported on November 11, 1864, “It is not even probable that he [Sherman] will have to fight a battle . . . He has to make a march of three hundred miles through a pleasant country, that his army can live upon if necessary. . .”<sup>213</sup> The *New York Times* printed reports of demoralized armies and the use of Confederate troops to catch stragglers throughout the state as early as 1863.<sup>214</sup> By September 1864, the newspaper reported several articles on the exhaustion of the state and the numerous options Sherman now had for inflicting massive damage. As Sherman prepared for the march to Savannah news about the relative ease of passing through Georgia mixed with confusion over the specific targets of his upcoming campaign was limited and many expressed concern over possible failure.

Sherman’s march to Savannah officially began on November 15, 1864 as Union forces evacuated the recently destroyed city of Atlanta. The 220 mile march required a massive area of foraging for Sherman’s 60,000 troops. Consequently, the army was divided into two columns under the command of Generals O.O. Howard and Henry W. Slocum. After studying the census records of Georgia, Sherman organized the two columns along different routes in order to hasten their progress through the state and to

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<sup>213</sup>*New York Herald*, November 11, 1864.

<sup>214</sup>*New York Times*, “Stragglers in Georgia,” September 17, 1863; “The Decline and Fall of the Great Rebellion,” September 14, 1863.

keep Confederate forces guessing as to their next target.<sup>215</sup> Most of the counties from Atlanta to Savannah fell within the plantation belt region of the state and offered a greater supply of crops and livestock. The terrain did offer some difficulty, however, as the counties surrounding Savannah, specifically Chatham, Bryan, and Liberty Counties, contained mostly rice plantations and little support for Sherman's forces.

Prior to the march to Savannah, Sherman established his expectations as to how the campaign was to be carried out. In Special Field Orders No. 120, Sherman discussed the restraint and discipline that Union troops were to exhibit during the campaign. In Section 4, it states that, "The army will forage liberally on the country during the march . . . Soldiers must not enter the dwellings of the inhabitants, or commit any trespass;"<sup>216</sup> Sherman again displays attention towards the separation between rich and poor with Section 5 of the order. It states, "As for horses, mules, wagons, etc., belonging to the inhabitants, the cavalry and artillery may appropriate freely and without limit; discriminating, however, between the rich, who are usually hostile, and the poor and industrious, usually neutral and friendly."<sup>217</sup> The stipulations offer a decidedly friendly approach to the lower class of Georgia. As historian Mark Grimsley suggests, this again reverts back to a "trinity division of the Southern population."<sup>218</sup> For many northerners, the South entered the war under the direction of wealthy elites, with poor whites serving in the army, and slaves constituting the labor at home. These sections of the order, however, go against the sentiment expressed in Sherman's personal correspondence, as well as his actions in the 1863 Mississippi campaign. There is an underlying realization

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<sup>215</sup>Bailey, 53-62.

<sup>216</sup>Special Field Orders No. 120, as found in *The Memoirs of William Tecumseh Sherman*, (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1990).

<sup>217</sup>Special Field Orders No. 120, as found in *The Memoirs of William Tecumseh Sherman*.

<sup>218</sup>Grimsley, 174.

that despite official orders to leave lower class Georgians relatively untouched, the very method of foraging relies upon acquisitions from the civilian population. In early 1864, Sherman related the historic military example of the British army invading and occupying Ireland, eventually with the result of expelling everyone out of various regions, as the precedent for his style of warfare.<sup>219</sup> Although the orders may have presented an official restriction against the destruction of property held by poorer whites, the implementation of campaign itself suggests that Sherman anticipated further hardships for the lower class.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that Sherman's campaign was an attack on the social unity can be derived by studying the foraging parties of the Union advancement. The very act of foraging required the acquisition of supplies for the survival of the army. Without proper military control, the groups could steal goods, supplies, and personal property with little resistance. The ability of officers to control their men, however, clashed with the missions that foraging groups were designed to carry out. In many towns, officers struggled to maintain a presence of military discipline while ordering troops to take crops, animals, and grain from struggling families.<sup>220</sup> As Joseph T. Glatthaar stated, "Vigorous control, the only solution to the problem, would have stifled out the independence of the troops and detracted from the overall effectiveness of the campaign, and probably would have endangered its success."<sup>221</sup>

On her plantation, Dolly Sumner Burge encountered the terror of the Union foraging. On November 15, Union troops entered her home outside of Covington. After stealing her flour, butter, eggs, and wine, the soldiers placed a guard on her home to avoid any internal damage. She wrote, "My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my

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<sup>219</sup>Letter to Roswell M. Sawyer from William T. Sherman, as found in *Sherman's Civil War*.

<sup>220</sup>See Grimsley, 193-196.

<sup>221</sup>Glatthaar, 147.

young pigs, are shot down in my yard and hunted as if they were rebels themselves. Utterly powerless I ran out and appealed to the guard. He replied, 'I cannot help you, Madam; it is orders.'<sup>222</sup> Burge also expressed shock over the treatment of her slaves when Union soldiers began "cursing them and saying that 'Jeff Davis wanted to put them in his army, but that they should not fight for him, but for the Union!'"<sup>223</sup> Eventually, the army passed leaving Burge "poorer by thirty thousand dollars than I was yesterday morning. And a much stronger Rebel!"<sup>224</sup> For some Confederate planters, particularly women, the foraging parties became sources of increased animosity against the North. Plain folk women, however, might have initially supported their husbands in the war effort, but could hardly recover from such pillaging.<sup>225</sup>

In his diary on the march, Private George Sharland related his numerous experiences with foraging. Often describing the campaign as a "rich feast" of food and jokes, Sharland observed the foraging companies and their impact on the various towns and cities. In one entry he wrote, "But shortly before dark, we passed through the town of Jackson, the county seat of Botts [Butts] county, and went into camp, on the east side of the same, having marched about twenty miles through a very fine country, containing abundance of forage for man and beast, which was liberally appropriated for army use."<sup>226</sup> He continued by discussing the various horrors that planters felt towards the foraging groups. "The planters dread to see them more in this aspect of their warfare

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<sup>222</sup>Diary of Dolly Sumner Burge, November 18, 1864, *A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation by Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea* (New York: Century Co., 1918).

<sup>223</sup>Diary of Dolly Sumner Burge, November 18, 1864.

<sup>224</sup>Diary of Dolly Sumner Burge, November 18, 1864.

<sup>225</sup>George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 174.

<sup>226</sup>Diary of George Sharland, November 17, 1864, *Knapsack Notes of Gen. Sherman's Grand Campaign through the Empire State of the South* (Springfield: Jackson and Bradford, 1865), 14.

than any other,” he wrote, “as it entirely cuts off their hopes from the prospect of a next year's crop, but such is the dreaded fortunes of war.”<sup>227</sup> Although speaking about the planters of Butts County, located in the central region of the plantation belt, his words portray the drastic damage to the towns and farms. The abundance of food and supplies suggests that plantations were not the only locations of Union foraging. Sharland supported this when he observed, “It becomes a matter of surprise to the masses of civilians, as to how an army of such proportions as ours, can daily prosecute its journey, through an enemy's country . . . yet in doing so, we do not furnish provisions for much over one half of what really belongs to the army. . . .”<sup>228</sup> To Sharland, the army's foraging reached such proportions that it surprised the southern civilians, yet in his opinion, the Union army could have taken or destroyed much more.

Sharland's observation displays the Union sentiment that all provisions within the state belonged to the Union forces. Foraging parties required northern troops to function independently and combined the open-ended orders with an intense desire to punish the Confederacy.<sup>229</sup> Sharland closed an entry on November 30:

But I am safe in concluding that the country left in our rear daily, is pretty much cleared of all it contained, leaving the inhabitants to conclude that they had experienced a human plague, or at least, that some unusually ravenous creatures had committed a general depredation, and passed on, without asking the privilege or right of way.<sup>230</sup>

Sharland's entries suggest that Union troops did little to differentiate between wealthy and poor Georgians. Reports of food being scarce in the state went against the experiences of many northern troops as they march toward Savannah. George Nichols,

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<sup>227</sup>Diary of George Sharland, November 20, 1864.

<sup>228</sup>Diary of George Sharland, November 30, 1864.

<sup>229</sup>Glatthaar, 65.

<sup>230</sup>Diary of George Sharland, November 30, 1864.

an officer from Illinois, discussed his confusion over the abundance of supplies. He wrote, “We had been told that the country was very poor east of the Oconee, but our experience has been a delightful gastronomic contradiction of the statement. The cattle trains are getting so large that we find difficulty in driving them along.”<sup>231</sup> To Nichols and his comrades, the campaign represented a great change in the way of living for the Union forces. In addition to the various vegetables and meats, Nichols wrote, “The mills here and there furnish fresh supplies of flour and meal, and we hear little or nothing of "hard tack" -- that terror to weak mastication. Over the sections of country lately traversed I find very little cultivation of cotton.”<sup>232</sup> For many Union troops, the campaign signified a chance to eat well, whether at the expense of poor or wealthy Georgians.

Despite the increasingly dire situation facing the state, many newspaper editors continued to portray the image of a unified southern home front. Even before the Savannah Campaign, as the Union forces continued through the counties outside of Atlanta, local newspapers throughout Georgia attempted to rally the citizens to the militia units. The *Macon Daily Telegraph* claimed that Sherman’s forces would find “a lion in the path” should they attempt to capture Macon.<sup>233</sup> Proclamations from Richmond urged Georgians to “fly to arms, remove your negroes, horses, cattle, and provisions away from Sherman’s army. . .”<sup>234</sup> An anonymous writer proclaimed that the Confederacy needed to bring more men up from the positions that keep them from the front lines. In order to accomplish this, “The newspapers and printing press could be suspended for a time. The stores could be closed for a month and every man go to Hood’s army. By this means the

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<sup>231</sup>Diary of George Ward Nichols, November 27, 1864, *The Story of the Great March: From the Diary of a Staff Officer* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 66.

<sup>232</sup>Diary of George Ward Nichols, November 27, 1864.

<sup>233</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “The Situation,” November 19, 1864.

<sup>234</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “Proclamation to the People of Georgia,” November 21, 1864.

army would be doubled within one week's time, and could, within one month, overwhelm Sherman."<sup>235</sup> For many poor whites, Sherman's march presented a difficult situation that required a decision between the sacrifice for national defense or the protection of family. In the loyalist areas of southeastern Georgia, many men previously resisted the call for national service. Deserting or remaining at home allowed poor whites the opportunity to avoid a war they felt was unjust. With Sherman's invasion, however, these men now faced a serious threat to the safety of their families.<sup>236</sup>

With the Union forces penetrating deeper into the state's plantation region, Sherman's columns attempted to deal with the growing number of slaves following its two columns. Sherman described an incident with a group of newly freed slaves around the town of Covington. After asking the slaves if they understood the war and how it was being fought, Sherman informed them of his desire to have them remain at the plantations. "I then explained to him [an elderly slave] that we wanted the slaves to remain where they were, and not to load us down with useless mouths, which would eat up the food needed for our fighting-men; that our success was their assured freedom."<sup>237</sup> With many slaveholders leaving before Sherman's troops arrived, slaves continued to follow the Union forces. In a tragic event at Ebenezer Creek, General Jefferson C. Davis ordered the pontoon bridge to be disassembled before slaves could cross the river. Confederate cavalry under General Joseph Wheeler killed or captured all the men, women, and children who did not drown attempting to flee.<sup>238</sup> The incident demonstrates that the

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<sup>235</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, "How to Fill the Ranks," September 30, 1864.

<sup>236</sup>Wetherington, 202.

<sup>237</sup>*Memoirs of William T. Sherman*, 546.

<sup>238</sup>See Bailey, 93-94.

Union campaign placed a far greater emphasis on the industrial and psychological destruction of the state, rather than the well-being of newly freed slaves.

As Sherman's troops surrounded Savannah, the experiences of the march demonstrated the drastically different experiences of planters and poor whites. In his diary, George Nichols discussed his views of the planting class as his regiment moved through the plantation belt of Georgia. He wrote:

In the upper part of the state, meeting with none but the poorer and more ignorant class, I was led to believe that the rich and refined class had fled farther south; but, although I have made diligent search for the intelligent, intellectual aristocracy, I have met with failure and disappointment. There are rich men . . . but their ignorance is only equaled by that twin sister of ignorance, intolerance.<sup>239</sup>

Nichols continued by describing the experiences between Sherman and some poor whites on the march. He acknowledged that Georgia was split over the idea of secession but that almost every civilian claimed to be a Unionist prior to their arrival. He wrote, "It seems hard, sometimes, to strip such men so clear of all eatables as our troops do . . . but, as General Sherman often says to them "If it is true that you are Unionists, you should not have permitted Jeff. Davis to dragoon you until you were as much his slaves as once the negroes were yours." By holding poor whites accountable for the actions of the state, Sherman's men succeeded in continuing the idea of social animosity.

As Sherman's campaign ended in Savannah on December 21, 1864, the psychological impact of the march focused on the economic and social disparities of Georgia. After the capture of Atlanta, Sherman employed his prior experiences of hard war tactics with his understanding of the social hierarchy of the South. Already knowing that the state government possessed little enthusiasm for the Confederate government in Richmond, Sherman understood that the internal unity of Georgia suffered from early contentions

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<sup>239</sup>Diary of George Nichols, November 29, 1864.



and that unity against the invasion would be minimal. With the campaign's end, the social stratification that appealed to the Union army intensified. As Sherman's troops moved into South Carolina in early January 1865, the effects of the Savannah Campaign proved overwhelming for the Georgia home front.

## CHAPTER 5

### “THEY ARE DOING AS MUCH OR MORE INJURY TO THE COUNTRY THAN THE ENEMY”: THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL DIVISION

#### AFTER SHERMAN’S CAMPAIGN

As Sherman’s forces entered Savannah on December 21, 1864, many soldiers reflected upon the recent campaign. In a letter to home, army chaplain George S. Bradley noticed that the southern newspaper reports downplayed the recent capture of the city. “Well, they certainly have a happy way of looking at all their mishaps as ‘blessings in disguise,’” he wrote, “But it will not go down with the masses at home . . . The people at home will be completely discouraged, and the soldiers in the field will feel the same when they hear of the destitution of their families.” Union soldiers like Bradley believed that the devastation of Sherman’s march went beyond pillaging and foraging. The Savannah Campaign, while bringing the harsh realities of war to the wealthy planters located in the central region of the state, placed further pressure on poor whites throughout the state. The march succeeded in raising social tensions by effectively bringing attention to the perceptions of personal sacrifice, desertion, and blame for the inadequate relief efforts. As Bradley observed, “the rebellion is fast tumbling to ruins. Sherman is knocking the bottom out.”<sup>240</sup>

Bradley’s account suggests that the Union military understood the destruction in Georgia to be more than just attacks on the state’s infrastructure. The psychological effect that resulted from Sherman’s campaign brought anxiety to the defenseless home front and concern to Georgian troops. Studies of the psychological implications of the

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<sup>240</sup>Letter from George S. Bradley, December 28, 1865. *The Star Corps: or, Notes of an Army Chaplain During Sherman’s Famous March to the Sea* (Milwaukee, WI: Jermain & Brightman Brothers, 1865), 225.

Savannah Campaign are not new to the field, but placing the march within the context of Georgia's internal disputes and growing "enmity" expands the subject of psychological warfare. As Sherman's forces continued into South Carolina, the physical destruction and psychological strain worsened the already strained unity between slaveholders and nonslaveholders. Poor whites, within the central counties and throughout the state, encountered an increasingly desperate situation. Union foraging had stolen precious supplies from already struggling families and the army had requisitioned or destroyed the crops that could have been used for state relief. Desertion rates in the Confederate forces increased dramatically by the end of December 1864. As southern men returned home, Unionist groups coerced Confederate conscription officers and stole supplies in the barren regions of the state. The lasting effects of Sherman's campaign demonstrated that, while physical destruction to the state could be repaired, the damage to an already weak social unity effectively ruined Georgia's participation in the war effort.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the Savannah Campaign capitalized on the early dissension over the understanding of the war and Georgia's participation in the Confederacy. Early political disputes regarding secession and state defense hindered attempts to promote a unified national identity for Georgians. As the war continued, frustrations over the 1862 Conscription Act, ineffective relief efforts, and the continuation of cotton production in spite of diminishing food supplies convinced many that the war effort lacked unity. This animosity hindered the war effort and aided the Union military tactics of hard war. In preparation for the Savannah Campaign, Sherman acknowledged the division developing within the state. With orders to differentiate between wealthy and poor, Sherman recognized the continuing differences between

Georgians on the home front. By late 1864, animosity within Georgia weakened the war effort in the South's most significant military contributor and served as a crippling weakness to the Confederacy.

This chapter addresses the effect of Sherman's campaign as it pertained to Georgia's worsening social divisions. After Sherman's forces continued into South Carolina, dissension throughout Georgia increased as wealthy planters and cities unaffected by the campaign criticized poor whites for the lack of enthusiasm in the war effort. While poor whites questioned the sacrifices of wealthy slaveholders during the early years of the war, Georgians who possessed the means to withstand the economic and military burdens publically criticized the increasingly desperate families and deserters for their apparent lack of fortitude. The experiences of women throughout the state show that Sherman's march made difficult but not dire circumstances for wealthy families. The foraging of Union troops changed the way of life for wealthy families but placed a dramatic burden on the already desperate situations of poor whites. The drastically varying experiences of women display the disproportionate burden of the war effort on poor families. Elite women expressed their longing for new dresses and more entertaining social events; families in the northern counties of Georgia sought refuge with nearby Union forces. As the number of deserters and Unionists grew, many placed blame on the state government and Governor Joseph E. Brown. For Georgians, the perception of incompetent leaders resulted from the failures of relief efforts and the public arguments between the state and national government. Despite his attempts at relief efforts, Brown faced public scrutiny over his tendency to criticize the Confederacy and offered few solutions of his own to the

growing desperation throughout the Georgia. By the end of the war, the divisions over the war and the understandings of the war resulted in devastating weaknesses to the state.

Although Sherman's campaign inflicted massive destruction upon the industrial and agricultural holdings of the state, the experiences and perceptions of the March largely depended on location, as well as economic status. The central counties that Sherman missed along the plantation belt continued to operate with little regard for the struggling counties in the northern and southern areas of Georgia. Newspapers in towns like Macon attempted to portray a relatively positive atmosphere amidst the growing desperation of the state. One article stated simply that "The warm bright sunshine of yesterday brought out upon the streets an unusual number of people—the ladies availing themselves of it to make calls and visit the merchants. . ."<sup>241</sup> The newspaper printed the article as a means of providing a positive view of the town during the last gloomy days of the Confederacy. The *Macon Daily Telegraph*, however, printed few articles throughout 1864 and 1865 that acknowledged the rising social tensions, suffering by poor Georgians, or the increasing desertions by Georgia troops. Macon, largely a manufacturing town surrounded by the plantations of central Georgia, had a newspaper that continually put distance between the city and the war by publishing articles that discussed the war in other areas of the Confederacy. By offering a focused perspective of the war that often ignored the immediate burdens of surrounding counties and cities, the Macon newspapers displayed the narrow perception of the war that existed throughout the state.

As the Union army moved out of Savannah and into South Carolina, Georgians recognized the worsening disputes throughout the state. An issue of the *Macon Daily Telegraph* questioned the observations of an Augusta newspaper that published reports

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<sup>241</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, February 2, 1865.

claiming, “Sherman has several times, we are told, openly said neither he nor his army are fighting to abolish slavery.”<sup>242</sup> A Macon editor argued that Sherman’s statements were fabricated to control the morale of his army and establish the possibility of reconstruction once the war ended. Ideas of reconstruction were “needed to sow and nourish sentiments of reconstruction in the South, creating dissensions among, whereby it is hoped to weaken us. . .”<sup>243</sup> During the march, Sherman bypassed Macon and Augusta, heavy industrial cities and both vital to the Confederate war effort. Yet, despite the similarities between the two cities, different interpretations of Sherman’s intentions emerged. The report from Augusta regarded Sherman’s statements as proof that the Union forces were not waging a war against slavery. The editor from Macon, however, perceived Sherman’s words as a method of developing the animosity between slaveholders and nonslaveholders. If Sherman maintained that the Union forces cared very little for slavery, he essentially ruined the arguments used by planters to hold together a society divided by class.

The different explanations offered by the Macon and Augusta newspapers display a division that existed from before Sherman’s troops left Savannah for South Carolina. Between November and December 1864, the foraging by Union troops forced many families to cope with little food and no means of production. While some wealthy families still possessed the means to survive, others holding just enough provisions to make it through the war found themselves with little food or supplies. In his diary, George Sharland, a private in the 64<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry, wrote on December 7, 1864 that “The most serious aspect of affairs within the border of rebellion, that stares the

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<sup>242</sup>*Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, as found in the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, January 23, 1865.

<sup>243</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, January 23, 1865.

intelligent observer in the face, is the large number of widows and orphans that are left within the blighted pale of desolation, with gaunt famine staring them in the face. . .”<sup>244</sup> Despite the poverty of some women, many others displayed intense animosity towards the invading forces. Influenced by wartime propaganda and anxiety over the safety of their loved ones, many women voiced their resistance and patriotism to Union troops.<sup>245</sup> By the end of the campaign, Sharland held a more critical view of southern women. He later asked in his diary, “So far as the women are concerned, we might as well spare our pity, for they are the worst secessionists, and why should *they* not suffer?”<sup>246</sup>

As suggested by Sharland’s observation, not all women in the state met the Union invasion with staunch resistance. The way in which women handled the Union invasion largely depended on their economic status and physical location. In the central counties, many women experienced the intensive foraging and pillaging of Sherman’s columns. The Cotton Belt counties, however, were home to many planting elites. For many women, the March did decrease the amount of supplies for wealthy families. Their condition afterwards, however, did not equal the desperation of poor whites in the northern and southern counties. Mary Ann Jones, a plantation mistress in Liberty County, wrote about the aftermath of Sherman’s march. “To obtain a mouthful of food, we are obliged to cook in what was formerly our drawing room,” Jones wrote, “and I have to rise every morning by candlelight before the dawn of day, that we may have it before the enemy takes it from us. . .”<sup>247</sup> Jones discussed several visits by Union soldiers

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<sup>244</sup>Diary of George Sharland, *The Star Corps*, 42-43.

<sup>245</sup>Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 70-72.

<sup>246</sup>Diary of George Sharland, December 28, 1864, *The Star Corps*, 225.

<sup>247</sup>Diary of Mary Ann Jones, January 7, 1865, *Yankees A’Coming: One Month’s Experience During the Invasion of Liberty County, Georgia, 1864-1865*, Monroe, Haskell, ed., (Tuskaloosa: Confederate Press, 1959), 72.

between December 15 and January 5. During each of these encounters, Union troops took personal property and the majority of her food, but still left enough for her and the family. While Jones suffered the emotional trauma of repeated Union visits to her property, her family still possessed enough food to avoid starvation. She still held enough personal possessions that Union troops visited her property. Like many plantation mistresses, Mary Ann Jones suffered from the emotional trauma of Sherman's foraging but did not face complete starvation.

Wealthy southern women in other regions of Georgia continued with their lives and experienced little direct effect from Sherman's troops. A young girl at the time of Sherman's invasion, Eliza Andrews described in her diary the social events in Macon as she spent time with her oldest sister. Largely untouched by the war, Andrews described attempts to get to her home town of Washington, Georgia, located near the South Carolina border. She wrote, "Father keeps writing for us to come home. Brother Troup says he can send us across the country from Macon in a government wagon, with Mr. Forline as an escort, if the rains will ever cease. . ." <sup>248</sup> The discussion, and in a larger sense even the possibility, of personal travel between family members suggests that in January 1865 Andrews and her family were not desperate or concerned about supplies. Describing an upcoming party, she wrote, "Mrs. Stokes Walton gave a big dining—everybody in the neighborhood, almost everybody in the county that is anybody was invited. I expected to wear that beautiful new dress that ran the blockade and I have had so few opportunities of showing." <sup>249</sup> The experiences of women in the central counties

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<sup>248</sup>Diary of Eliza Frances Andrews, January 14, 1865, *The War-time Journal of a Georgia girl, 1864-1865*. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1908), 68.

<sup>249</sup>Diary of Eliza Frances Andrews, January 19, 1865.



and those of the northern and southern regions exposed the dichotomy emerging in the state. For many, the disproportionate burdens became extreme by 1865.

The importance of the observations made by Andrews and Jones during late 1864 is in their descriptions of how they withstood the added pressures of hard war. For Jones, the location of her plantation resulted in Union troops confiscating her food and stealing personal possessions from her family. She admitted that food was available, despite the foraging from Sherman's troops. For Andrews, the war seemed to do little in terms of interrupting the continuation of social events or traditions. Both women possessed the means necessary to survive the war. As Sherman's campaign ended and the war burdens increased, poor whites grew frustrated with this drastic difference in situation.

The differences in social class continued through the wartime experiences of women throughout Georgia. Although the direct social changes to her life were minimal, Eliza Andrews did notice the growing anti-Confederate sentiment permeating the state. Even in a region untouched by the war, the threat of raiding from deserters and unionist groups remained a possibility. In one entry, she describes how a Confederate soldier briefly visited her sister's home. Eventually, the soldier related that he was from the same county in Georgia and "promised to do his best to keep the raiders from getting to us."<sup>250</sup>

As Sherman's forces continued into South Carolina, Georgians struggled to direct blame on someone for the desperate conditions seen throughout the state. By late 1864, privations from the months of warfare forced many poor white women to riot and steal in order to provide for their families. Reports from Early and Miller counties, located in southwestern Georgia, claimed that women and children were guilty of stealing local

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<sup>250</sup>Diary of Eliza Frances Andrews, February 2, 1865.

livestock. In the *Early County News*, the editor threatened to publish the names of the women if the stealing continued. In the same article, another planter from Miller County claimed that “They are now acting as they always would have done, had they the opportunity.”<sup>251</sup> The *Macon Daily Telegraph* reported that in Miller County, fifty women “claiming to be soldiers’ wives,” used axes to break into the county depot at Colquitt. The editor asked “Wonder why is it that soldiers’ wives are reduced to the necessity of thus providing for themselves? Would not the proper authorities do well to look into the matter?”<sup>252</sup> The reports of the desperate women establish how the conditions in the state hindered social unity. In the descriptions, blame is placed on the poor women for behaving “as they always would have done,” and on the state government for its failure to provide relief. Rather than establishing efforts to aid suffering families, the newspaper accounts offer blame and criticism.

As poor whites struggled to withstand the Union forces in the state, local newspapers directed anger and frustration at the lack of patriotism and support. During the Atlanta Campaign, many poor whites attempted to save their property and homes by informing the invading Union forces that they were supporters of the Union. Poor families in the northern counties around Atlanta attempted to convince Sherman’s army that they held strong anti-Confederate sentiments. After the March, many in the plantation belt held strong animosity against these families and groups. The *Macon Daily Telegraph* argued in January 1865:

Of all the mad delusions which ever entered the head of the crack-brained, the ignorant, and the timid, none equals in absurdity that entertained by a few persons

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<sup>251</sup>*Early County News*, February 8, 1865 as found in Williams, et. al., 88.

<sup>252</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “Miller County,” February 24, 1865.

in the South—namely: that it would be possible, under any circumstances to save property by affiliation with the Yankees.<sup>253</sup>

The editorial questions the motive and reasoning behind offering support for the Union. Rather than recognize the possibility of strong unionist sentiment in the northern regions, the author remarks on the certain failure of aligning with the Union. The newspaper accounts from Macon suggest that poor whites received blame and criticism rather than aid against the increasingly desperate conditions.

The article continued to hint that its intended audience was not the planting class of the state. If the Union forces prevailed in the war, the state was determined to “sink into slavery,” using threats of racial chaos to convince poor whites of the seriousness facing them. The article claimed that the Union government would soon demand payment for the war debts, and “It would take more than we possess to repay their debt, and the most traitorous tory in the South would find himself despoiled equally with the truest hearted patriot.”<sup>254</sup> By arguing that all southerners would be subjected to Yankee rule, the article attempted to convince poor whites of the racial hierarchy that would emerge while simultaneously attempting to scare Georgians still loyal to the Confederacy. This argument displays an interesting strategy of appealing to the fears of both groups of civilians. Through this, Sherman’s idea of creating a growing presence of anti-southern sentiment succeeded. The article attempted to subdue the anti-war supporters by reintroducing the racial justifications of the war and suggesting that the state would be unified through its shared punishment if the Union proved to be victorious.

The growing disparity between wealthy and poor Georgians was exacerbated over concerns that planters still placed personal profit before the war effort. Even in early

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<sup>253</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “A Delusion,” January 13, 1865.

<sup>254</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, January 13, 1865.

1864, as Sherman's army approached Georgia from the north, many farmers still refused to grow crops in place of cotton. Calls still went out for planters to organize and contribute more to the war effort. The *Daily Columbus Enquirer* published a letter discussing the recent call for a meeting by the Confederate Commissary. Planters in Muscogee County, as well as the surrounding areas outside of Columbus, were urged to attend in order to "secure concert and cooperation among the producers [planters]." Led by General Howell Cobb, the meeting displayed the serious difficulty Georgians faced in providing for the army and gaining personal profit for crops, cotton, and other supplies. The newspaper reminded planters that "The Government has soldiers in the field fighting for the defense of this wealth, and these soldiers must be provided for, *or all is lost.*"<sup>255</sup>

Despite these appeals, planters who were not directly affected by Sherman's campaigns continued to place personal gain before the war effort. Cotton production throughout small towns in the plantation belt continued. Towns like Griffin, south of Atlanta, produced 440 bales in September 1864. As part of Sherman's "Christmas present" to President Abraham Lincoln, Union troops confiscated 25,000 bales of cotton in Savannah.<sup>256</sup> With Sherman's acquisitions in Savannah, it is evident that cotton production continued even as many women and families in the poor regions of northern and southern Georgia struggled to survive. The *Augusta Constitutionalist* published a report from a commissary agent in Atlanta who claimed that "the suffering for food is absolutely heart rending." He went on to explain that his headquarters "almost constantly thronged with women and children begging for bread. . . During the late freezing weather, females walked as far as sixteen miles in the mud and ice, for the purpose of

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<sup>255</sup>*Daily Columbus Enquirer*, "The Planters' Meeting," February 7, 1864.

<sup>256</sup>Williams, Williams, and Carlson, 187.

getting a meal. . .”<sup>257</sup> As the description shows, Sherman’s idea of the poor encountering an increasingly desperate situation was realized while the perception continued of a planter class unaware of internal struggles in the state.

As the riots and starvation continued, pressure developed against the state officials for their perceived lack of attention. In an article titled “What Will Georgia Do?”, A.C.C. Thompson, a surgeon from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Georgia regiment, described the situation facing many Georgia families. Acknowledging that troops in the field became discouraged by desperate letters from home, the author asked “In view of this critical state of affairs, would it not be wise for the people to demand through their State Legislatures, or Conventions, that the Central Government should take some immediate steps to meet the approaching difficulties with such measures as will save us from utter ruin?”<sup>258</sup> Thompson suggested that the troops in his regiment “were not whipped” and that the only factor leading to the army’s demoralization was the inability of the home front and state government to fully support the war effort. To the men in the army, the political ineffectiveness of the state resulted in poor families facing even greater desperation. In order to “see the people wake up to a proper sense of duty and bring all of our available means,” Thompson even suggested that the country develop a “constitutional hereditary monarchy” as a way of obtaining the means necessary to avoid northern rule.<sup>259</sup> For Thompson, the frustration against the state government resulted from the inability of the government to provide for struggling families. Although not directed at Davis, this “latent enmity” emerged from disappointment in the state government.

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<sup>257</sup> *Augusta Constitutionalist*, March 10, 1865.

<sup>258</sup> *Macon Daily Telegraph*, “What Will Georgia Do?” February 2, 1865.

<sup>259</sup> *Macon Daily Telegraph*, February 2, 1865.

By 1865, Governor Joseph Brown received most of the blame for the state government's inability to provide for poor Georgians. Prior to Sherman's march, Brown had attempted to deal with the growing difficulties in providing relief that faced the state government. In November 1864, Brown asked the state legislature to appropriate six million dollars for the relief of soldiers' families. Appealing to a sense of unity that was not present in the state, Brown suggested that it was the duty of "those at home to see that their families do not suffer from the necessities of life."<sup>260</sup> The relief money, however, did little to alleviate families from the rising prices of speculation. Individual counties became responsible for the relief money and corn distribution, with local judges supervising the distributions.<sup>261</sup> Even the proposed legislation that offered each county its own relief officer met with opposition. One newspaper editorial questioned Brown's decision by arguing that the system was subject to corruption. Any distribution officer that failed to follow the wishes of his superiors would be punished by being reported to the conscription enrollment officers.<sup>262</sup> Brown requested another two million dollars for a clothing fund for the Georgia troops. A cotton tax was offered, although not passed by the General Assembly. Believing that the war could continue on indefinitely, Brown also suggested that every state, north and south, send delegates to a convention. From this, each state would have the ability to decide which nation to join. Since Georgia seceded from the United States, Brown assumed that southern states possessed the right to remove themselves from the Confederacy. As Brown argued, "In a crisis like the present

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<sup>260</sup>Governor's Message to the General Assembly, November 3, 1864.

<sup>261</sup>Mark A. Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 116.

<sup>262</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, "Legislation," March 3, 1865.

Statesmanship is even more important than Generalship.”<sup>263</sup> The call for a state convention after the campaign confirmed Sherman’s belief that Brown’s frustrations with the national government would worsen with an increasingly desperate populace.

Sherman’s march brought attention to the myriad of problems that Brown failed to resolve. In his message to the General Assembly in February 1865, Brown claimed that only three hundred of the ten thousand Georgia troops in Confederate service were in the state during the invasion.<sup>264</sup> Brown’s early war fears of a national government seizing control of a state’s militia and leaving them defenseless were realized. Despite numerous calls from Georgians across the state, however, he still refused to authorize the use of slaves as soldiers, insisting that “I am quite sure any attempt to arm the slaves will be a great error.”<sup>265</sup> He continued by arguing that “When we arm slaves, we abandon slavery. We can never again govern them as slaves, and make the institution profitable to ourselves or them. . .”<sup>266</sup> Despite the threat of military defeat for the Confederacy, Brown resisted the calls to arm the slaves on the basis of being disastrous to the profit of the institution and state’s rights. To many, the state government’s inability to accept responsibility for the Union invasion or the desperate conditions throughout the state continued to build frustrations. The Governor’s message to the State Legislature received harsh attention from the local newspapers. In Macon, an editorial criticized Brown’s insistence that Davis was to blame for the state’s military situation. The author went as far as to suggest that “The effect of this message over the country will be to make Georgia a term of reproach. Even now, in Virginia, Georgians are ashamed of their

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<sup>263</sup>Governor’s Message to the General Assembly, November 3, 1864.

<sup>264</sup>Governor’s Message to the General Assembly, February 15, 1865, pg. 7.

<sup>265</sup>Governor’s Message to the General Assembly, February 15, 1865, pg. 15.

<sup>266</sup>Governor’s Message to the General Assembly, February 15, 1865, pg. 16.

state.”<sup>267</sup> Continuing to blame Richmond, Brown closed his message by arguing that the states of Kentucky and Missouri enjoyed the benefits of the Confederacy while offering nothing in direct taxes. His proposal to remove the representatives of Kentucky and Missouri from the Confederate Congress met with animosity and frustration throughout the nation. In a letter to the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, a Kentuckian wrote that Governor Brown’s message criticized the loyalty of two states, while his own remained in doubt.

He wrote:

I should esteem it base and ungrateful to them[Kentuckians] in the extreme to impugn their State because of those who remain at home shirking their duty, and because of the probability that but for a difference in geographical position, your State to-day has been less united and less determined in purpose than that of Kentucky.<sup>268</sup>

For Joseph Brown, Sherman’s campaign realized the deep fears Brown held for the safety of the state. After continually begging Jefferson Davis to provide more support for the state’s defense, Brown’s urgent calls went unfulfilled due to a lack of soldiers and political animosity. Even after the campaign, Brown continued to defend his actions regarding the militia. In a letter to Secretary of War Seddon, Brown wrote, “Thus ‘abandoned to her fate’ by the President, Georgia’s best reliance was her reserve militia and State Line, whom she had organized and still *keeps*, as by the Constitution she has a right to do. Without them much more property must have been destroyed. . . .”<sup>269</sup> He continued by arguing “Had some officials labored as successfully for the public good as they have assiduously to concentrate all power in the Confederate government . . . the

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<sup>267</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “The Governor’s Message,” March 1, 1865.

<sup>268</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “Gov. Brown and One Point in His Message,” February 24, 1865.

<sup>269</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to James Alexander Seddon, January 6, 1865, as found in *Official Correspondence of Joseph E. Brown*, (Atlanta: C.P.Byrd State Printer, 1910), 698.



country would not have been doomed to witness so many sad reverses. . .”<sup>270</sup> According to Brown, Georgia’s military vulnerability resulted from the constant attempts of the Confederate government to remove all authority and power from the states. In a larger sense, Brown’s arguments with Davis and the numerous secretaries of war in 1861 were justified.

The public perceptions did not agree. An editorial from Macon described the effect that Brown had on the men serving in the Confederate ranks:

Some persons think that *your* [Brown’s] course has done more to promote desertion than have any other dozen causes combined. If you have been constantly sewing [sic] the seeds of distrust and disaffection in and out of the army, then permit me to suggest that it would be more magnanimous in you to take the responsibility, than to charge it upon others.<sup>271</sup>

The article demonstrates the intense frustrations felt by regions untouched by the war. Between 1863 and 1865, Macon’s newspaper printed various critiques of Brown and his arguments with Davis. In the early years of the war, few in the Macon press printed any disagreements with Brown’s policies. As the war effort crumbled throughout the state, towns like Macon questioned the political decisions in an effort to explain why the state’s defenses failed. By questioning Brown’s impact on the soldiers, the Macon press attempted to place blame on the governor for the desertion levels. In many ways, their argument proved valid. Georgia troops in the Confederate armies grew impatient with Brown’s inability to relieve the desperate areas of the state. As one soldier wrote to the

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<sup>270</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to James Alexander Seddon, January 6, 1865, as found in *Official Correspondence of Joseph E. Brown*, 700.

<sup>271</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “To Joseph E. Brown, Governor,” March 3, 1865.

governor, he felt “unwilling to fight longer for a country that will not protect our helpless families.”<sup>272</sup>

As the tensions between wealthy and poor Georgians continued through the later years of the war, desertion became the strongest form of resistance for poor white men in the military. Fear, frustration over the war effort, and concern for struggling families convinced many southern men to leave their regiments. From the first days of the conflict, the Confederate armies suffered from desertion. In mid-1863, General Robert E. Lee informed President Jefferson Davis that “The number of desertions from the army is so great and continues to such an extent that unless some cessation of them can be caused I fear success in the field will be seriously endangered.”<sup>273</sup> In Georgia, as in most of the Confederacy, many of the soldiers came from poor families. As the threat to families and food supplies increased from Sherman’s invasion through the northern counties, Georgian troops deserted in high numbers. Historian Mark Weitz suggests in his study on desertion among troops from Georgia that “From late 1863 through 1864, the will of Georgia’s soldiers to continue fighting gave way to a higher duty to home, particularly those from the Upcountry and upper Piedmont regions of northern Georgia.”<sup>274</sup> The effect of Sherman’s march through the counties of the plantation belt, however, resulted in a lower number of desertions than in the battles outside of Atlanta.<sup>275</sup> This difference resulted from the difference in the economic and social status of Georgians in Sherman’s

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<sup>272</sup>Letter from Thomas R. Trammell to Joseph E. Brown, June 23, 1863, as found in Mark A. Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 117-118.

<sup>273</sup>Letter from Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, August 17, 1863, as found in *Lee’s Dispatches: Unpublished Letters from General Robert E. Lee, C.S.A., to Jefferson Davis and the War Department of the Confederate States of America* (New York: G.P.Putnam’s Sons, 1915), 122-123.

<sup>274</sup>Mark A. Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>275</sup>Weitz, 165-170.

path. The central counties contained a higher number of planters and fewer nonslaveholders than the northern and southwestern counties of the state. What historians like Weitz fail to address, however, is that the perceptions of desertion weakened the relationship between wealthy and poor Georgians in the remaining months of the war. While many poor whites went back to families in the northern and southern regions of the state, many wealthy communities along the plantation belt now renewed their calls for courage and sacrifice in the face of the enemy.

For many poor whites, the urge to desert the Confederate ranks increased dramatically with the Union army's attack on Atlanta in the summer of 1864. In an attempt to drive the Confederate forces under General John B. Hood out of Atlanta, Sherman elected to destroy the city's supply lines by attacking the railroads. In late July, Sherman ordered that Union artillery units target the wagon routes and railways into Atlanta.<sup>276</sup> Despite his attempt to cut off the Confederate supply lines, Sherman understood that Hood's forces still foraged from the countryside. As the siege continued into September, both armies acquired their food and resources from the already struggling northern counties of Georgia. After Sherman captured the city, Hood's decision to continue into Tennessee resulted from the threat of desertion to the army. As General P.G.T. Beauregard wrote in December:

To pursue Sherman the passage of the Army of Tennessee would necessarily have been over roads with all the bridges destroyed, and through a devastated country, affording no substance or forage, and moreover it was feared that a retrograde movement by the on our part would seriously deplete the army by desertions."<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup>Stephen Davis, *Atlanta Will Fall: Sherman, Joe Johnston, and the Yankee Heavy Battalions* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2001), 157.

<sup>277</sup>Letter from P.G.T. Beauregard to Jefferson Davis, December 6, 1864, as found in *The Official Records of the Civil War, Vol. XLIV*, pg. 932.

To coincide with the intense foraging on the desperate counties of Georgia's northern regions, the Union military policy towards deserters transformed into an effective tool to undermine the southern war effort. In 1862, the Union military held to a policy that insisted all deserters and prisoners of war be held until they swore allegiance to the United States, after which they could travel to the North or return to their families.<sup>278</sup> As the war continued into its third year, General Ulysses Grant argued that Confederate prisoners of war be held, as a way to deplete the southern armies. Deserters, however, were offered monetary rewards and transportation home, if their families resided in Union-occupied areas.<sup>279</sup> For many poor Georgians in the Upcountry of northern Georgia, Sherman's forces allowed them an opportunity to return safely.

The actual numbers of Georgia desertions demonstrate that as Sherman's forces moved through the state, the location of families and their economic status influenced how often troops left the ranks. Between July and December 1864, 1,121 Georgians left their ranks for the Union lines.<sup>280</sup> Of this number, only 179 left in October and November. By December, the number decreased again to 106. This demonstrates that the earlier campaign against Atlanta resulted in a larger number of desertions in Georgia. The northern counties, where resistance and frustration over the war continued to strengthen as the war went on, experienced much higher desertion rates than the central plantation counties.<sup>281</sup>

Disappointment and anger with the state government emerged as a factor for desertion before Sherman's campaign. By 1864, Confederate soldiers who did stay

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<sup>278</sup>Weitz, 42.

<sup>279</sup>See Weitz's discussion of the Union transitions in POW/Deserter policy, 35-60.

<sup>280</sup>Table 2, Weitz 67. Numerical data is obtained from Mark Weitz's study of the "The Register of Confederate Deserters," located in the National Archives.

<sup>281</sup>Weitz, 165-170.

received little, if any, monetary compensation as the war continued. A published report in Macon stated that many soldiers who visited their Quartermasters and paymasters were met with clerks informing them that money was unavailable. The article asked, “Why should these poor fellows, who have borne the ‘heat and burthen of the day,’ be turned away without their just compensation, while the eleventh hour men, mostly at home. . .manage somehow to get money, not only for necessary, but for luxurious expenses?”<sup>282</sup> The location close to home and the lack of money convinced many soldiers to desert the ranks.

As troops deserted, the threat of being captured by Confederate authorities existed in the counties and towns of northern and southern Georgia. As early as 1863, reports of the growing number of deserters and “Tories” appeared in state newspapers. The *Columbus Daily Enquirer* wrote that conditions in White County were becoming unsafe. “The state of affairs in that section is said to be very bad . . . It is hoped the authorities will send a sufficient force there to clean them out, root and branch.”<sup>283</sup> In an attempt to eliminate the roaming groups and strengthen his depleted militia units, Governor Brown offered a pardon to the “very considerable amount of deserters and stragglers” hiding from the Confederate forces. Brown declared that the deserter groups represented a threat to the state when he wrote “numbers of these deserters, encouraged by disloyal citizens in the mountains of Northeastern Georgia, have associated themselves together with arms in their lands and are now in rebellion against the authority of this State and the Confederate

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<sup>282</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “No Money!”, February 2, 1864.

<sup>283</sup>*Columbus Daily Enquirer*, “Tories in White County,” November 18, 1863.

State.”<sup>284</sup> According to Brown, the growing unrest in the northern counties weakened their defenses against the Union invasion by encouraging desertions and resisting Confederate political and military authority.

As Sherman’s forces left the state, the Confederate army attempted to capture the increasingly large number of deserters. Orders from General Joseph Wheeler, the commander of the Confederate cavalry under General Hood, stated that missing soldiers would “be returned to their proper commands under good officers” as soon as possible. Wheeler’s order addressed the early war frustrations of poor whites who felt the officers and commanders of the newly formed regiments were unable to lead. Wheeler continued by stating that those missing men who “committed depredations upon citizens” would be punished immediately.<sup>285</sup> Governor Brown also called all militia over the age of fifty to “arrest and send forward deserters and stragglers.”<sup>286</sup> According to the Confederate military, the deserters were not the only ones guilty of hindering the war effort. Colonel I.W. Avery of the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia Cavalry stated that any citizens “who have been depredated upon are requested to send me full particulars, including names, dates, places, circumstances, etc.” Avery’s actions also struck at the desperate families associating with guerrilla groups. He ordered that “Under all circumstances citizens must refuse to purchase stock from strange soldiers, and report them to me. Citizens who buy stock are parties to the theft. . .”<sup>287</sup> The possible aid and support from civilians throughout the counties exacerbated the problem. The deserter groups in the northern counties did not

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<sup>284</sup>Proclamation by Governor Joseph E. Brown, January 17, 1863, *Official Records Series 4, Vol.2, Part 1*, pg. 361. In the proclamation, Brown continued by declaring any citizen harboring a deserter to be guilty of treason and punished

<sup>285</sup>Special Orders, Major General Joseph Wheeler, December 23, 1864.

<sup>286</sup>Letter from Joseph E. Brown to Jefferson Davis, January 23, 1865, as found in *Official Correspondence of Joseph E. Brown*, 705.

<sup>287</sup>Letter from Colonel I.W. Avery, as found in the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, February 2, 1865.

pose the only threat. In a status report from August 1864, Brigadier-General John K. Jackson described the threat of deserters and loyalists from Georgia in the northern counties of Florida. He wrote:

Many deserters from the armies of Virginia and Northern Georgia . . . are collected in the swamps and fastness of Taylor, La Fayette, Levy, and other counties, and have organized, with runaway negroes, bands for the purpose of committing depredations upon the plantations and crops of loyal citizens and running off their slaves.”<sup>288</sup>

When the Confederate military did respond to the growing threat, the troops stationed in the northern counties did little to suppress the desertions or unionist groups. As Confederate conscription officers attempted to requisition supplies and men, the constant battles against the deserter groups often created further violence and animosity. A report from the *Macon Daily Telegraph* argued that the men under General Joseph Wheeler’s cavalry “are really doing as much or more injury to the country than the enemy.”<sup>289</sup> After an inspection in January 1865, Brigadier-General A.W. Reynolds sent a message to General Howell Cobb informing him of the difficult situation facing Confederate authorities in the northern counties. According to Reynolds, many of the troops “have been induced to join these regiments under the promise that they should not be disturbed, and have the privilege of remaining at home. These several commands are mostly unarmed.” Reynolds urged that “They ought not to be sent to General Hood . . . and the facilities and inducements for desertion being greater, I have no doubt a majority of them would either leave or go over to the enemy.” By early 1865, anti-war sentiment extended beyond the northern counties and thwarted the ability of the state and national

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<sup>288</sup>Report from Brigadier-General John K. Jackson to General S. Cooper, August 12, 1864, *Official Records*, Series 1, Vol. 35, Part 2, pg. 605.

<sup>289</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, December 23, 1864.

governments to effectively reinstate deserters or gather supplies. With the prospects of a military victory quickly ending, the state's troops felt little urgency.

Despite the perceived lack of enthusiasm for the war effort, Reynolds closed his message by stating that throughout his tour, he found “no signs of disloyalty” from the civilians.<sup>290</sup> Although Reynolds' description states that poor whites remained loyal, the desperate situation in the northern counties by early 1865 suggests that Reynolds' comment relates to the lack of active resistance. The anti-war sentiment continued into the previously enthusiastically loyal counties of the state. Previous supporters of the Confederacy organized loyalist meetings.<sup>291</sup> A report in the *Macon Daily Telegraph* observed that “There are numerous persons in Macon—in southwest Georgia, and the rich cotton growing sections of the South Atlantic States, who, of late, talk as though they were whipped and are glad of it.”<sup>292</sup> The author attempted to bring attention to the growing discontent in the previously enthusiastic regions of the South, regions that largely benefited from the war. The article continued by observing that “The poverty stricken refugee, the disabled soldier, the gallant achievers of our victories, the patriotic gentleman who has nothing to lose but his honor, and the women—do not talk in this strain.”<sup>293</sup> By describing various supporters of the war effort, the article attempted to establish the presence of active loyalists throughout the state.

Attempts to control Unionist sentiment often became violent, particularly when under the control of the Confederate army. In November 1865, Sidney Andrews, a veteran of Sherman's army, reflected upon the condition of Unionists during the war. According to

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<sup>290</sup>Letter from A.W. Reynolds to Howell Cobb, January 22, 1865, *Official Records Series 1*, Vol. 49, Part 1, pg. 963

<sup>291</sup>Williams, Williams, and Carlson, 186.

<sup>292</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, “Reconstructionists,” January 18, 1865.

<sup>293</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, January 18, 1865.



Andrews, “While the country was under the control of Johnston and Hood, the Union men suffered almost every conceivable wrong and outrage. Their families were turned out of their doors, their wives were abused and insulted, their daughters were maltreated and ruined, their farms pillaged and desolated, their houses sacked and burned, and they themselves were imprisoned and tortured. . . .”<sup>294</sup> Andrews’ reflection, although possibly exaggerated, suggests that Confederate frustrations against Unionist groups often only worsened the situation. By attacking already struggling families or individuals, Confederate authorities only hindered the already low morale throughout the regions.

By March and April 1865, the attempts to subdue the active resistance against the unionist groups seemed to be taking effect. The *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel* reported that under General Rosecrans, the deserters and Tories throughout northern Georgia were being apprehended.<sup>295</sup> It reported again on March 25 that the possibility of another Union attack forced the units in the region to threaten the civilians. The article stated, “Our troops in that section openly threatened to destroy all the property of those who are suspected of sympathizing with the enemy in case they again advance.”<sup>296</sup> The *Southern Watchman* in Athens reported that the situation in the northern counties improved by April 1865. The article stated, “The country is now perfectly quiet—Tories all driven out, and no scenes of bloodshed.” It did suggest that the desperate conditions of many families still remained. According to the author, “We regret to state that stealing horses and other property is still very common. This evil has grown to such proportions that many persons will find it very difficult to get their crops cultivated.”<sup>297</sup> Although the

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<sup>294</sup>Diary of Sidney Andrews, November 1865, 345.

<sup>295</sup>*Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, February 23, 1865.

<sup>296</sup>*Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, March 25, 1865.

<sup>297</sup>*Athens Southern Watchman*, “Affairs in the Up-country,” April 1, 1865.

direct attacks on Confederate officials seemed to be decreasing, the desperation for many Georgians remained.

With the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia in April 1865, the last major Confederate resistance was eliminated. For the state of Georgia, however, the internal divisions created insurmountable weaknesses for the state government and the military well before the official surrender of the Confederacy. Through the growing disparity over the experiences and burdens of war, Georgians faced great difficulties in uniting the population. Anger towards the actions and perceived lack of enthusiasm for the war caused many Georgians to view struggling families with disdain. Many directed animosity and blame towards the state government and Governor Joseph Brown for the inability to provide relief, capture deserter groups, and for constant public criticism against President Jefferson Davis. This chapter contributes to the scholarship of Georgia's wartime experiences by examining the specific difficulties encountered after General William T. Sherman's Savannah Campaign. By observing the military, economic, and social problems of Civil War Georgia, the Savannah Campaign represents a significant attack into the larger weaknesses of the Confederacy. Although recognized as an impressive march through the heart of enemy territory, Sherman's campaign also symbolizes a Union attack that exploited the lack of unity and understanding of the Confederacy and the southern war effort.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

On January 7, 1865, the *Macon Daily Telegraph* printed an editorial addressing the dangers facing the country. In a rare acknowledgement of the realities developing in Georgia, the article suggested that the social division that emerged in the initial years of the conflict had effectively hindered the state by 1865. “The seeds of discord were sown at an early period of this unparalleled contest,” the article stated, “They have germinated, and the fruits are now appearing. A spirit of bitter controversy—of crimination and recrimination—is beginning to be developed, and ‘dissension, distraction, and division of sentiment and aim,’ are indeed beginning to lead, even in our infancy, to political death.”<sup>298</sup> Animosity between slaveholders and nonslaveholders emanated from disputes over secession, the Confederate war effort, and the increasingly disproportionate sacrifice being made by poor whites. The events in Georgia leading into the March to the Sea demonstrate that Georgia’s internal divisions weakened the state’s ability to remain an effective contributor to the war effort. Sherman’s march did not occur as a solitary event, but rather within the worsening social conditions of the South’s largest and most industrially productive state.

By viewing Sherman’s March within the context of Georgia’s social divisions, it is evident that internal support for the Confederacy suffered from the beginning. The “latent enmity of Georgia” emerged not after Sherman’s campaign in 1864, but as early as the political discussions of secession in 1860. Previous historiography addresses the political disputes, but views them in the context of a political battle over the understanding of state’s rights. Although the correspondence between Governor Joseph

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<sup>298</sup>*Macon Daily Telegraph*, January 7, 1865.

Brown and President Jefferson Davis relates to Georgia's role in the Confederacy, the documents imply a larger struggle to maintain the satisfaction of both poor and wealthy Georgians. As resistance to the Confederate service developed, Brown attempted to satisfy both groups by keeping troops within Georgia and forcing the Confederacy to take Brown's selected officers. Urging Davis to consider the many threats facing the state, Brown succeeded in creating a strained relationship with the Confederate War Department and used this conflict with Richmond to place blame on Davis for the state's conditions in 1864.

Despite Brown's failed attempts to foster unity for the war effort, the state still provided more supplies and soldiers to the Confederate military than any other southern states. Yet, regions of the state still remained unconvinced. Wealthy planters continued to grow cotton despite the desperate need for military and public aid. The prices of food and supplies rose quickly through the work of speculators. Through deployments in his early military career, as well as the Meridian Campaign in late 1863, General Sherman recognized the divisions between poor and wealthy throughout the South. Georgia's social tensions, made visible by the public disputes between Brown and Davis, convinced Sherman of the increasingly desperate conditions in the state.

As General Ulysses Grant established the need for hard war tactics, Sherman's observations of the South aided in the development of the Savannah Campaign. Although historians have studied psychological warfare and its impact on the Savannah Campaign, the effect on Georgians shows that the effects went beyond the fear of invasion or destruction. The planters located in the Cotton Belt of Georgia did anticipate his campaign with great anxiety. The greater impact, however, came from the increased

stress it placed on the already tenuous relationship between wealthy and poor Georgians. Poor families, already desperate from the lack of supplies, faced greater burdens while some wealthy planters still maintained a sense of pre-war life and luxury and were unmoved by the hardships of their poorer neighbors. Animosity also developed from Georgians relatively untouched by the war, as the reports of poor whites going to Union forces for aid angered many people in places like Macon. Desertion rates and the number of guerilla units rose dramatically after the Savannah Campaign as the war's cost and family desperation convinced many poor whites to return home.

After the war, Sherman wrote in his memoirs that he considered the March to the Sea to be of less significance than his campaign through South Carolina. "Were I to express my measure of importance of the march to the sea, and of that from Savannah northward," Sherman wrote "I would place the former at one, and the latter at ten, or maximum."<sup>299</sup> While the campaign through the Carolinas may have appealed to Sherman's idea of "punishment" for the South, the Savannah Campaign represents a greater attack on the internal condition of the Confederacy. The social damage to the state, and ultimately the Confederacy, proves that Sherman succeeded in his attempt to "make Georgia howl."

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<sup>299</sup>*Memoirs*, 581.

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