

“The land of my birth and the home of my heart”: Enlistment Motivations for Confederate
Soldiers in Montgomery County, Virginia, 1861-1862

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ABSTRACT

There is a gap in existing literature in regards to the role of community in understanding the motivations of Civil War soldiers. Current historiographical studies try to apply the same motivational factors to entire states, armies, or to all Union or Confederate soldiers in general. Some historians even attempt to show that regardless of Union or Confederate, soldiers’ motivations were similar due to a shared American identity. This thesis explores a community in the mountain valleys of present-day Southwest Virginia, which stayed loyal to Richmond and the Confederacy. This case study of Montgomery County illustrates that enlistment motivations varied based on a mixture of internal and external factors distinctive to a soldier’s community; therefore, there cannot be a representative sample of the Confederate Army that covers all the nuances that makes each community unique.

Enlistment was both a personal decision and one influenced by the environment. Montgomery County soldiers were the product of their community that included external factors such as slavery, occupation, and class, and internal ideological themes such as honor, masculinity, and patriotism, that compelled them to enlist in the Confederate Army in the first year of the war, April 1861 through April 1862. These men enlisted to protect their status quo when it was convenient for them to leave their home and occupation, and if they had fewer family obligations.

For Jess and Alexandria

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INTRODUCTION

WHY A COMMUNITY STUDY OF SOLDIER MOTIVATION?

What motivates a soldier to join the armed forces during a time of war? Is it the thrill of proving one's masculinity in the face of the enemy and uncertain death? Does a citizen enlist to protect his nation, his land, his loved ones, or his community, or to protect his way of life, possibly to preserve the legacy of generations of his family before him? What if he felt his customs were threatened not by a foreign aggressor, but by a large faction of his own government? The American South was pushed to the brink, and many Southerners believed they had no better recourse to protect their culture than to engage their Northern countrymen on the battlefield. Most Southerners, in the states that ultimately pledged allegiance to the Confederate war effort, lived in or near slaveholding communities and were economically tied to secession and the continuation of slave labor. Southerners in Virginia's agrarian Tidewater and Piedmont regions, therefore, had a vested interest in taking up arms for the Confederacy. For the most part, their neighbors' economies to the west, in the Appalachian communities of present-day West Virginia, did not rely on slave labor and, due to trade routes, had closer ties to Pennsylvania and the Ohio River Valley than to Richmond and the rest of Virginia. After the start of conflict, most of these Unionist counties seceded from Virginia and applied for statehood to the Union as West Virginia.

This thesis investigates the communities outside the usual focus of Virginia Civil War study, in the mountain valleys of present-day Southwest Virginia, which stayed loyal to Richmond and the Confederacy. Southwestern Virginia had a smaller slave population than the rest of the state and is geographically similar to Unionist West Virginia, eastern Tennessee, and western North Carolina. Few transportation and communication lines linked the rural mountain communities of Montgomery and Southwest Virginia to the rest of the state. But when President Lincoln's call to arms rang out across the country calling up seventy-five thousand state militia to suppress the "combinations" of seven Southern states opposing the federal government, Southwestern Virginians turned out in droves—to protect their state of Virginia from possible

federal invasion. Although Virginia had not officially seceded, many Montgomery men felt secession was imminent and mustered with local militia units. Numerous Southwest Virginians felt their way of life was threatened by a “Northern aggressor” and most 1861 volunteers enlisted into the Confederate Army without hesitation. This project examines the motivations that influenced citizens from Montgomery County in Southwestern Virginia to pick up rifles during the first year of the war (April 1861 – April 1862).

ARGUMENT

In part, Montgomery County residents felt compelled to join the Confederate Army because of a sense of patriotism and duty to their state. Although Montgomery residents lived in an area that had similar geography to Unionist regions (like eastern Tennessee and West Virginia), their impetuses to fight for the Southern cause were similar to those of Confederates from other parts of eastern Virginia and South Carolina. Loyalty to the state of Virginia and ideological bonds to the Southern cause propelled men to resist the perceived Northern aggressor who threatened to destroy their culture as they knew it. These patriotic motivations are similar to what other historians found in soldiers’ letters and diaries throughout the Confederacy as well.¹ Due to its location and lines of communication, Montgomery County may at first seem different from rest of the state, but primary evidence suggests that the political ideological ties that bound residents to the Southern cause were similar to those found in eastern Virginia.

This thesis argues that there is a gap in existing literature in regards to the role of community in understanding the motivations of Civil War soldiers.² Current historiographical studies try to apply the same motivational factors to entire states, armies, or to all Union or Confederate soldiers in general. Some historians even attempt to show that regardless of Union or Confederate, soldiers’ motivations were similar due to a shared American identity. This case study of the Southwestern Virginian county of Montgomery illustrates that motivation varied based on a mixture of internal and external factors distinctive to a soldier’s community;

¹ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988); Michael Barton, *Goodmen: The Character of Civil War Soldiers* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981).

² I use Benedict Anderson’s notion of shared culture and experience, found in *Imagined Communities*, to help me define the framework for the definition of community. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

therefore, there cannot be a representative sample that covers all the nuances that make a community unique.

Enlistment was both a personal decision and one influenced by the environment. Montgomery County soldiers were the product of their community that included external factors such as slavery, occupation, and class, and internal ideological themes such as honor, masculinity, and patriotism, that compelled them to enlist in the Confederate Army in the first year of the war, April 1861 through April 1862. These men enlisted to protect their status quo when it was convenient for them to leave their home and occupation (for farmers in particular), and if they had fewer family obligations (young, unmarried, not the head of their households).

SIGNIFICANCE

An investigation of Montgomery County, a small, rural segment of the Southern population, allows historians to understand communal influences on soldiers' reasons to join a conflict, especially where ties to the Southern cause of states' rights and the protection of slavery were not as clearly defined, nor as thoroughly investigated, as in predominantly slaveholding regions. This thesis is a case study that considers how class, family, gender, race, and age within the community influenced the 1861-1862 volunteer soldiers from Southwestern Virginia's Appalachian communities in Montgomery County. These factors will be discussed in depth through the subsequent chapters. Social and cultural factors are integral to understand the community's mentality, and these two methodological approaches guide this investigation.

The effect of community is examined through two enlistment segments: those who enlisted before the end of April 1862 and those who joined the war after April 1862. Starting with the First Conscription Act in April 1862 (and Second Conscription Act the following year and the Third Conscription Act the year after), incentives for voluntarily taking up arms changed due to the fact that the Confederate Army was no longer an all-volunteer force. The threat of the draft may have pushed those men on the fence who considered joining to finally enlist. The Conscription Acts changed a soldier's motivation from a sense of duty to that of an obligation, which seemed to volunteer soldiers as less honorable than volunteering. As will be seen in chapter two, forced enlistment created resentment among conscripted soldiers that contributed to increased desertion later in the war. This thesis concentrates on the soldiers of the first year of

the war, April 1861 through April 1862, when a soldier would have voluntarily enlisted without the pressure of conscription.

Motivation is an individualistic internal concept that compels or drives a person to participate in an event or action. 'Inspiration', 'incentive', and 'enthusiasm' are usually equated with twenty-first century definitions for motivation. Montgomery soldiers did not explicitly state their impetuses for joining the war using modern terms and definitions for 'motivation'. If they did write why they chose to go to war, the words they used most often had overtones of honor, duty, patriotism, or politics.

It is appropriate here to make a note on the primary sources used in this project. In an attempt to maintain the integrity of the primary manuscripts the quotes are left in their original state in regards to spelling, grammar, and punctuation. There are times when the words are not legible, either due to indiscernible handwriting or damage to the original document. My spelling corrections and interpretations for missing or illegible words are indicated in brackets and used only to help the reader. At times, clarifying remarks within quotes are required to eliminate confusion and are also enclosed within brackets.

There are two main benefits to focusing on this particular county as a case study. First, considering only a limited number of available sources alleviates the immense task of wading through countless letters and diaries. This narrow focus enabled me to explore connections among the community's soldiers that would be missed in large-scale studies. I was able to pick out relationships between neighbors, families, and friends that are overlooked by historians trying to research a much larger area, whether it is the state of Virginia or the entire Confederacy. When focused on a small population, historians can carefully investigate the social, economic, and political status of individuals and the competing segments within a community. Additionally, a social and cultural focus on community and society sources allows scholars to explore a regional environment and its effect on a Civil War soldier's decision to enlist. This project aims to encourage other historians to take similar approaches to examine how 'community' influences a soldier's motivation for war. Just as historians understand that each war has its own motivators for the soldiers joining (which is why the Second World War answer of 'primary group cohesion' is not appropriate to apply to the Civil War), historians should know that the blends of motivations are unique across regions and communities.

Like many Civil War historians, James McPherson relied on soldiers' letters and diaries, and he is the first to admit that his sample is biased toward literate soldiers, overlooking groups such as black former slaves, immigrants, and working-class soldiers.³ Unfortunately, any study relying on either solely or mostly literary evidence will be biased toward literate soldiers. McPherson also noted that most of the letters and diaries that survived tended to be from those who died in combat because families wanted to preserve the memory of their lost loved ones. McPherson admits that the high rate of combat deaths in his sample skews the evidence toward highly motivated combatants. After all, one can assume that the more motivated soldiers would not shirk their duties or avoid combat and be more likely to stay at their posts while the bullets flew. Interestingly, both Montgomery enlisted men and officers included more motivational rhetoric during the first year of joining the army and wrote less about their motivation for the Southern cause as the war dragged on.⁴

OUTLINE

The first chapter introduces the citizens and environment of Montgomery County and places Montgomery in context within the greater Virginia state leading up to the Civil War. The baseline analysis of the county demographics created in the first chapter will be used when comparing socioeconomic traits of soldiers to their neighbors in the second chapter. This study explores the county's economic growth, political loyalties, ties to slavery, residents' occupations, and classes. Therefore, chapter one is important to demonstrate what makes Montgomery County similar to other parts of Virginia and the South and why it is a good case study to support or refute existing scholarship on Confederate soldiers' motivations.

After familiarizing readers with Montgomery County, the second chapter explores the external motivating forces that compelled soldiers to enlist in the Confederate Army. These

³ McPherson noted that more than ninety percent of white Union and more than eighty percent of Confederate soldiers were literate and found that many wrote frequent letters to family and friends. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 11.

⁴ Chandra Manning's *What This Cruel War Was Over* explores what ordinary soldiers thought about slavery and its relationship to the war and how those perceptions changed over time. She discovered that there were many reasons why individuals chose to enlist. Her study is more concerned with what soldiers believed the war was over rather than why the soldiers fought. Chandra. Manning, "*What This Cruel War Was Over*": *Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 4.

external forces were important to nurture the individual and influence their personal reasons for joining the fight; specifically: community, peer pressure, family, politics, propaganda, wealth, and class. These factors are more apparent because soldiers wrote more about their community and family than their own emotions. Additionally, analyzing census data allows historians to get an idea of the aggregate county enlistment rather than relying solely on a sample of letters and diaries. Historians can pull socioeconomic and demographic data from census records. The process may be time-consuming, but it is easier to quantify the data.⁵

Of course, a study of this scope would not be complete without hearing the voices of the soldiers themselves. Literary analysis supplements the soldiers' socioeconomic data. Chapter three examines several central themes found in the soldiers' literature. Personal factors, including religion, masculinity, honor, politics, patriotism, and ideology, all affected one's decision to voluntarily enlist in the Confederate Army.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1980s, historians have grappled with the question of what motivated soldiers to enlist during the Civil War.⁶ So far, most scholars have tried to find the answer by using representative samples of Union and Confederate soldiers—or both. Thus, they paint their answer using a broad brush across either the Northern or Southern states. Historians acknowledge the uneven application across regions due to the limited availability of primary sources and the social and professional differences between the soldiers in the sample (primarily officer and enlisted). They look for motivation clues in the letters and diaries of the soldiers, but due to the overwhelming scope of their projects (trying to find the blanket motivations for the “Confederate” soldier, not the “Virginian” soldier, or the “Richmond” soldier) they leave many stones unturned. The historiographical conversation between the key historians on the subject of Civil War soldier motivations flourished in the past couple decades. The trend toward understanding the conflict from the ground up, or from the perspective of the common Civil War soldier, started seventy years ago with Bell Irvin Wiley's *The Life of Johnny Reb* (1943) and *The Life of Billy Yank* (1952), and was followed by Bruce Catton's research posthumously published

⁵ See Appendix A for my methodology in creating the database of Montgomery County soldiers.

⁶ Most notably, McPherson, Linderman, and Hess.

in *Reflections on the Civil War* (1981). In 1988, forty years after Wiley persuaded Civil War historians to move beyond the tactics and politics and focus on the soldiers of the Civil War, Reid Mitchell and James Robertson penned updated versions of studies on the common soldier in *Civil War Soldiers* (1988) and *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (1988), respectively. The late twentieth century was ripe with historiographical sketches of the Civil War soldier.⁷

The study of the common soldier slowly evolved from examining their experiences to studying their combat motivations. Gerald Linderman pioneered this new approach in his *Embattled Courage* in 1987. However, not everyone was satisfied with Linderman's answer and methodology for boiling down combat motivation to one essential core value—courage. Historians James McPherson and Earl Hess each published their own interpretations of soldiers' motivations in 1997. McPherson's and Hess' studies attempt to define motivation across the board for the entire South or the entire North but are too comprehensive to consider variations in motivation from region to region. Recent publications narrow the scope of exploration down to the state level. Aaron Sheehan-Dean and Joseph Glatthaar focus on Virginia and Army of Northern Virginia soldiers, respectively, but both are too broad to investigate the communal influences on a soldier's impetus to fight.⁸ In one such study, Larry Logue created a random sampling of Mississippi males from the 1860 federal census and analyzed the statistics to compare enlistment amongst Mississippi regions.⁹ While supported with some written evidence, Logue's findings were based mostly on socioeconomic analysis.

Linderman's *Embattled Courage* followed more in the footsteps of Wiley and pushed Victorian values of knightliness, manliness and courage, rather than ideological motivations such as patriotism and honor.¹⁰ *Embattled Courage* draws parallels between the Civil War and the

⁷ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943); Bruce Catton, *Reflections on the Civil War*, ed. John Leekley (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981); Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*; and, James I. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

⁸ Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987); McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*; Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997); Aaron Charles Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); and, Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia: A Statistical Portrait of the Troops Who Served Under Robert E. Lee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁹ Larry M. Logue, "Who Joined the Confederate Army? Soldiers, Civilians, and Communities in Mississippi," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 611–23.

wars of the twentieth century. The author noted the similarities in the “gap between the expectations and the actuality of war; the threat that gap posed for soldier-civilian solidarity in wartime; and the efforts of a postwar society to refashion the soldier experience to fit civilian comprehension of the war.”¹¹ The gap widened over time and caused the motivations for soldiers to change during the war. Linderman wrote that Civil War soldiers regularly faced challenges that strained the confidence with which they originally set out to battle; this loss of confidence was against their expectations and the experience of military life changed them. In Linderman’s analysis two composites of the Civil War soldier emerge, which he splits into two phases: 1861-62 and 1864-65. The focus in *Embattled Courage* is on the first phase, the volunteers. These young male volunteers in the first phase of the war brought with them to army camps a set of values taught to them at home, and they continued to receive support from the home front.¹² Linderman’s definition of courage is infused with ideas of masculinity: “A failure of courage in war was a failure of manhood.”¹³ This thesis’ third chapter explores the concept of Montgomery soldiers defending their masculinity through enlisting. Masculinity was tied to honor more than courage for Montgomery soldiers—they enlisted to defend their families and home as was expected of Southern gentlemen.

Many modern historians have used the Second World War as a case study for understanding soldier motivations during wartime. Shortly after the conflict subsided, a group of psychologists, sociologists, and military analysts constructed a combat motivation paradigm through a four volume work published in 1949 entitled *The American Soldier*.¹⁴ The research resulted in the paradigm of ‘primary group cohesion’, which suggested that solidarity held each member of the group accountable to the whole unit. However, what may have explained why American GIs fought on the European and Pacific front lines, or why most did not shirk their duties once they had gone to war, did not explain what prompted men (the ones who were not drafted) to initially take up arms and leave their loved ones at home. Also, what may effectively

¹⁰ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 309.

¹¹ Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴ Samuel Andrew Stouffer, et al, *The American Soldier*, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

answer the question of soldier motivations during twentieth century global conflicts does not necessarily work for nineteenth century civil war.¹⁵

After writing *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (1988), one of the most-acclaimed volumes on the Civil War, James McPherson took stock of existing literature on Civil War soldier motivation and determined that it was inadequate. The resulting *For Cause and Comrades* (1997) is lauded as one of the best investigations into the motivations for Union and Confederate soldiers to join the war. *For Cause and Comrades* is an expansion of McPherson's earlier *What They Fought for, 1861-1865* (1995),¹⁶ and focuses on the variety of motives of volunteer soldiers from both sides of the conflict. Unlike previous publications on the common Civil War soldier, *For Cause and Comrades* is a cultural investigation that focuses on the motivations of volunteer soldiers, including peer pressure, group cohesion, male bonding, ideals of manhood and masculinity, concepts of duty, honor, and courage, functions of leadership, discipline, coercion, the role of religion, and hatred and vengeance.¹⁷ McPherson attacks the twentieth century paradigm that 'primary group cohesion' was the main factor in motivating soldiers during the Civil War. He perused a sample of 25,000 personal letters and 249 diaries from 1,076 soldiers (647 Union and 429 Confederate; every state involved in the conflict is represented in his study) to find out why they fought. McPherson borrowed some conceptual framework from John Lynn (a historian of the French Revolutionary armies) which breaks soldiers' motivation into three categories: initial motivation, sustaining motivation, and combat motivation. In McPherson's work, the first deals with the reasons why men enlisted, the second is what kept the men in the army, and the third is what allowed them to face the danger of battle. This thesis focuses on the interrelation of the first two categories, primarily the initial enlisting motivations.

McPherson's book was well-received in the historical community, and because it hit the bookshelves the same year (1997) as Earl J. Hess' *The Union Soldier in Battle*, the two are often compared and reviewed together. As the title suggests, Hess' *Union Soldier in Battle* draws on

¹⁵ The beginning of the trend in describing the way common soldiers see battle has been attributed to John Keegan's 1976 book, *The Face of Battle*.

¹⁶ James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995). The title of the second book answers the question posed in the title of the first book—soldiers fought for ideological reasons and their communities.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

letters, diaries, and memoirs of Union soldiers to understand how they dealt with combat. It focuses primarily on the experience of battle and how Union soldiers adapted to the bloodshed—more psychological and emotional than philosophical or political ideologies. For these reasons, it seems to fill a gap in literature that was too focused on ‘courage’ or ‘primary group cohesion’ and missed other human factors of the common soldier. McPherson’s and Hess’s (to a lesser extent) sweeping studies of soldier motivations contribute significantly to the field of understanding Civil War soldiers’ motivations. Both interpretations of why men fought in the war serve to remind readers that the elemental experience of armed combat has a cultural history. Many historians see both books as a response to Linderman’s *Embattled Courage*, and reviews of the two books often cite problems with Linderman’s examination of the cultural world of the soldier and his suggestion that stress of battle changed soldiers over time since 1861.¹⁸ I likewise agree that neither Linderman’s stress on ‘courage’,¹⁹ nor twentieth century historians’ stress on the ‘primary group cohesion’ that grew out of the studies of soldiers’ motivations during the Second World War, adequately address the motivations of the Civil War soldier.

McPherson’s and Hess’ books taken together challenge Linderman’s argument that soldiers’ initial enthusiasm to join the fight *evolved over time* until men were not so much fighting for the Northern Cause or the Southern cause, but had other motivations for fighting. However, neither historian considered that both armies were composed of units created from neighborhoods and small communities. Most soldiers (and citizens, for that matter) based political understanding of their nation as made up of states, which were in turn made up local governments and communities. This thesis’ focused study on community allows it to stand apart from overarching narratives that attempt to answer enlistment motivation for an entire nation.

Joseph Frank’s take on Civil War soldier motivation, *With Ballot and Bayonet* (1998), regards governments and politics as key ideological motivators. Frank contends that politics was

¹⁸ Mark Grimsley, “In Not So Dubious Battle: The Motivations of American Civil War Soldiers,” review of *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* by Earl J. Hess, and *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* by James M. McPherson, *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Jan., 1998), pp. 175-188; Carl J. Guarneri, review of *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, by James M. McPherson, and *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, by Earl J. Hess, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (Dec., 1997), pp. 1069-1070; and, Philip S. Paludan, review of *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* by Earl J. Hess, and *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* by James M. McPherson, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 2 (Apr., 1998), pp. 599-601.

¹⁹ “Part One” of his two-part book is entitled “Courage’s War.” The first 112 pages focus on the “centrality of courage” in the volunteer soldier (Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 8).

the defining feature of people's armies North and South, and political convictions served important roles in motivating men and gauging the loyalty of officers: "politics was a decisive factor affecting relations between the home front and the men in the ranks: troops demanded that the home front suppress dissidents who undermined the parent society's resolve and jeopardized its support for the army."²⁰ He did not, however, consider who remained at the home front to do the suppressing until his last chapter. It is in this last chapter that he looks at the community's support for the soldiers on the field. Frank correctly argued that the Civil War was a total war, which required a "new kind of soldier, the citizen-soldier, who must be politically motivated to believe that the cause merits a personal commitment and brutality."²¹ Citizen-soldier volunteers did not need to be conscripted. Frank spends a great deal of time comparing the American armies to the European/Napoleonic armies and the differences between citizen soldiers and soldier citizens (who defeated monarchic armies). *With Ballot and Bayonet* deals mostly at the state level, not communities or regions, and is ultimately biased toward Union sources. It is of note that Frank devoted a brief couple pages to gender motivators and masculinity.²²

Aaron Sheehan-Dean's *Why Confederates Fought* (2007) is a comprehensive study of the experience of Virginia soldiers and their families in the Civil War. He argued that Virginia Confederates remained motivated by emotional connections between military service and the protection of home and family, and challenged scholarship that argued middle and lower class southerners gradually withdrew their support for the Confederacy as the war raged on. He maintains that although the war increased in costs (money and lives of southern civilians and soldiers), Virginians "grew increasingly committed to the Confederacy and to the Confederate war goals of establishing independence and maintaining slavery."²³ The study focuses on the soldiers and their families and analyzes how men understood the purpose of the war and how those understandings changed over time. Sheehan-Dean's study of Virginia Confederates better addresses regional motivations for joining the army, but because it looks at the entire state, it is still too comprehensive to address communal influences.

²⁰ Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

²² *Ibid.*, 30–1.

²³ Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 1.

Local studies fall into the existing gap in literature on Civil War soldier motivation, although several historians have explored the effect of war on a particular community's social structures. Analyzing individual Southern communities allows historians to explore issues of loyalty and motivation within them. Martin Crawford investigated Confederate volunteering and enlistment in Ashe County, North Carolina. His research answers Maris Vinovskis' call for more social histories of the Civil War. Crawford explores the loyalty of a mountain population and the need for further examination of the war's impact on individual communities. His research points to the importance of family, local economic and political cultures to mountain societies, and their effects on Civil War enlistment. Jonathan Sarris and Daniel Sutherland also focused on the shared experiences of communities during the Civil War. The studies by Sarris and Sutherland on two Georgian Blue Ridge counties and Culpepper County, Virginia, respectively, offer scholars in-depth looks at Southern communities affected by the war raging around and within.²⁴

Scholars are slowly exploring the experiences of citizens and motivations of soldiers in rural Southern communities. However, social and cultural historians have not adequately investigated soldier motivation at the community level. One avenue in which to study the impact of the war on the South is to examine its effect on a community, where scholars may measure and evaluate the consequences of war within a concentrated area of people, both soldiers and civilians, who witnessed the war there. An important aspect of the war is how the South filled its armies with men ready to defend the Confederacy—why men left their homes and families to enlist in the Confederate Army. The thesis is one of the first studies to explore Confederate enlistment motivations within a specific time and place.

²⁴ Martin Crawford, "Confederate Volunteering and Enlistment in Ashe County, North Carolina, 1861-1862," *Civil War History* 37, no. 1 (March 1991): 29–50; Maris Vinovskis, ed., *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Jonathan Dean Sarris, *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); and, Daniel E. Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861-1865* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

Table i. Montgomery soldiers in the Confederate Army

Army (Total)	Unit (Total)	Company (#)	Organized	Nickname
Army of Northern Virginia (531)	4 th Virginia Infantry (320)	B (63)	July 1861	Fort Lewis Volunteers
		E (82)	July 1861	Montgomery Highlanders
		G (95)	July 1861	Montgomery Fencibles
		L (69)	Aug 1861	Montgomery Mountain Boys
		F/S (3)		
	11 th Virginia Infantry (117)	F (116)	May 1861	Preston Guards
	14 th Virginia Cavalry (52)	F 2 nd (28)	May 1863	Smith's Company
		G (21)	April 1862	Border Rangers
24 th Virginia Infantry (42)	K (41)	May 1861	New River Grays	
Army of Tennessee (295)	54 th Virginia Infantry (220)	C (104)	Sep 1861	Taylor's Company
		E (98)	Sep 1861	Montgomery Grays
		I (7)	Oct 1861	Akers' Company
		F/S (3)		
	63 rd Virginia Infantry (75)	D (75)	April 1862	Francis' Company
McCausland's Brigade, SWVA (75)	21 st Virginia Cavalry (21)	D 2 nd (19)	June 1863	Logan's Company
	25 th Virginia Cavalry (39)	E (27)	Sep 1862	Radford's Company
		F (11)	Sep 1862	Thomas' Company
	36 th Virginia Infantry (15)	C (5)	July 1861	Chapmanville Riflemen
		F (7)	July 1861	Mountain Riflemen
Reserves (85)	4 th Infantry, Preston's Reserves (85)	A (40)	April 1864	Montgomery Reserves
		D (44)	April 1864	Montgomery Reserves
Home Guard (139)	Wade's Regiment Local Defense Troops (139)	A (57)	July 1863	Miller's Company
		D (25)	July 1863	Creed's Company
		E (35)	July 1863	Harris' Company
		F (18)	July 1863	Jones' Company

Note: For simplification, companies with two or fewer soldiers are omitted, as are soldiers in unknown companies. F/S denotes Field Staff.

CHAPTER 1

“THE HOME OF MY HEART”: AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY’S RESIDENTS AND SOLDIERS

Nestled high in the New River Valley between the Alleghany Mountains to the northwest and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the southeast, the communities that made up Montgomery County escaped the turmoil of the nation’s first major wars. After Virginia voted to join the seven other states that seceded before the firing on Fort Sumter, residents across the state realized their geographic location placed their homes at the doorstep of a new enemy, the United States. Surrounded by Washington, D.C., and states still loyal to the U.S. Government,¹ Virginians were anxious that they would not be able to avoid the chaos of the impending conflict. After all, their state lay in the direct path between the U.S. capital and the bulk of the Confederate States, including its then capital of Montgomery, Alabama. However, while the Civil War would eventually bring carnage to the backyards of the folks living in Montgomery County in 1864, the men living there in 1861 had a difficult decision to make. Should they cast their lot with the army of the nascent Confederate government or try to avoid service to stay and protect their homes from possible enemy invasion?

This chapter examines the environment that encouraged soldiers in Montgomery County to enlist in the armies of the Confederacy. In many respects, the county’s ridges and valleys that originally hindered travel to the outside world made it geographically similar to the counties that later formed West Virginia.² This topography perpetuated the frontier culture of its inhabitants located between the populous eastern portion of the state and the mountainous wilderness to the west through the first half of the nineteenth century. For most of their existence prior to the Civil

¹ At the time Virginia seceded, it was bordered on the south by the future Confederate states of Tennessee and North Carolina, on the west and northeast by politically divided Kentucky and Maryland, and to the north by Ohio and Pennsylvania.

² Montgomery County was still more accessible than other parts of Southwest Virginia. This access helped strengthen Montgomery’s ties to the rest of the state during the county’s early years.

War, these distant communities were considered to be on the fringe of civilization. The valley landscapes were not at first accessible to grow the crops that depended upon slave labor, such as those crops of the agrarian-based economies to the east. Residents used the lands for subsistence farming rather than staple crops. When conflict between the North and South opened, the counties of Southwest Virginia could have swayed to the influence of the Unionist, anti-slavery counties of future West Virginia and not aided the Confederate cause with men and supplies. Instead, once Virginia voted to secede from the Union hundreds of men in Southwest Virginia signed up to defend their state from the Yankee invaders. During the course of the nineteenth century Montgomery County strengthened its bonds with Richmond, and when the counties to its north broke off from the state in 1861 Montgomery residents' sympathies remained with the eastern portion of the state. Montgomery County continued to be loyal to Virginia; thus its fate was entwined with that of the Confederacy.

Stronger than any other tie, economic links bound the Montgomery County communities' sympathies to eastern Virginia. Improved transportation routes were crucial commercial links to connect communities to the rest of the country. Situated on the most direct route between the Deep South and the Northeast, Montgomery County relied on the trade and travel that passed through the county. Starting along old Indian trails, the series of maintained turnpikes was eventually bolstered by the railroad in the mid-nineteenth century. By the start of the Civil War, the county depended on the iron-made connection to transport goods to Virginia's Piedmont and Tidewater regions. Slaves were transported to the county to help farmers meet the demands on their fields. Although not to the extent of the Valley, Piedmont, and Tidewater regions, Montgomery County citizens relied on slavery to maintain their status quo. Thus, the railroad, and slavery, pulled Montgomery County from the fringe of the frontier to a committed stakeholder in Virginia's future. Their ties to Richmond and the east bound them to support Virginia's secession.

In addition to the economic environment of Montgomery County, this chapter considers the roles education, class, family, and politics played in compelling men to enlist in the Confederate Army. Social and cultural factors are extremely important to understanding the residents' mentalities, and these two methodological approaches will guide this investigation.³

³ Historian Maris Vinovkis compiled and edited a short collection of social history essays on the Civil War in 1990. At that time, there was a scarcity of materials dealing with the social history aspect of the Civil War, and

This chapter explores Montgomery County’s demographics, political loyalties, and community (settlements and neighborhoods) during the decade before and at the beginning of the Civil War, and will look at class, race (both free and slave blacks), family, and age groups in the population. This discussion will not be complete without exploring the geography, environment, and economy of the county. Chapter one will seek to demonstrate what makes Montgomery County similar to other parts of Virginia and the South and why it is a good case study to support or refute existing scholarship on Confederate soldiers’ motivations. After discussing the county’s geography and economic growth through the nineteenth century, this chapter will analyze slavery, race, politics, occupations, class, and family at the outbreak of the Civil War.

A FLOURISHING COUNTY

Straddling the divide between the deep valleys and high mountains of Northwest Virginia and the eastern part of the state, Southwest Virginia could have gone the way of the counties to its north. Yet, the region was more easily accessible, and it lay along the most direct route between the Northeast and the South. Unlike other parts of Appalachia, Southwest Virginia experienced tremendous change during the mid-nineteenth century. Specifically, a transportation revolution and expansion of slavery expansion propelled the region and its people to support secession and pick up arms for the Confederacy.

For much of the early twentieth century, most historians of the South believed that the mountain communities of Appalachia lived out of sync and far removed from their coastal plain neighbors to the east. While most communities linked to cities and bustling harbors thrived, many of their inland counterparts maintained a state of economic stasis. Because the region’s people were separated from the rest of the country by mountains and treacherous waterways, these scholars concluded Appalachian communities became hamlets of backwoods white mountaineers who shunted change and embraced their isolation; eventually falling into poverty

Vinovskis’ collection of essays deal exclusively with the Union. Maris Vinovskis, *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Since the early 1990s there has been a push to explore the South through a social lens. Examples include Stephanie McCurry’s *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

and ignorance.⁴ However, Southern historians have now moved beyond this antiquated notion of Appalachia and attempt to explore the region’s history that makes it distinct from the Upper and Lower South.⁵

Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Southwest Virginia’s few transportation and communications connections to the rest of the state and country were the Cumberland Gap, Kanawha road, and Valley Road.⁶ Montgomery County residents lived in the remote section of the main thoroughfare through the region and were thus linked to the rest of the state. The county was originally formed in 1776 from Fincastle County,⁷ and during that time many considered the county to be the gateway from Virginia’s populated eastern regions to the frontier.⁸ During the late eighteenth century, the towns that are now known as Christiansburg (founded in 1792 and known previously as Hans Meadows) and Blacksburg (founded in 1798) emerged along two major routes through the county. Travelers passing through Hans Meadows in 1791 noted there were just ten houses in the county seat.⁹ These communities slowly

⁴ Kenneth W. Noe, “Appalachia’s’ Civil War Genesis: Southwest Virginia as Depicted by Northern and European Writers, 1825-1865,” *West Virginia History* 50, no. 1991 (1991): 91. Examples include Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area*, (Boston: *Atlantic Monthly*, 1963); William Goodell Frost, “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,” *Atlantic Monthly* 83 (March 1899): 311-19; Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among the Mountaineers* (1913; reprint, Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1976); and, James Watt Raine, *The Land of the Saddle Bags: A Study of the Mountain People of Appalachia* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Educ. Movement of the U.S. and Canada, 1924).

⁵Kenneth Noe is leading the way challenging old notions of Appalachia consisting entirely of traditional white mountaineers. His book on Southwest Virginia’s railroads presents a “modern” region in touch with the eastern portion of the state. Kenneth W. Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷ It took a while for Montgomery County to form into the boundaries that are familiar today. The 1776 Montgomery County encompassed modern southern West Virginia and much of southwestern Virginia. In 1789, Kanawha formed from the northern third of the original county, then Wythe County formed from a little over half the remainder a year later in 1790. Giles formed from the remaining upper portion in 1806 and Floyd broke off from the south in 1831. Finally, in 1839 Pulaski formed from the western half of the county. By 1885, 25 counties would be formed, in three different states, within Montgomery County’s 1776 boundaries. Robert A. Brock, *Hardesty’s Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, Illustrated* (New York: H.H. Hardesty, 1884).

⁸ “Montgomery County,” *Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center*, accessed January 11, 2014, <http://montgomerymuseum.org/learn/montgomery-county/montgomery-county>; Patricia Neumann, “Blacksburg Transported: From Wagons to Jet Planes,” *A Special Place for 200 Years: A History of Blacksburg, Virginia*, accessed January 11, 2014, <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/bicent/recoll/histbook/chapter7.htm>.

⁹ “Christiansburg,” *Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center*, accessed January 12, 2014, <http://montgomerymuseum.org/learn/montgomery-county/christiansburg>.

blossomed from the flow of frontier-seeking families undertaking the trek up to the New River Valley and beyond.¹⁰ Christiansburg, founded on what would eventually be built a more trafficked southerly route—the “Great State Road”, grew faster than Blacksburg and would be the largest town in Montgomery County at the start of the Civil War.

Montgomery County’s growth was slow because of the difficult passage in which voyagers in wagons climbed over a thousand feet in elevation up from the Roanoke Valley to the New River Valley to continue to Tennessee and other points south and west. The graveled Alleghany Turnpike, chartered in 1805 and completed in 1809, eased a traveler’s ascent up Christiansburg Mountain into Montgomery.¹¹ In 1835, the state budgeted funds to macadamize the Great State Road, and in 1848 the “Southwest Turnpike,” or “macadamized road,” was completed through the county.¹² This improved, maintained road eased the journey for weary wagoners and invited more travelers along the route through the southwest part of the state. Spurred by westward expansion into the American Frontier and aided by improved transportation routes, the county’s 1850 total white population slowly grew to 6,822.¹³

As they did in the rest of the country, the 1850s brought quickening modernization to Montgomery. The most important product of this modernization was the introduction of the railroad to the region. After years of discussion and bickering in the state capital, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad commenced construction from Lynchburg in January 1850.¹⁴ Tracks reached Salem by the end of 1852, and in September 1853 the railroad reached Big Spring (now Elliston). The grade up Christiansburg Mountain into the New River Valley proved the most daunting to engineers,¹⁵ and it was not until June 1854 that the tracks passed through Cambria—Christiansburg’s train depot—and reached Newburn across the New River in Pulaski

¹⁰ As many as fifty thousand families passed through Christiansburg in one year during this time. *Ibid.*

¹¹ Walter K. Wood, “Henry Edmundson, the Alleghany Turnpike, and ‘Fotheringay’ Plantation, 1805-1847: Planting and Trading in Montgomery County, Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 83, no. 3 (July 1975): 304–20.

¹² Neumann, “Blacksburg Transported: From Wagons to Jet Planes.”

¹³ J. D. B. DeBow, “The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850” (Washington: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>.

¹⁴ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 29.

¹⁵ John B. Floyd, *Eighteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors of the Board of Public Works to the General Assembly of Virginia, December 18, 1833* (Richmond: Office of the Board of Public Works, 1834), 279.

County. Finally, in 1856, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad stretched over the 200 miles from Lynchburg to Tennessee after nearly six years of construction.¹⁶

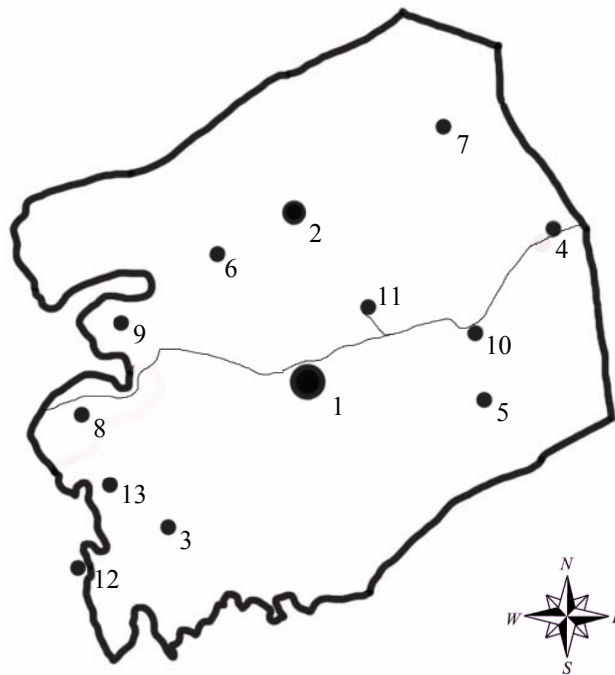
GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMY, SLAVERY, AND POLITICS

The introduction of the railroad was so influential to life in Montgomery County because of Southwest Virginia’s geography. The hilly piedmont and flat tidewater regions east of the Appalachian Mountains were ideal for agriculture. Undulating lands with fertile soil encouraged tobacco and other cash crops which in turn helped bolster Virginia’s share of the Southern economy. With no mountains or deep valleys hindering the construction of roads and railroads, a sprawling transportation infrastructure allowed agricultural goods and merchandise to be easily transported from farms to cities. Likewise, chattel slave labor could be efficiently conveyed to non-slaveowners who used the rented help to sow and harvest crops.

West of the Blue Ridge Mountains was a different story. The terrain of Virginia’s Southwest grand division was mountainous and wooded, with hazy mountains separating rich, deep valleys. Montgomery County lay in the Valley subregion of this grand division in 1860, between the Blue Ridge subregion to the south and Alleghany-Cumberland Plateau subregion to the northwest and the Valley grand division to the east.¹⁷ The Valley subregion was more of a series of interconnected valleys which offered fruitful bottom land to farmers and easy transportation to travelers who conquered the ascent into the New River Valley. Starting at Montgomery, the Valley subregion ran southwest through Pulaski, Wythe, Smyth, and Washington counties to the Tennessee border. High ridges naturally partitioned the counties in the Valley subregion from their neighbors to the north and south. Once settlers were able to reach the area, these counties were the first settled, and became the most populous and commercially-oriented of Southwest Virginia, owing to their proximity to the main thoroughfare,

¹⁶ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 29–30; Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>. The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, with its branches, went from 0 miles in 1850 to 214.86 miles with \$7.43 million in construction costs. This was the biggest investment by any rail line in the state in the decade prior to 1860, where railroad construction costs in Virginia totaled \$64.95 million.

¹⁷ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 12. Virginia was split into grand divisions in 1860. The nine northern-most and more mountainous counties in the Southwest Division latter became part of West Virginia. The Valley grand division encompasses the Shenandoah Valley.

Map of Montgomery County with railroad and post offices

Post office locations labeled in order of population size:

1. Christiansburg
2. Blacksburg
3. Childress Store
4. Lafayette
5. Alleghany Springs
6. Matamoras
7. McDonalds Mill
8. Lovely Mount (located just southeast of the present city of Radford, which separated from Montgomery County in 1892)
9. Shellville
10. Shawsville
11. Montgomery Springs
12. Snowville¹⁸
13. Dry Valley

Source: Author

the Great Road.¹⁹ However, the Valley’s new railroad would swiftly allow residents to exploit their surrounding resources and tie the region to Richmond and the eastern half of the state.

Like many railroads in the nineteenth century, the Virginia and Tennessee encouraged the commercialization of regional agriculture, contributed to industrialization and town development, and stimulated the utilization of African American slavery in Southwest Virginia.²⁰ The railroad made it profitable for farmers and merchants to transport produce, meat, and homemade goods to other parts of the state, and land value near the railroad rose 62.6%

¹⁸ Note that Snowville is technically in Pulaski County. I decided to include soldiers from Snowville for two main reasons: Snowville’s proximity to other Montgomery population centers meant that its residents were more closely tied and relied on those areas for news, supplies, etc. Additionally, census takers included Snowville residents on the census schedule and therefore Snowville households were part of the 1,452 that made up the county total.

¹⁹ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 13; Neumann, “Blacksburg Transported: From Wagons to Jet Planes.”

²⁰ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 12.

between 1850 and 1860, especially in Montgomery County.²¹ A promising coal industry brought prosperity to the region. Local lumber fueled locomotives that transported the mineral resource to seaports for use in marine steam engines. In 1854, the Virginia and Tennessee commissioned a study of coal fields in Montgomery County. By 1860, coal banks in Brush and Price mountains yielded 80,000 bushels.²² Nearly 150 skilled workers in 45 different county manufacturing establishments produced goods valued at \$155,235 for the year as well.²³

Prior to the railroad, the Valley subregion’s agricultural practices were diverse. Farmers grew various subsistence crops, cultivated corn and wheat, and the land was well suited for cattle grazing. The land and climate was also ideal for cultivating tobacco. However, wagon and river transportation was unreliable and farmers did not want to risk losing profits through mold and spoilage. The arrival of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, with reliable logistics schedules and direct lines to the outside markets, hastened the development of capitalistic, slave-based, cash-crop agriculture, which changed the landscape of Montgomery County.²⁴ Arable land grew from 59,734 acres in 1850 to 72,939 in 1860, an increase of 22.1% compared to the 10.4% for the rest of Virginia. During the same period, Virginia’s prized tobacco production blossomed over 118.2%, but Montgomery County’s output in 1860 was a staggering 1,479.2% more than a decade earlier—from 46,100 lbs to 727,995 lbs. In 1860, Southwest Virginia harvested 2,284,167 lbs of tobacco, an incredible 2,020.5% increase since 1850. Seven individual counties, including Montgomery, produced more tobacco in 1860 than the entire region grew ten years earlier.²⁵ Montgomery was one of three counties in the region most affected by a cash-crop economy in 1860; corn production declined as more farmers decided reserve acreage to grow tobacco and wheat than corn. The railroad brought in the required farming equipment and labor, and by 1860 the values of farms in the county grew by 97.9% compared to the state’s 71.8% increased farm value. It is clear that by 1860 the county’s economy was dependent on the railroad that connected it to the east. In the following war years the Confederate government

²¹ Ibid., 50.

²² Ibid., 63; Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860.”

²³ Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860.”

²⁴ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 43.

²⁵ Ibid., 37; DeBow, “The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850”; Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860.”

would turn to Montgomery and Southwest Virginia as a chief source of grains for bread to feed troops in the eastern theater.²⁶

When the Wheeling Conventions of 1861 denounced Virginia’s Ordinance of Secession and set the stage for the new Union state of West Virginia, it was obvious to many delegates why Southwest Virginia sympathized with eastern Virginia: “[Southwest Virginia’s] interests are the same as [Virginia’s]. They lie along the line of the Tennessee and Kentucky, connected with Eastern Virginia by railroads.”²⁷ During the Second Wheeling Convention, delegate John Carlile remarked: “... look at the lines of improvement in Western Virginia outside the Northwest. Where do they lead? Where is the railroad that penetrates Monroe and Greenbrier and the whole Southwest? It is the road that runs from Richmond All the rest and residue of the State is bound by iron bands and commercial ties to the Eastern part of the State, and can never have any commercial interests or intercourse with us.”²⁸ The Unionist counties of West Virginia felt detached economically from the slave-based economy of eastern Virginia and therefore remained loyal to the United States when Virginia seceded.

A Slave-Based Economy

The railroad boosted Montgomery County’s economy by bringing in new residents and more slave labor. Though Virginia’s total free population increased 16.5% between 1850 and 1860, Montgomery County increased by 21.9% and the town of Christiansburg by 31.4%. However, while Virginia’s slave population grew by only 3.9%, Montgomery gained 748 slaves and so increased its chattel population by 50.8%.²⁹ Similarly, Christiansburg’s slave population rose by 57.1%. Virginia’s total population grew by 12.3% during the same period, with

²⁶ Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860”; Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 43, 111.

²⁷ Virgil A. Lewis, *How West Virginia Was Made. Proceedings of the First Convention of the People of Northwestern Virginia at Wheeling, May 13, 14 and 15, 1861, and the Journal of the Second Convention of the People of Northwestern Virginia at Wheeling, Which Assembled, June 11th 1861* (Charleston, WV: News-Mail Company, 1909), 105.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 237.

²⁹ In comparison, Floyd County’s slave population only increased by 6.8%, Roanoke County’s by 5.0 %, and Giles County’s by 15.6%, while Smyth County’s decreased by 2.6%. Other counties further east also lagged behind Montgomery in slave population growth. Charles L. Grant, “An Appalachian Portrait: Black and White in Montgomery County, Virginia, Before the Civil War” (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1987), 9–10.

Montgomery County up 27% and its county seat situated along the railroad up 38.9%.³⁰ Table 1.1 shows the county’s population growth between 1790 and 1860. Although the three decreases can be attributed to the formation of Giles, Floyd, and Pulaski counties, respectively, from Montgomery, there is slow growth in the county with the exception of the years between 1820 and 1830.

Montgomery County’s slave population swelled during the decade preceding the Civil War. In 1850 Montgomery County’s black population was nearly 18.4% of its total populations. Just over 4% of the black population was free, meaning that the total slave population in Montgomery County was 17.6%. By 1860, Montgomery’ black population reached 22.3% with a slave population of 20.9%. Montgomery ranked among the lowest in percentage of free blacks of total county populations in the state.³¹ In Christiansburg, the black population was 38.6%, including 33.2% slave, while the total black Blacksburg population was about 13%.³² The number of enslaved blacks in Christiansburg and Montgomery may seem insignificant when compared to eastern Virginia in 1860, but the percentages of slaves are higher than typical for an Appalachian region.³³ Montgomery slaves were thus a significant minority in a region perceived by many as having had an insignificant slave population when compared to the eastern part of the state. Montgomery’s slave population is actually significant when put up against the rest of Southwest Virginia, where blacks made up only 10.8% ten percent of the region’s population.³⁴ Of its fellow Valley subregion counties, only Washington had more free blacks and more slaves,

³⁰ In 1850, Montgomery’s total population was 8,359, including 6,888 free and 1,471 slaves. By 1860, the population grew to 10,617, of which 8,398 were free and 2,219 were slaves. Christiansburg’s slave population grew from 156 in 1850 to 245 ten years later. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860”; DeBow, “The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850.”

³¹ One extended family, the Campbells, headed six Montgomery households in 1860, totaling thirty-six free blacks which represented nearly 25 percent of the total free black population in the county. Grant, “An Appalachian Portrait,” 58.

³² Harvey Black and Mary Kent Black, *The Civil War Letters of Dr. Harvey Black: A Surgeon with Stonewall Jackson*, ed. Glenn L. McMullen (Baltimore, Md.: Butternut and Blue, 1995), 105. The 1860 census revealed Blacksburg’s population as 406, with 3 free blacks and 52 slaves. *Ibid.*, 106.

³³ As a whole, the Southwest region contained 20,532 blacks, of which only 1,506 were free. 10.8% of the region’s slaves resided in Montgomery County. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior.”

³⁴ The Valley subregion (28.6% of Southwest Virginia’s total population) was 19.0% free black and 17.6% slave; the Alleghany-Cumberland Plateau subregion (58.5%) was 8.0% free black and 7.4% slave; and the Blue Ridge subregion (12.9%) was 5.6% free black and 5.2% slave. *Ibid.*

Table 1.1. Population change in Montgomery County between 1790 and 1860

Census	Population	% Increase
1790	13,228	—
1800	9,044	– 31.6
1810	8,409	– 7.0
1820	8,733	3.9
1830	12,306	40.9
1840	7,405	– 39.8
1850	8,359	12.9
1860	10,617	27.0

Sources: Compiled from the First through Eighth Censuses of the United States

while Pulaski had a higher percentage of free blacks and slaves. Railroads frequently used slave labor during construction, and the building of the Virginia and Tennessee during the early 1850s no doubt played a role in the free black and slave population increases in the Valley subregion during the decade.³⁵

Slaves were an important economic commodity, both as a major source of labor for wealthier land owners in the county, and as a source of labor for less wealthy land owners. Farmers growing labor-intensive cash crops required extra help came at harvest time. Rented slaves were desirable to farmers who could not afford to own a slave; they could hire a slave for less than the cost to pay a white laborer.³⁶ And unlike white laborers, slaves were reliable workers because in their legal status they could not demand higher wages, were accustomed to menial labor, and lacked the freedom to leave.³⁷ Additionally, white masters could earn an extra

³⁵ Over forty slaves counted in Montgomery were employed by the Virginia and Tennessee in the 1860 census.

³⁶ Daniel Hoge to John Brown, October 15, 1854, p.1, Brown Family Papers, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia (hereinafter referred to as VPI).

³⁷ Grant, “An Appalachian Portrait,” 2–3. A major complaint was that slaveholders refused to hire poor whites for skilled jobs and often chose slaves instead. Poor whites had hard time supplementing income from meager farms. Tom’s Creek, a community north of Matamoras dominated by poor farmers, miners, and stonecutters, “seethed with resentment against slaveholders.” Research for this thesis and by other historians reveals a correlation that as the war dragged on many poor soldiers abandoned the Southern cause that would continue the institution of slavery. Cathleen Carlson Reynolds, “A Pragmatic Loyalty: Unionism in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865,” (M.A. thesis, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1987), 28.

profit from renting out their slaves, especially if they did not require many laborers during the whole year (e.g., farmers need more help during the harvest season but not necessarily during the winter months).

The Politics of Slavery

Voting patterns reveal that residents voted to protect slavery which had become vital to the county’s economy. Montgomery residents were primarily Democratic, and voted in support of increasing personal rights (for white males) and the protection of their economy. Following the Virginia State Constitution Convention of 1851, Montgomery voted overwhelmingly in favor of the reforms that gave more electoral rights to whites west of the planter-dominated piedmont and tidewater regions. The county also sided with Democratic Party gubernatorial candidate for the 1855 election, Henry Wise, who ultimately beat Know Nothing candidate Thomas Flournoy. During the 1859 gubernatorial election, Montgomery followed suit with most of Southwest Virginia and voted for Whig candidate William Goggin, who lost to Democrat John Letcher.³⁸ Montgomery and other counties perceived Letcher as a free-soiler, in part due to his one-time support of the 1847 “Ruffner Pamphlet.”³⁹

Montgomery voters were more united in their support of the candidate who would least likely disrupt their way of life during the 1860 presidential election. John Bell narrowly carried the state of Virginia, with 44.6% of the vote over John C. Breckinridge’s 44.5%. Bell received a clear majority (58.8%) of Montgomery’s votes, with 712 ballots cast in his favor. Breckinridge received substantially fewer votes (35.1%), while Douglas (6.1%) and Lincoln (0 votes) were far behind as was the case in the rest of the state. Montgomery heavily favored Bell compared to other counties along the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad which were more closely divided between him and Breckinridge, especially in the most southwestern corner of the state.⁴⁰ Only Pulaski had returns similar to Montgomery. Montgomery supported Bell as did the central and

³⁸ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 87–91.

³⁹ Henry Ruffner proposed stemming the spread of slavery west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Henry Ruffner, *Address to the People of West Virginia: Showing That Slavery Is Injurious to the Public Welfare, and That It May Be Gradually Abolished Without Detriment to the Rights and Interests of Slave Holders* (Bridgewater, VA: Green Bookman, 1933), 38.

⁴⁰ Southwest Virginia gave a 1,510 vote majority to Breckinridge. “Presidential Election Returns,” *Richmond Daily Enquirer*, December 24, 1860, http://www.virginiamemory.com/docs/1860_election_returns.pdf.

eastern portions of the state—in fact, only 20 other counties (13% of all Virginia counties) voted for Bell in higher proportions than Montgomery.⁴¹ Bell ran on the Constitutional Union Party’s platform to oppose possible secession over the national issue of slavery. The party aimed to hold the principles behind the Constitution as the unbendable law of the land, with no other laws to be made that would infringe on Southerners’ right to own slaves. The decade of rapid growth in Montgomery prior to 1860, marked by the increase in tobacco and other farm production that relied on slave labor, could have been vanquished by the emancipation of slaves. Montgomery voted on a candidate with whom they would most likely maintain their status quo.

Montgomery did not escape the political chaos that embroiled the rest of the state during the secession debate in Virginia. Competing factions attempted to discredit each other with divisive rhetoric; men’s honors were called into question. ‘Immediatists’ were labeled as such because they wished to immediately secede from the United States and depicted Unionists as men without honor: unmanly cowards, ‘submissionists’, and abolitionists. Unionists became known as ‘conservative secessionists’ and labeled as ‘wait-a-bits’, and as the state approached the sectional conflict, these politicians won larger margins in Whig/Constitutional Union counties like Montgomery County.⁴² Esteemed Montgomery native and former Secretary of the Navy, William Ballard Preston, was the “acknowledged leader of the wait-a-bits” who opposed hasty secession. Preston saw secession as a right, but only as a last resort. Although from a slaveowning family, he called for the gradual emancipation of slaves at the 1832 session of the Virginia House of Delegates.⁴³ Montgomery voted unanimously in favor of secession in May 1861, but not without coercion. Although no blood was spilled in Montgomery County, armed men patrolled neighborhoods, threatening white male voters to vote for secession or else risk loss of life and/or property.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Breckenridge carried 75 counties to Bell’s 73, plus one county’s votes were tied for the two. Douglas took only four counties. Ibid.

⁴² Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 99.

⁴³ Ibid., 102; Peter Wallenstein, “William Ballard Preston and the Politics of Slavery, 1832-1862,” *The Smithfield Review: Studies in the History of the Region West of the Blue Ridge* 1 (1997): 64.

⁴⁴ Several men claimed after the war that they were threatened with death or having their homes and barns burned if they did not vote in favor of secession. See Southern Claims Commission Record Group (hereinafter referred to as RG) 233, Cases 13893, 21988, 14705, 8230, 179, and 14618. For other evidence of threat of use of force from armed men in the county, see Mary E. Caperton to George H. Caperton. May 14, 1861, p.1-2. Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS AND OCCUPATIONS

An important part of statistical comparison requires a baseline sample for which to compare the soldiers who enlisted from the general county population. Census takers in 1860 collected information from 1,452 Montgomery families who lived in the vicinity of one of thirteen post offices. They gathered data on residents, including household sizes, gender, age, occupation, values of real and personal estates, place of birth, and literacy. This data is used to measure and compare various factors that may have contributed toward motivating an individual to enlist. A random sample of 304 free Montgomery County households was created for this purpose, which generated a 95% confidence rating for the county population of 1,452 households.⁴⁵ This sample included families from every post office, including the category of “Sundry Offices” for which a household was not associated with any post office in particular. The map on page 20 shows the locations of the post offices throughout the county.

With the exception of the two towns of Christiansburg and Blacksburg, Montgomery residents lived in small neighborhoods or individual plots at some distance from one another. Although not large towns, the population concentrations allow us to see how living close to one another affected men’s enlistments. Peer pressure and a sense of community would be more prevalent in more populated places. The largest segment of this sample lived in Christiansburg and comprised of 118 families with a sample population of 701 white and free inhabitants. However, the Eighth Census officially tallies the Christiansburg population at 494, and includes what the census takers considered to be within the Christiansburg town limits.⁴⁶ Because hundreds of other residents used the Christiansburg post office, it is fair to assume that they were under the town’s communal influence. Residents on the census listed in Christiansburg proper, or the outlying areas of Christiansburg, are considered in one post office in the database and county sample for ease of analyzing the data. Also, where the census delineates Christiansburg proper from the surrounding district, there are no such distinctions made in military service records.

⁴⁵ See Appendix A for my methodology in creating the Montgomery County sample.

⁴⁶ This number is found on the thirteenth page of Schedule 1 for Montgomery County.

Table 1.2. Post office populations in the Montgomery sample

Post Office	# Households	% County	# Population in Sample	% Sample Population
Alleghany Springs	21	6.9	113	6.3
Blacksburg	42	13.8	253	14.0
Childress Store	20	6.6	130	7.2
Christiansburg	118	38.8	701	38.9
Dry Valley	5	1.6	26	1.4
Lafayette	21	6.9	122	6.8
Lovely Mount	12	3.9	61	3.4
Matamoras	17	5.6	111	6.2
McDonalds Mill	10	3.3	70	3.9
Montgomery Springs	10	3.3	48	2.7
Shawsville	9	3.0	60	3.3
Shellville	10	3.3	61	3.4
Snowville	7	2.3	41	2.3
Sundry Offices	2	0.7	7	0.4
Montgomery County	304	100	1,804	100

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

In a similar vein, the census does not have a separate listing for the town of Blacksburg versus the Blacksburg district, and not everyone listed as living in Blacksburg actually lived in the town proper. Table 1.2 lists the Montgomery post offices in the county sample.

Only the occupations of the heads of households are considered in the county sample. Like the occupations of soldiers in the database, there were dozens of different professions and jobs held by county residents. Many jobs are combined under one classification in both the soldier database and the county sample for simplicity. Table 1.3 breaks down the six occupational areas by post office. The largest group of workers in both samples was that of farmer. Farmers and farm laborers are combined into the occupation of “farmer” because while census takers had directions on who was a farmer and who was a farm laborer, military service

records had no uniformity.⁴⁷ Some soldiers appeared as a farmer on the census but as a farm laborer in their service record. To avoid confusion between data collected from the census and service records, both are considered as “farmers.”

Lawyers and physicians combined into the “professional” occupation, while less-educated bank tellers, clerks, merchants, teachers, etc., were grouped under the “white-collar” category. Those individuals who identified themselves as laborers, miners, and other menial jobs fell under “unskilled.” Jobs such as butchers, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, etc., involved more practice in the trade and were therefore grouped under “skilled” labor. Because the county sample only considered the occupation of the head of household, there were no students; however, “students” was a classification in the soldier database.

Finally, if there was no occupation listed in either the census or service record the individual was listed in the “none” category. None of the women heading households had an occupation listed, making up two-thirds of the county sample’s “none” category. These women may have been widows or their husbands were away on travel during the census collection, but the households in the “none” category were on average the smallest, most often illiterate, and least likely to be headed by a married couple. Soldiers who had no occupation listed are broken into two segments: those eighteen years old and younger and those nineteen years old and older. Many of the former were likely working for their parents, and a few of them students (or both), when they enlisted. Their average combined household real and personal properties were three to four times greater than the latter group made up of working-age men.

For several trades, Montgomery County was closely aligned with Virginia at large. Table 1.4 shows the distribution of occupations in both the county sample and the soldier database compared to the rest of Virginia. Population percentages engaged in unskilled labor varied around only half a point between the county sample and Virginia. However, while less than one percent of Virginians had no occupation listed, over ten percent of the county sample fell under the “none” category. This disparity is perhaps due to the high number of female heads of households in the sample population.

⁴⁷ Directions for the Eighth Census marshals: “The proprietor of a farm for the time being, who pursues agriculture professionally or practically, is to be recorded as a farmer; the men who are employed for wages by him are to be termed farm laborers.” Department of the Interior, Washington, 1860, “IPUMS USA: 1860 Enumerator Instructions (to the Marshals),” Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, University of Minnesota, *1860 Census: Instructions to the Marshals*, accessed April 15, 2014, <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliiii/inst1860.shtml>.

Table 1.3. Distribution of occupations among Montgomery post offices in 1860

Post Office	Farmer		Unskilled		Skilled		White-Collar		Professional		None	
	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC
Alleghany Springs	71.4	9.4	14.3	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	9.1
Blacksburg	54.8	14.4	21.4	16.4	16.7	17.1	2.4	8.3	0.0	0.0	4.8	6.1
Childress Store	65.0	8.1	25.0	9.1	10.0	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Christiansburg	50.8	37.5	13.6	29.1	14.4	41.5	7.6	75.0	2.5	100.0	11.0	39.4
Dry Valley	40.0	1.3	20.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.0	6.1
Lafayette	71.4	9.4	9.5	3.6	4.8	2.4	4.8	8.3	0.0	0.0	9.5	6.1
Lovely Mount	16.7	1.3	16.7	3.6	50.0	14.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	6.1
Matamoras	35.3	3.8	29.4	9.1	17.6	7.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.6	9.1
McDonalds Mill	80.0	5.0	10.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	3.0
Montgomery Springs	30.0	1.9	70.0	12.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Shawsville	55.6	3.1	11.1	1.8	22.2	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.1	3.0
Shellville	50.0	3.1	20.0	3.6	10.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	6.1
Snowville	14.3	0.6	14.3	1.8	28.6	4.9	14.3	8.3	0.0	0.0	28.6	6.1
Sundry Offices	100.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Montgomery County		52.6		18.1		13.5		3.9		1.0		10.9

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

Notes: %PO: Percentage of post office heads of household engaged in occupation. %MC: Percentage of occupation per post office

OCCUPATIONS OF MONTGOMERY SOLDIERS

The database of Montgomery soldiers attempts to include all soldiers from the county who enlisted in some capacity—infantry, cavalry, partisans, reserves, and home guard—to fight for the Southern cause. There is no official tally for how many soldiers joined from Montgomery County, although a few sources estimate that the number was roughly 1,000.⁷² Unless otherwise annotated, the soldier database referred to in this thesis is for the 915 infantrymen and cavalrymen enlisted in the regular service. There are no verified records of soldiers enlisting first into the artillery, although a few did transfer from one of the other two branches to become artillerymen. Appendix A details the methodology used to determine the list of Montgomery soldiers in the database.

The occupational make-up of Confederate forces varies between samples used by several historians, primarily due to how those samples were created. Table 1.5 compares the Montgomery soldier database to the samples used by Joseph Glatthaar, James McPherson, and Bell Wiley. Wiley’s sample draws on Confederates from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia; Glatthaar considers soldiers from those states plus Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas; and McPherson’s sample includes soldiers from all the above states plus Missouri. Wiley and McPherson attempted to paint the portrait of a typical Confederate soldier while Glatthaar focused exclusively on the soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia. Only 48.0% Montgomery soldiers belonged to Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia, while 29.1% fought with the Army of Tennessee, and 22.9% served in various units that engaged in hostilities within the areas of the Shenandoah Valley, West Virginia, Southwest Virginia, and East Tennessee. Wiley included the most soldiers of any of the samples with over 9,000, while the Glatthaar and McPherson samples combined for just over a 1,000 Confederates.

Glatthaar developed a random stratified sample of Army of Northern Virginia Confederates; 300 of his 600 soldiers belonged to the infantry and 150 each to the cavalry and artillery, which was similar to the army’s composition of the three branches.⁷³ Although the

⁷² Brock, *Hardesty’s Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia*; Charles W. Crush, *Montgomery County, Virginia: The First Hundred Years* (Athens, Ga.: Iberian Pub. Co., 1990), 72.

⁷³ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, x.

Table 1.4. Distribution of occupations in Montgomery soldiers, Montgomery sample, and Virginia overall

Occupation	# in Segment	% of Population
Farmer		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	359	49.7
Post Apr62 enlistees	70	45.2
Montgomery Soldiers ^a	451	49.3
County Sample	160	52.6
Virginia	139,476	56.8
Professional		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	12	1.7
Post Apr62 enlistees	1	0.6
Montgomery Soldiers	13	1.4
County Sample	3	1.0
Virginia	3,808	1.6
Skilled		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	97	13.4
Post Apr62 enlistees	18	11.6
Montgomery Soldiers	117	12.8
County Sample	41	13.5
Virginia	37,456	15.3
Student		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	12	4.1
Post Apr62 enlistees	31	20.0
Montgomery Soldiers	61	6.7
Virginia	2,357	1.0

Occupation	# in Segment	% of Population
Unskilled		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	168	23.3
Post Apr62 enlistees	21	13.5
Montgomery Soldiers	195	21.3
County Sample	55	18.1
Virginia	45,747	18.6
White-Collar		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	39	5.4
Post Apr62 enlistees	1	0.6
Montgomery Soldiers	41	4.5
County Sample	12	3.9
Virginia	14,292	5.8
None Listed		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	17	2.3
Post Apr62 enlistees	13	8.4
Montgomery Soldiers	36	3.9
County Sample	33	10.9
Virginia	2,269	0.9
Total		
Apr61-Apr62 enlistees	723	
Post Apr62 enlistees	155	
All Montgomery Soldiers	915	
Sample	304	
Virginia	245,405	

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

Note: ^a Men from regular infantry and cavalry units, not home guard or reserve. The “County Sample” refers to the occupations of the heads of household only.

Table 1.5. Comparison of Confederate soldier samples between Montgomery County, McPherson, Glatthaar, and Wiley

Occupation	% of Sample	Occupation	% of Sample
Farmer		Unskilled	
Montgomery Soldiers	49.3	Montgomery Soldiers	21.3
Glatthaar	53.7	Glatthaar	13.2
McPherson (Farmer)	34.9	McPherson	0.0
McPherson (Planter)	26.9	Wiley	8.5
Wiley	61.5	White-Collar	
Professional		Montgomery Soldiers	4.5
Montgomery Soldiers	1.4	Glatthaar	4.1
Glatthaar	6.1	McPherson	17.2
McPherson	18.7	Wiley	7.0
Wiley	5.2	None Listed	
Skilled		Montgomery Soldiers	3.9
Montgomery Soldiers	12.8	Wiley	3.7
Glatthaar	9.2	Sample Size	
McPherson	2.3	Montgomery Soldiers	915
Wiley	14.1	Glatthaar	600
Student		McPherson	390
Montgomery Soldiers	6.7	Wiley	9,057
Glatthaar	13.8		

Sources: Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia: A Statistical Portrait of the Troops Who Served Under Robert E. Lee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 6.

James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 181.

Note: McPherson published the percentages from Wiley’s sample in *For Cause and Comrades*.

home states of the soldiers is not proportional to the distribution of Army of Northern Virginia, Glatthaar collected his data from a broad array of sources including military service and census records, pension files, unit histories, and town directories in an attempt to make the sample as representative as possible to the varied backgrounds of the soldiers who made up the army.

McPherson admits that he could not construct a truly representative sample for the Union and Confederate armies. His work is based on the 25,000 letters and 249 diaries from 1,076 soldiers,

of whom 429 were Confederate.⁷⁴ McPherson’s work offers great insight into motivation from the soldiers’ perspective because his research is based on the written sources from the soldiers. Still, the drawback to this methodology is that the resulting findings are heavily weighted toward the literate soldiers. Officers, slaveholders, wealthy, and professional/white-collar workers are overrepresented in his sample. As a result, McPherson’s sampling is greatly skewed toward the literate upper class and away from the illiterate lower class. McPherson determined over a quarter (26.9%) of his sample to be planters; however, he defines a planter as the owner of twelve slaves, rather than the more common measure of twenty. McPherson could not determine the occupations of 39 soldiers in his Confederate sample. Rather than place them under a category of “none” or “unknown” he simply leaves them out. Additionally, he listed the occupation of a young soldier still living at home as the same as his father.⁷⁵

While the occupational percentages for Montgomery soldiers were closely aligned with the county sample and Virginia as a whole, there were some significant differences between the jobs of Montgomery soldiers and those in previous samples analyzed by Glatthaar, McPherson, and Wiley, as illustrated in table 1.5. Montgomery farmers (49.2%) at first seem slightly underrepresented when compared to the other samples. Farmers make up 53.7% of Glatthaar’s sample, 61.5% of Wiley’s sample, and 61.8% of McPherson’s sample. However, since Montgomery County had a smaller percentage of farmers than Virginia on average, this is not a notable difference. Additionally, if more soldiers who identified themselves as laborers on the census and military records were in reality farm laborers there would most likely not be a difference between Montgomery’s soldiers and the three samples. Such a shift would also affect the unskilled category, as the decrease in number of Montgomery’s laborers would perhaps decrease the percentage to that comparable to Wiley and Glatthaar.

Wiley’s sample is similar to Montgomery for soldiers who had either no job (or at least none that could be determined from the data) or worked in skilled labor. While neither McPherson nor Glatthaar had a category for “none,” they both had far lower percentages of skilled workers. McPherson and Wiley did not consider students, but Glatthaar’s percentage of students was twice that of Montgomery soldiers. McPherson’s data based on literate sources may explain why he found far more soldiers in the professional and white-collar occupations than in

⁷⁴ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, i, 10–11.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

Montgomery, but none considered as unskilled laborers. Unskilled laborers were more likely to be illiterate than other occupations. Sweeping studies of Civil War soldiers that look at literary evidence are skewed away from the uneducated and lower levels of society. Local studies like this one are able to create a more complete cross section of the ranks because historians attempt to pool as much data as possible from a small population. This focus does not allow any segment to be overlooked.

The first cohort of volunteers had higher percentages of soldiers from occupations in which it was easier to pick up and go to war. Table 1.4 shows the occupations of Montgomery soldiers in the two enlistment waves. Unskilled laborers, skilled laborers, professionals, and white collar occupations were more likely to enlist during the first year than later in the war. Soldiers with no listed occupation were on average younger (all but three were teenagers). Most did not enlist earlier because they would have been too young during the first year. Students did not enlist nearly as much during the first year compared to later years; they were younger and many chose to defer enlistment until after the spring session was completed. In fact, students were the second biggest segment behind farmers during the later years. Farmers were the majority in both waves, with a higher percentage enlisting during the first wave.

Examining Table 1.4 reveals that with the exception of two occupations, the proportions of Montgomery enlistee occupations were in line with the same proportion of the county sample. Where farmers made up 53% of the county, only 49% of all the enlistees were farmers. And where 18% of the county sample was unskilled laborers, 21% of Montgomery's soldiers were previously unskilled laborers. It is not surprising that the occupational make-up of the soldiers from Montgomery County were similar to that of the general county; however, it is interesting to see the differing mixes of occupations during the first year of enlistment.

More farmers enlisted than any other occupation, but that is to be expected because over half of Montgomery's men engaged in farming. Yet, farmers did not always constitute half the enlistment group. During the first two months, April and May 1861, only 40.7% of enlistees were farmers. Table 1.6 breaks down enlistments during the first year by occupation. During the same months, skilled laborers made up 23.9% and white collar workers 10.2% of enlistees; both percentages are about twice as high as their respective war-long averages. Farmers made up higher percentages during the summer months, then dropped in October (in fact, there are no recorded Montgomery County enlistments in December 1861 or January 1862) until picking up

Table 1.6. Occupations of enlisting Montgomery soldiers during April 1861-April 1862

Occupation	April-May	June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Jan	Feb-Mar	April 1862
Farmer	40.7%	51.9%	58.0%	42.9%		50.0%	59.4%
None Listed	1.1	2.5	5.6	0.0		1.4	1.5
Professional	2.5	1.2	2.8	14.3		0.0	0.0
Skilled	23.9	7.4	5.6	14.3		8.1	6.0
Student	3.9	3.7	4.9	0.0		4.1	4.5
Unskilled	17.9	28.4	21.0	28.6		35.1	27.1
White Collar	10.2	4.9	2.1	0.0		1.4	1.5
Total Enlistees	285	81	143	7	0	74	133

in the early-mid spring. This pattern suggests that many farmers opted to wait until after the spring planting season to enlist in 1861. September was a high enlistment month for farmers, and may be due to the mustering of the Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry in that month, when enlistment peaked during the year after the first two months of the war. Additionally, September marked the end of harvest season for many crops, thereby freeing many farmers to join the Confederate Army. Another explanation for the August-September enlistment peak is that these months followed the first major battle of the war. Manassas showed both sides that the Civil War would be a bloody conflict not about to be resolved quickly. Unskilled laborers made up significant portions of enlistees during the later segments of the first wave; suggesting that these men waited until after the growing and harvesting season. Many of those men hired themselves out to help with sowing and harvesting crops and other menial jobs around the farms. Though, none of these men were listed specifically as “farm laborers,” many may have worked as laborers assisting farmers or doing other odd-jobs around the county. These enlistment trends affirm the importance of Montgomery’s agricultural economy.

This level of analysis is not possible using literary evidence alone. Local studies allow historians to see how seasons affected enlistment during a year. In communities where so many men worked the land, the growing and harvesting seasons had significant effects on *when* a man enlisted. Because farmers did not enlist in the same proportion during the first couple months as later in the war, it does not mean they were less committed to the cause at the beginning of the war. The same can also be said for students and men without an occupation listed.

MONTGOMERY'S ECONOMIC CLASSES

While there does not appear to be a strong correlation between occupation and enlistment, pairing occupation with an examination of class reveals something more. Montgomery County's average farming household net worth was \$9,953, but farmers who enlisted in the first year came from households with an average net worth of \$5,768, which was far lower than the county average but still slightly higher than the average farmer soldier who came from a household worth \$5,565. However, the county's average household net worth for unskilled laborers (\$124), skilled laborers (\$1,115), and professionals (\$6,608) were all lower than the average soldiers from those same occupations (\$927, \$1,480, and \$32,740, respectively). Like their farmer counterparts, all three occupations had higher average net worth among the first year enlistees: unskilled laborers, \$1,010; skilled laborers \$1,612; and professionals, \$35,177. Economic class seems to have a greater effect on a men's decision to enlist. With the exception of farmers, white collar workers, and no occupation listed, more of the affluent within each occupation were more likely to enlist during the first year of the war. As suggested above, farmers may have hesitated to enlist due to other circumstances; in particular being tied to their crops during the beginning of the growing season.

The fact that the more affluent skilled and unskilled laborers enlisted early in the war suggests that these early enlistees felt more comfortable leaving their jobs to no longer provide for their families. They knew their absence would not place as much of a financial strain on their families as would an absence in a lower class household. Of course soldiers were paid for their service, but as the war ground on, the paychecks were not consistent and many soldiers went months at a time without getting paid. Wealthier soldiers did not need to worry as much about their families' financial stability during these periods without pay.

A soldier's economic background affected his decision to enlist and is an important factor to consider. Thanks to the new railroad built during the 1850s, Montgomery County experienced a financial boon. As discussed above, the railroad created strong ties to the eastern half of the state and thus Montgomery's citizens became stakeholders in Virginia's future prosperity. The wealthier residents had more to lose if their investments vanished with the failed Confederacy experiment.

In his statistical analysis of the Army of Northern Virginia, Joseph Glatthaar divides Lee’s soldiers into three classes: upper, middle, and lower. After conferring with fellow historians McPherson and Gary Gallagher, he determined that soldiers with a total wealth (real estate and personal estate combined) of \$800 to \$3,999 would fall into the middle class bracket. Every soldier worth less than \$800 would be considered lower class while \$4,000 or more would be upper class.⁷⁶ These amounts divide the three major classes for this project, but each major class is further broken in half (High and Low) to create six separate classes. This further segmentation allows a better analysis within each class. To separate the moderately affluent from the extremely rich, \$10,000 is used as the bottom of the Upper (High) class with those individuals worth between \$4,000 and \$9,999 falling into the Upper (Low) class. Part of the reasoning for using \$10,000 as the cut-off between the two was that slaveownership and professional and white-collar occupations dropped markedly below that line. Middle class was split Middle (High) and Middle (Low) at the \$2,000 level. Finally, \$300 was the break between Lower (High) and Lower (Low), with the bulk of the labor force below that point being unskilled. In his own study, however, McPherson does not break his sample into classes based on wealth and instead opts to use rank as a substitute for class, placing officers in the upper class above enlisted and non-commissioned officers.⁷⁷

The class distribution of Montgomery’s soldiers who enlisted during the first year of the war is nearly identical to the class distribution of the present-day boundaries (PDB) Virginia sample. Montgomery County’s soldiers would appear to be a representative cross section of the eastern portion of the state with which the county as a whole was more aligned than the rest of their countrymen to the north and west. Yet, Montgomery County’s class distribution, as seen in table 1.7, does not marry perfectly with either the 1860 Virginia sample or 1860 PDB Virginia sample.⁷⁸ The county was not identical with either the eastern portion of the state (PDB Virginia) or Virginia as a whole. In all three samples the lower class makes up the clear majority of the population. However, both the 1860 PDB Virginia sample and Montgomery had high percentages of residents in the Upper (High) class—second only to the Lower (Low) for each.

⁷⁶ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 140–141.

⁷⁷ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 101.

⁷⁸ The 1860 Virginia sample includes households from present-day West Virginia. All Virginia samples were created through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).

The Upper (High) class in 1860 Virginia was only the fourth largest segment. A greater percentage of Montgomery’s residents hailed from either the middle or upper classes than in either the 1860 Virginia or 1860 PDB Virginia samples. Montgomery was clearly not a poor Appalachian mountain county like those that broke off to create West Virginia.⁷⁹ In 1860 the aggregate total for real estate and personal estate for the county was over \$7.5 million (nearly \$4.2 million real and \$3.4 million personal), which placed Montgomery a little above the average Virginia county aggregate of \$7.3 million.⁸⁰

During the first year enlistment segment, both the upper and lower class were overrepresented while the middle class was underrepresented when compared to the county. In Montgomery County’s middle class, three out of every four households were headed by a farmer; among the upper class that proportion jumps to four out of every five. Consequently, farmers accounted for just over 60% of the first year enlistees from both the upper and the middle classes, thus supporting the argument that farmers were hesitant to enlist during the war’s first year. Although upper class farming families were underrepresented, men from other occupations stepped up, and as a whole, the upper class was overrepresented in the ranks compared to the county.

While class distribution within the first wave of enlistees was nearly identical to the class ratio in 1860 PDB Virginia, the middle and lower classes shrank in proportion to the upper class for enlistments during the rest of the war. Upper class soldiers made up almost a third of the later enlistees. Since the average age of the upper classes during the first year of the war was 24.1 years old, and the average age for later enlistees from the upper class dropped to 21.7, it is difficult to ascertain that conscription compelled more of the county’s wealthier residents to enlist. As the Conscription Acts increased the upper age limit and removed previous restrictions for enlistment, one may suppose that the average age for the upper class might increase.

The fact that the average age *decreased* points to another factor affecting enlistment: three-quarters of upper class later enlistees were either a son or brother of a soldier also serving in the army. The average age of these family members was only 19.3 years old. Many were too young to enlist earlier and so had to wait to join the fight to protect their family’s wealth after the

⁷⁹ In an IPUMS sample of 1860 West Virginia, 57.2% hailed from the lower class, 29.8% from the middle class, and only 13.0% from the upper class.

⁸⁰ Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860.”

Table 1.7. Class distribution in Virginia and Montgomery, and in Montgomery soldiers

Economic Class	Virginia ^a Households (%)	Virginia ^b Households (%)	Montgomery Sample (%)	April 1861- April 1862 (%)	Post April 1862 (%)	All Years ^c (%)
Upper (High)	11.7	14.7	16.8	13.6	20.6	14.7
Upper (Low)	10.2	11.2	6.8	11.8	12.3	12.0
All Upper Class	21.9	25.9	23.6	25.4	32.9	26.6
Middle (High)	9.5	9.2	11.3	9.0	8.4	9.1
Middle (Low)	13.7	11.1	13.3	11.5	8.4	10.9
All Middle Class	23.2	20.3	24.6	20.5	16.8	20.0
Lower (High)	12.2	10.1	13.0	11.5	10.3	11.1
Lower (Low)	42.7	43.1	38.9	42.5	40.0	42.3
All Lower Class	54.9	53.9	51.8	54.1	50.3	53.4

Source: Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 (Machine-readable database). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

Note: Virginia samples are for 1% of all heads of households in the entire state. Sample provided by IPUMS.

^a Sample of 1860 Virginia boundaries.

^b Sample of present-day Virginia boundaries (subtracting present-day West Virginia counties)

^c Enlistment across all years of the war.

first year of the war. The Conscription Acts pulled more men into the fight but not as many families—almost one half of those enlisting after April 1862 already had an immediate family member serving in the army. Add extended families into the mix and it would be safe to say that most later enlistees had family already in the army.

One half of Montgomery’s soldiers came from the lower class; for the upper class the ratio ranged from one in four to one in three soldiers, and the middle class topped at one in five soldiers. Therefore, it can be expected that post offices with higher proportions of either upper class or lower class residents would have higher enlistment rates. Additionally, soldiers who were previously professionals, students, white collar, or youth under the age of 19 years old were more likely to come from the upper class. Soldiers who had jobs considered skilled or unskilled,

or who were over the age of 18 years old with no job were significantly more likely to come from the lower class. Farmers were slightly more likely to come from the middle class than the upper class.

As predicted, when one compares the distribution of wealth across the county, wealthier communities—those that claimed the most Middle (High) through Upper (High) class households (of the county)—had higher enlistment rates. Montgomery’s economic classes vary greatly across the county, as evidenced in table 1.8. Table 1.9 shows enlistment totals by community. The bottom of the table compares each community’s share of the Montgomery County population. Just above that line is the percentage of soldiers from that community who enlisted during the entirety of the war. Communities with higher soldier shares than county population shares are ones with higher enlistment rates. Blacksburg and Christiansburg are two communities with higher percentages of soldiers than their share of the population. Looking at the first two months of the war reveals a greater disparity, with 17.4% of soldiers hailing from Blacksburg and 44.0% of soldiers from Christiansburg. The two communities combined for one-third of the county’s Upper (High) households.

It was also expected that communities with more lower class residents would have high enlistment rates. Lafayette and Shawsville both had higher percentages of households in the lower class, and both had higher enlistment rates, especially during the first couple months of the war. Though one community, Matamoras, did not follow this trend. It had an exceptionally high percentage of low income households but a low enlistment rate. In fact, only two Matamoras men volunteered during the first two years of the war. Shellville also had a comparatively low enlistment rate during the war. Perhaps the Price family, whose members primarily resided in the area between the two communities played a large role in the low enlistment rate. After all, many of the Prices were known to be Unionists and therefore not likely to enlist in a war they did not support. There are no anomalies in the enlistment rates for the remaining communities that would indicate higher or lower enlistment rates than expected for their populations.

Table 1.8. Distribution of classes among Montgomery post offices in 1860

Post Office	Average Net Worth	Upper (High)		Upper (Low)		Middle (High)		Middle (Low)		Lower (High)		Lower (Low)	
		% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC	% PO	% MC
Alleghany Springs	\$903	0.0	0.0	4.8	5.0	9.5	7.4	23.8	12.8	14.3	7.9	47.6	7.2
Blacksburg	16,847	28.6	28.6	9.5	20.0	7.1	11.1	9.5	10.3	11.9	13.2	33.3	10.1
Childress Store	3,136	10.0	4.8	10.0	10.0	15.0	11.1	20.0	10.3	10.0	5.3	35.0	5.1
Christiansburg	4,863	13.6	38.1	5.9	35.0	9.3	40.7	14.4	43.6	13.6	42.1	43.2	37.0
Dry Valley	3,503	20.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	60.0	2.2
Lafayette	999	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.0	14.8	19.0	10.3	19.0	10.5	42.9	6.5
Lovely Mount*	7,149	16.7	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	5.3	66.7	5.8
Matamoras	1,524	5.9	2.4	5.9	5.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	2.6	23.5	10.5	58.8	7.2
McDonalds Mill	7,153	20.0	4.8	20.0	10.0	20.0	7.4	10.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	30.0	2.2
Montgomery Springs	2,598	10.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	90.0	6.5
Shawsville	8,048	22.2	4.8	11.1	5.0	11.1	3.7	0.0	0.0	11.1	2.6	44.4	2.9
Shellville	3,155	10.0	2.4	20.0	10.0	10.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	10.0	2.6	50.0	3.6
Snowville*	4,301	14.3	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	2.6	0.0	0.0	71.4	3.6
Sundry Offices*	7,680	50.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Montgomery County	\$5,790		16.8%		6.8%		11.3%		13.3%		13.0%		38.9%

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

Notes: %PO: Percentage of post office residents in class. %MC: Percentage of class per post office. Several post offices, denoted by an asterisk (*), had smaller sample sizes with one or two extremely wealthy heads of household which resulted in above average net worth for the particular communities.

Table 1.9. Enlistment numbers by post office

Army	Unit	Company	Alleghany Springs	Blacksburg	Childress Store	Christiansburg	Dry Valley	Lafayette	Lovely Mount	Matamoras	McDonalds Mill	Montgomery Springs	Shawsville	Shellville	Snowville	Sundry Offices		
Army of Northern Virginia	4th Virginia Infantry	B	13			7		23		1	1	2	15					
		E		55		12		1		1	7	2	1	3				
		G	14	4	3	65	1	1	4				1			2		
		L		42		2		1		10	7	4	1	2				
	11th Virginia Infantry	F	15	1	10	71	1	3	1			3	5	2	1	2		
	14th Virginia Cavalry	F (2 nd)		4	3	14		1	1	1	3				1			
		G	3	2		4			8		1			1				
24th Virginia Infantry	K			10	13	5			7	1		1			4			
Army of Tennessee	54th Virginia Infantry	C	7	2	2	78		3	1	2	5				1			
		E	2	3	6	42	7	19	2		3	3	7	1			1	
		I	4	1									1					
	63rd Virginia Infantry	D	2	2	15	27	1	3	9	1	2	4		6	1	1		
McCausland's Brigade, SWVA	21st Virginia Cavalry	D (2 nd)		3	3	9				2		1	1					
	25th Virginia Cavalry	E	2	1	2	11	3	1	2	1	2							
		F				4			2	2				2		1		
	36th Virginia Infantry	C		1							3				1			
		F		6														
Miscellaneous Units			2	9	2	19	1	7	1		1	1	1	2	9	2		
Post Office Total			64	136	56	378	19	73	30	24	31	21	36	16	10	4		
Post Office Percentage of Total Soldiers			7.1%	15.1%	6.2%	42.1%	2.1%	8.1%	3.3%	2.7%	3.5%	2.3%	4.0%	1.8%	1.1%	0.4%		
Post Office Percentage of Sample Population (from table 1.2)			6.3%	14.1%	7.2%	38.9%	1.4%	6.8%	3.4%	6.2%	3.9%	2.7%	3.3%	3.4%	2.3%	0.4%		

SLAVEOWNING SOLDIERS

As previously discussed, slavery was prevalent in Montgomery County leading to the Civil War and its impact on enlistment needs to be assessed. According to the 1860 census there were 265 slaveowners and 1,872 males aged 20-79 in Montgomery County. Since most (over 90%) slaveowners were males under the age of 80, it is safe to estimate that 14.2% of males aged 20-79 owned slaves. Matching the names of slaveowners with heads of household from the county sample (see Appendix A) reveals that 11.8% of households owned slaves and 13.9% of Montgomery residents lived in a household that owned slaves. The mean net worth for slaveowners was \$34,643, and their average age was 50.6 years old in 1861.

Contrary to the percentage of slaveowning soldiers, Montgomery County slaveowners were not reluctant to enlist. As Table 1.10 illustrates, only 5.5% of the first enlistment segment and 5.2% of the second segment were slaveowners—half as many as the county sample. However, the average age for the county slaveowners (50.6 years old) was almost twenty years higher than the slaveowners who enlisted in the first cohort (32.4 years old). Since only 16.7% of the county sample slaveowners were within the military age range (~18-35 years old), it is no surprise that only 5.5% of the first wave’s enlistees owned slaves. Still, 69.2% of slaveowners in the first segment were 18-35 years old, so it appears many older slaveowners understood what was at stake in the war and enlisted to fight. The average age for the second cohort was only one year younger than the first, and by then all slaveowners were of military age due to expansion of the Conscription Acts. The mean net worth for the first enlistment segment’s slaveowners, \$16,147, was less than half the net worth of the mean net worth of county slaveowners. Yet, neither the lower percentage of enlisted slaveowners, nor their mean net wealth compared to the county sample, necessarily support the “rich man’s war and poor man’s fight” argument. Rich men did go to war, but in the beginning of the conflict it was the young men who did the fighting. In 1861 more than four out of five slaveowners were older than 35, and almost half were over 50. Younger men were also just starting to amass their wealth; so it is expected that their net worth would be less than that of their older neighbors whose old age exempted them from having to serve.

Table 1.10. Slaveowning among soldiers’ households and Montgomery County residents

Economic Class	Montgomery Slaveowning Households		Slaveowning Soldiers				Soldiers from Slaveowning Households				Total Soldiers from Slaveowning Households across all years	
	% of Class	% of Slaveowning Households	% of Class owning Slaves		% of all Enlisted Slaveowners		% of Class Living with a Slaveowner		% of all Enlisted Living with a Slaveowner		% of Class in slaveowning home	% of all Enlisted Living in Slaveowning home
Enlistment Segment	-	-	Apr61-Apr62	Post Apr62	Apr61-Apr62	Post Apr62	Apr61-Apr62	Post Apr62	Apr61-Apr62	Post Apr62	-	-
Upper (High)	58.1	69.4	14.3	15.6	1.9	3.2	50.0	56.3	6.8	11.6	66.4	9.8
Upper (Low)	20.0	11.1	10.6	0.0	1.2	0.0	24.7	26.3	2.9	3.2	33.0	3.9
Middle High	22.2	16.7	7.7	0.0	0.7	0.0	10.8	7.7	1.0	0.6	16.9	1.5
Middle (Low)	2.6	2.8	7.2	7.7	0.8	0.6	4.8	0.0	0.6	0.0	11.1	1.2
Lower (High)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	0.0	0.8	0.0	6.2	0.7
Lower (Low)	0.0	0.0	2.0	3.2	0.8	1.3	3.6	1.6	1.5	0.6	5.1	2.2
% of county sample or database segment	-	11.8^a	-	-	5.5^b	5.2	-	-	13.6^c	16.1	-	19.3^d

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

Note: ^a 11.8% of households in Montgomery sample owned slaves. ^b 5.5% of first year enlistees owned slaves. ^c 13.6% of first year enlistees lived in a household that owned slaves. ^d 19.3% of all soldiers either owned slaves or lived in a slaveowning household.

Soldiers in general were more likely to come from a slaveowning home than the county average. 19.3% of all Montgomery soldiers either owned slaves or lived in a home that owned slaves. Only 13.9% of Montgomery residents could say the same in 1860. Within the first segment, 13.6% of soldiers came from slaveowning families, nearly mirroring the county slaveowning resident percentage of 13.9%. Additionally, 16.1% of soldiers who enlisted later in the war were from slaveowning families. This increase shows that as the war dragged on, men from slaveowning families stepped up to enlist instead of trying to find ways out of fighting.

Wealthier slaveowners, like wealthier non-slaveowners, tended to enlist during the first year of the war. The mean net worth for all enlistees from April 1861-April 1862 was \$5,399, while slaveowners in the first cohort had a mean net worth of \$16,147, and soldiers from slaveowning homes had an average personal or household net worth of \$16,215. The average net worth dropped significantly for soldiers who enlisted later: the average net worth for post April 1862 enlistees was \$2,900, with the average net worth for slaveowners of \$9,257, and \$10,826 for soldiers from slaveowning households.

Although prevalent, slaveowning was less common in Montgomery County than across the areas that provided the bulk of General Lee's troops. Only 5.4% of Montgomery's soldiers owned slaves while 19.3% lived in slaveowning families. These numbers fall far below the Army of Northern Virginia's averages reported by Joseph Glatthaar. He found that while the 1860 census showed 4.9% of Southern adults owned slaves and 24.9% of all households held slaves, 13.0% of Lee's soldiers owned slaves and 44.4% of his army came from slaveholding homes.⁸¹ Moreover, he determined that approximately 92% of all soldiers with a combined wealth of \$4,000 or more (upper class) owned slaves. While 51.4% of Montgomery's upper class soldiers came from slaveholding households, only 12.6% of the first cohort and 9.8% of the second cohort (11.5% across all years) of upper class soldiers owned slaves. Furthermore, only four Montgomery soldiers achieved planter status (owned 20 or more slaves in 1860) while 1.7% of all Montgomery's soldiers lived in a planter household.⁸² By comparison, 3.2% of all Southern households were considered planter status. Glatthaar determined that 6.9% of Lee's soldiers were

⁸¹ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 9.

⁸² 25 of 264 Montgomery slaveowners, or 9.4%, could be considered planters. If all 264 slaveowners hailed from different homes, then 18% of Montgomery households owned slaves, while only 1.7% of Montgomery households were planter status. 3.2% of all Southern households qualified as planters. *Ibid.*

planters and 9.3% of the Army of Northern Virginia lived in planter households.⁸³ However, the average age for a planter in the county sample was 54.7 years old, while the average age for a planter soldier was 40.3 years old. Montgomery’s planter class was much older on average and not eligible to enlist during the war, even with conscription. Additionally, Sheehan-Dean found that counties with higher slave populations and slaveownership had higher enlistment rates. Therefore, it makes sense that Glatthaar’s data would have more slaveowners as his sample is representative of the whole Army of Northern Virginia.

Along with the Second Conscription Act in October 1862, the Confederate Congress passed the so-called “Twenty Negro Law.” In addition to extending the upper age limit from 35 to 45, it exempted white males who oversaw or owned 20 or more slaves from military service in order to “secure the proper police of the country.”⁸⁴ The Confederate government worried that slaves might revolt with fewer white males in the county to oversee them. The “Twenty Negro Law” ensured that a few white male slaveowners would remain to keep the peace; coincidentally, these were the wealthiest slaveowners. Montgomery planters did not drop from the service after the law was enacted, but other Montgomery slaveowning soldiers were concerned with keeping their slaves under control back home. “All the young men have left the Country,” wrote Fourth Virginia Infantry officer William Guerrant after returning to Montgomery County after the Battle of First Manassas, “and it [is] absolutely essential that I have some white men on the farm to be with the negroes.”⁸⁵ Slightly more than ten percent of Montgomery slaveowners qualified as planters with twenty or more slaves and all of Montgomery’s planter soldiers were already under arms by the time the law was enacted. While the highly unpopular “Twenty Negro Law” remained on the books until the end of the war, the Confederate Congress abolished the corruption-plagued substitution system by the end of 1863.

Communities with higher slaveownership had higher enlistment rates. In the county sample, roughly a third of slaveowners each lived in Blacksburg and Christiansburg, with the remaining third evenly distributed across the rest of the county. Out of all the slaveowning soldiers, nearly 40% were from Christiansburg, 30% were from Blacksburg, and 8% from

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “The Twenty Negro Law,” *Teaching American History*, accessed February 24, 2014, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-twenty-negro-law/>.

⁸⁵ Diary entry of William Guerrant, August 14, 1861, Guerrant Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter referred to as VHS).

Alleghany Springs (all other communities each had less than 5% representation). After adding soldiers who lived with slaveowners (whether parents or landlords), every community that had 6% or more representation in this group had higher enlistment rates. Conversely, and with only a few exceptions, all those communities with less than 5% representation in the group of slaveowners and soldiers from slaveowning households had lower enlistment rates. The same holds true for enlistees in both enlistment segments, although nearly half (45.5%) of this group who enlisted after April 1862 were from Christiansburg while only 15.2% were from Blacksburg.

Glatthaar interprets his findings to counter the “rich man’s war, poor man’s fight” argument and his data seems to support his counterargument that the war was also “a rich, moderate, and poor man’s fight.”⁸⁶ Montgomery County slaveowning soldier data does not yield the same results as Glatthaar found to counter the “rich man’s war, poor man’s fight.” Age seems to skew the Montgomery data away from Glatthaar’s sample due to the older ages of Montgomery slaveowners. Slaveowners and their families were definitely wealthier than their non-slaveowning counterparts, but one cannot draw the conclusion that the army was comprised of wealthier men strictly because of a higher percentage of slaveowners in the ranks. Nevertheless, when one considers the data from table 1.10, it is clear that wealthier slaveowning men were interested in enlisting to fight and protect their way of life. Nearly a fifth of Montgomery’s soldiers came from slaveowning households, and over a quarter hailed from the upper class. These facts together fall in line with Glatthaar’s argument that the war was a rich man’s fight as well.

This was a poor man’s *war* as well as a fight. The relatively high proportion of lower class slaveowning soldiers, or lower class tenants who may have enjoyed second-hand the amenities available through their wealthier head of household’s slaveownership, indicates that these lower class soldiers believed they also stood to bear economic ruin with the manumission of slaves.⁸⁷ If these tenants or other low income men relied on employment by a slaveowner, they could be out of a job if their boss was financially wrecked by losing slaves. Middle and

⁸⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁷ Soldiering provided an opportunity for lower class men to hold a steady, albeit dangerous, job which may have compelled some men to enlist to provide for their families. This motivational theory should not be discounted, although there was no indication in letters or diaries surviving from any of these Montgomery County soldiers that they joined for the pay.

lower class men would also lose access to cheap slave labor that could be gotten through renting slaves from their masters. Both Montgomery’s rich and poor residents depended on slavery to maintain economic and social class status quos. While most upper class men desired slaves to do the menial field work required to turn a comfortable profit, lower class men wanted slaves as a reminder: although they had little property and money, lower class men at least had freedom. Rich and poor men alike enlisted to fight and protect the system that was beneficial to them in different ways.

Slavery, whether in the form of slaveowning or living with slaveowners, was a major factor that affected enlistment. None of the soldiers wrote about joining the war specifically to defend slavery, but it played a role in their decision-making, tacitly or not, due to their community environment. While the literary evidence may not show it, the socioeconomic data reveals that men most affected by slaveowning were more likely to volunteer in the Confederate Army. These men also joined early: nearly half of the 171 slaveowners and soldiers from slaveowning households joined in the first two months of the war, and more than four out of five joined in the first year. However, the available data does not disclose the full extent of slaveownership in the community, including how many more men benefitted from renting slaves. Nor does the data express the anxiety the men must have felt in communities with larger slave populations. The Confederacy’s failure for independence would result in over a fifth of Montgomery County’s total population earning their freedom. Racism is necessary for the implementation of slavery within society. Emancipation could free slaves but could not change white males from believing their race superior to the black man. Emancipation also meant that white men, especially from the lower class, in communities with larger slave populations would have to compete for work with their new black equals.

FAMILY AND LITERACY

Family influences consider how parents, children, siblings, and other relatives influenced soldiers to join. There is some overlap with age and gender when discussing how parents and wives influenced males to join, but each of these warrants its own lens to examine motivations. Obviously, not all females who influenced male soldiers were wives—some were sweethearts, friends, sisters, daughters, and women in the community. Not all aged influencers were

parents—church elders, friends, and civic leaders too old to join the conflict themselves could exert their influence on the younger soldiers. How these external forces affected Montgomery soldiers’ decisions to enlist will be the focus of the next chapter, while this section will explore the family statistics of Montgomery County.

Soldiers born outside the county were less likely to be employed in jobs that prohibited them from up and leaving and were more likely to enlist during the war’s first year. Table 1.11 displays the family demographic data for Montgomery County’s soldiers during the war. On average, fewer than 5% of soldiers were born out of the county. However, during the first two months of the war the percentage of enlistees born outside Montgomery was twice the average. In all, three were born in Europe, eleven were from northern states, two from Border States, three were born in another southern state, and twenty-three were born in other parts of Virginia. One record stated only eighteen Blacksburg residents were born outside Virginia.⁸⁸ Of the nineteen soldiers born out of the county and enlisting in April 1861, roughly a third were farmers, a third skilled laborers, and a third white collar workers. It appears that soldiers born out of the county were less likely to be invested in farming and instead employed in occupations where they could easily stop working to enlist in the army; in fact, nearly 60% of all soldiers born out of the county were employed in skilled, unskilled, or white collar jobs. Only a quarter of all soldiers born out of the county were farmers before the war.

The men who enlisted in the first two months of the war had fewer responsibilities at home. They were the least likely to be married: where nearly one third of all soldiers were married, less than a fifth of these first soldiers left a wife at home. Likewise, a third of all soldiers were the head of the household when they went off to war, compared to a fifth of the soldiers leaving in April and May 1861. These men who enlisted early were less likely to be the main provider for the household in which they resided. Across all years only a tenth of soldiers lived in a house headed by someone with a different last name (“mixed household”), but during the first two months over a fifth came from a mixed household. These factors indicate that early enlistees were those who were more able to go off to war with less of a financial impact on their household. No doubt their absences negatively affected their household emotionally, and on deeply personal levels, but their absence due to enlisting was less likely to burden their families financially.

⁸⁸ Black and Black, *The Civil War Letters of Dr. Harvey Black*, 106.

Table 1.11. Family demographics among Montgomery soldiers

	Avg Household Size	Avg # Females in Household	Avg % Females in Household	Avg Age	Married (%)	Female Head of House (%)	Born out of County (%)	Illiterate (%)	Member of Mixed Household (%)	Mother Present (%)	Head of Household (%)
Apr-May 1861	7.2	3.2	39.8	24.5	19.6	7.4	8.4	4.9	21.1	47.4	20.4
Apr61-Apr62	7.0	3.1	41.8	25.5	31.9	6.4	4.7	10.4	12.2	46.3	34.1
Post Apr62	7.1	3.2	43.4	23.9	27.7	3.9	4.5	6.5	6.5	51.6	29.0
All Soldiers	7.0	3.1	42.0	25.3	31.1	6.0	4.7	9.6	10.9	46.6	33.3

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

Notes: A “Mixed Household” indicates that there were one or more members listed in the house with a different last name.

Early enlistees were more literate than their later enlisting brothers-in-arms. In the 1860 census, 42 of the 69 illiterate heads of household had an unskilled or no job listed, and these households had an average net worth of \$76.⁸⁹ State illiteracy for twenty-year-olds and greater in 1860 was 12.7%.⁹⁰ 22.7% of the county sample was illiterate, which much higher than the statewide average. Education in Montgomery prior to the Civil War was reportedly dismal according to one source, “Forty per cent. [of teachers] perhaps, were persons of fair literary attainments and substantial character; about forty per cent. had a very imperfect knowledge of the branches taught, and the remaining twenty per cent. were tramps of a low order who went about deceiving people, never remaining in one place longer than a school term.”⁹¹ However, the illiteracy rate for Montgomery’s soldiers in 1860 was only 9.8%, lower than both the county’s and state’s illiteracy rates.⁹² Illiteracy was self-reported to the census marshals, so inaccuracies in reporting may skew the actual illiteracy rate. Marshals were charged to inquire if persons over twenty could read or write and mark the census schedule.⁹³ Because illiteracy was self-reported in the census, it may be underreported; the census is the only measure available for the purposes of this thesis. Surprisingly, the percentage of illiterate soldiers (4.9%) enlisting during the first two months of the war was half the whole war average. Perhaps the literate soldiers were more inclined to read the newspapers and write to friends and family around the state and nation, to form opinions about the war early on. They realized at the beginning what was at stake if Virginia was not ready to defend herself—after all, the men who enlisted in April and May of 1861 did so before Virginia officially seceded from the United States. These literate men were more likely to enlist for ideological reasons influenced by rhetoric in their newspapers and politicians. Unskilled laborers, of whom over two in five were illiterate, made up a much smaller

⁸⁹ DeBow, “The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850.”

⁹⁰ Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860” 502–510; Alfred J. Morrison, *The Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia, 1776-1860: Study of Secondary Schools in Relation to the State Literary Fund*, 1917, 83, <http://books.google.com/books?id=cIAzilAXD7kC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁹¹ Morrison, *The Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia*, 88–9.

⁹² Montgomery soldier literacy rate is higher than McPherson’s estimate of 80%. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 11.

⁹³ Department of the Interior, Washington, 1860, “IPUMS USA: 1860 Enumerator Instructions (to the Marshals).”

proportion of the April and March 1861 enlistment wave than in later parts of the war. Thus, printed ideological propaganda would not have had as much of an impact on this occupation group.

* * *

Montgomery residents were cognizant of their location’s importance along the railroad between Virginia and the Deep South when the state seceded. Railroads were vital links to sustaining the wartime effort of the Confederacy. The railroad that Virginia relied upon to tie her to the rest of the Confederacy was the same that Montgomery residents thrived on in the years leading to conflict. It bound Montgomery’s fate to Richmond, and therefore to the future of the rebellion. However, unlike their kindred in Northern Virginia and around Richmond, most did not feel the urgency that Union troops would be marching through their county at any moment. Unionists and the Union Army in the Kanawha Valley surely presented a threat, but nothing like the threat of the Army of the Potomac to the north. Instead of waiting until the point of extremis nearly two-thirds of the able-bodied men volunteered to fight for the Confederate cause, most of those in the first two years of the war.⁹⁴ Because Montgomery County, like much of the South at the start of the Civil War, was not immediately in harm’s way it becomes a good case study to identify and analyze the motivations for soldiers who enlisted in the Confederate Army.

Montgomery men enlisted to protect their way of life, as long as their absence did not interfere with home and business at first. These men who joined during first year of the war, and especially during the first two months, were less inclined to enlist if they had family at home or engaged in business such as farming that required oversight during the planting, growing, and harvest season. However, as the war dragged on, even after the First Battle of Manassas, it became apparent that more men were required to join the army to secure Southern independence. Southern success required more than single dependents to fill the ranks of the Confederate Army. Montgomery men, whether married, head of household, or engaged in occupations requiring their oversight, were thus compelled to enlist in the war; although the Conscription Acts ultimately removed some soldiers’ decision-making freedom.

⁹⁴ Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 26.

CHAPTER 2

“THERE WILL BE BLOOD SPILLED IN MONTGOMERY”: ENVIRONMENTAL MOTIVATION

On the morning of April 19th, 1861, John T. Howe, a farmer from Shellville, enlisted in Company E of the Fourth Virginia Infantry with sixty of his friends, relatives, and neighbors from Montgomery County. The Fourth Virginia was being mustered into service by Colonel James F. Preston, a prominent, wealthy farmer and owner of the Whitethorn estate near Blacksburg. Howe later related his first soldiering experience to his family and remarked how the townsfolk gathered on the streets in excited groups as they bid farewell to their friends, relatives, and loved ones. Ladies offered soldiers tobacco, sewing kits, and other sundries. Soldiers young and old seemed “jubilant” to head off to war for their “first great adventure.”¹ Howe’s adventure would take him from Montgomery to Appomattox four long years later.

In the same month that the Virginia convention voted to secede from the Union, 190 Montgomery men volunteered to serve in what would become the Fourth Virginia Infantry to defend their commonwealth following Lincoln’s call for troops to subdue the unrest in the South. By the end of the war slightly more than a thousand Montgomery men, roughly two-thirds of all eligible men in the county, would enlist in the defense of their communities. Many men were already part of militia units established before the war. Companies B and G of the Fourth Virginia grew from the “Fort Lewis Volunteers” and “Montgomery Fencibles,” respectively, that were initially formed in early 1860 to defend Virginia against future insurrections following John Brown’s failed raid in Harpers Ferry. These two companies along with Company E, the “Montgomery Highlanders,” were the first to leave Montgomery en route the seat of war.² They

¹ Daniel Dunbar Howe, *Listen to the Mockingbird: The Life and Times of a Pioneer Virginia Family*. (Boyce, Va.: Carr Publishing, 1961), 43.

² Crush, Charles W., “Charles W. Crush Collection, 1796-1978, Ms84-180,” Papers (Montgomery County, 1978 1796), 114, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Va. Likewise, some of the men in Company C of the Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry originally were in the Seventy-Fifth Virginia Militia. See Jeffrey C. Weaver and G. L. Sherwood, *54th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1993).

assembled with the rest of the Fourth Virginia in Winchester a few days later and were officially mustered into Confederate service in Virginia’s First Brigade on July 1st at Harpers Ferry.³ Private Howe and his comrades-in-arms trained under Virginia Military Institute cadets for what they believed would be a quick war, lasting a few days or weeks at most. Surely, a “grand experience was in store” for them and they would return home victors after making a demonstration on Washington without firing a shot.⁴

The Fourth Virginia indeed had a “grand experience” in store for them, but instead of a quick, bloodless war many expected their experience would take them from First Manassas to Appomattox, via the bloodiest engagements of the conflict including Gettysburg and Chancellorsville. They would be an integral part of the repulse of, and counterattack on, Union forces at the battle of First Manassas, earning them the moniker of “Stonewall Brigade.” The Fourth Virginia formed the center of General Jackson’s line and bore the brunt of fighting on Henry Hill, thereby sustaining most of the brigade’s casualties that afternoon. With 31 soldiers dead, and Colonel Preston wounded along with 100 others, the unit realized the highest losses of any regiment in the brigade.⁵ Of the Fourth Virginia’s ten companies, eight were from Southwest Virginia, including four from Montgomery County. Due to the importance of the victory for the Confederacy, historian Kenneth Noe remarks that, “In one sense, then, Southwest Virginia saved the Confederacy at Manassas.”⁶ Perhaps one could extend that supposition that Montgomery County saved the Confederacy at First Manassas.

Following the battle, families and neighbors lent aid and supplies to their soldiers. A few days after First Manassas, John Apperson, a hospital steward for the Fourth Virginia noted that “A great many citizens of Montgomery, Wythe, and Pulaski Counties came down to see their friends. Many of them brought conveniences for the wounded soldiers in the shape of shirts, sheets, pillows, etc. I returned to camp in the evening and found a recruit there for our company.”⁷ News of the casualties from the first major battle did not squash the county’s support

³ James I. Robertson, *4th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1982), 2.

⁴ Howe, *Listen to the Mockingbird.*, 44.

⁵ Robertson, *4th Virginia Infantry*, 7.

⁶ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 109.

⁷ Diary entry of John Apperson, near Manassas, July 25, 1861. Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

to send men to fight for the Confederate cause. Hard fighting would take a toll on the Fourth Virginia, as it did to so many other units. During the coming years nearly 1,500 men would serve in the Unit; however, less than fifty—sixteen from Montgomery—would be present for duty at the Army of Northern Virginia’s surrender at Appomattox.⁸ Approximately 15,000 Southwest Virginians saw action in at least 99 infantry companies, four artillery battalions, and seven cavalry companies.⁹ Montgomery sent roughly a thousand of its sons, fathers, and brothers to fight in the Fourth Virginia and other units.

The soldier’s home environment is as influential as personal reasons to motivate him to enlist during wartime. There are many personal motives that guide an individual to fight, but a Confederate soldier did not make his decision in a vacuum, void of external influences. A soldier’s environment, including family, community, politics, recruiters, religion, and peers, played an important role in helping him decide to enlist. This chapter will discuss these external factors that motivated Montgomery men to enlist. These forces significantly nurtured individuals and influenced their personal reasons for joining the fight.

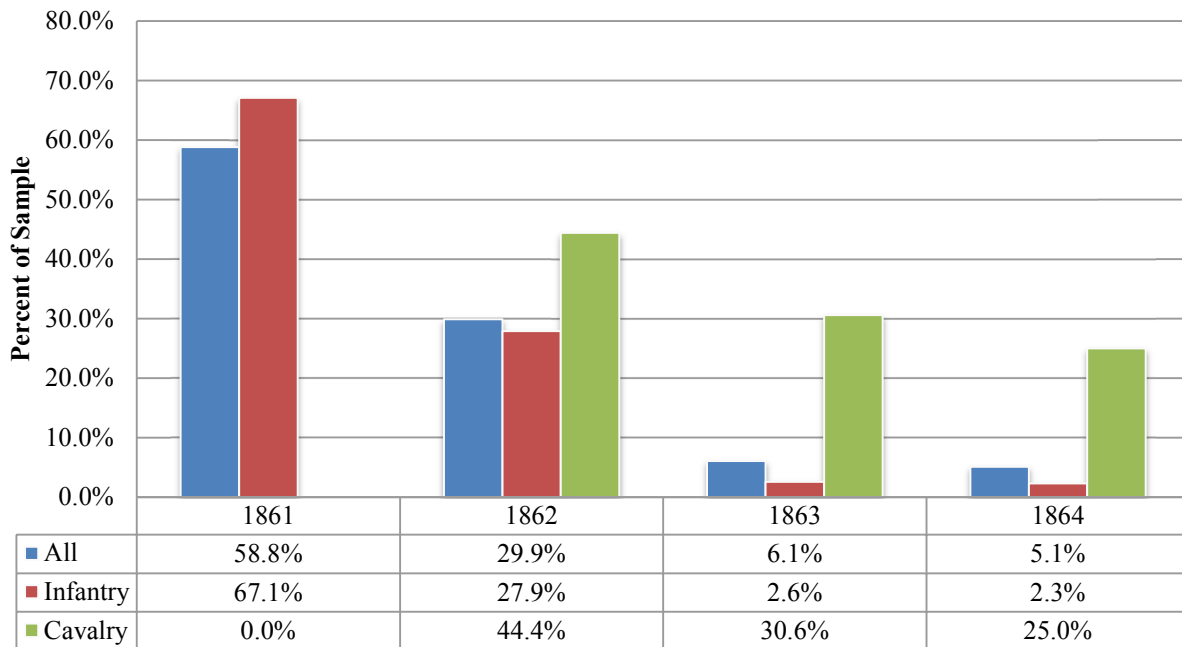
Unlike their compatriots in northern Virginia counties, Montgomery residents did not see Union troops in their streets and backyards until May 1864.¹⁰ While Montgomery men did not feel the same immediate pressure to enlist to protect their families and property as their brethren in northern Virginia, approximately 65.8% of the eligible, able-bodied men in the county joined the war effort (see Appendix A). Nearly 60% enlisted during the first six months of the war, and over 84% volunteered before the Confederate government started enforcing the first Conscription Act in 1862. By comparison, 77.3% of Joseph Glatthaar’s sample of the Army of Northern Virginia and 70% of Aaron Sheehan-Dean’s sample of Virginia soldiers enlisted during the same period. Both Glatthaar’s and Sheehan-Dean’s samples match Montgomery County’s distribution of enlistments through the war, with roughly 56% of all county enlistees mustering for war in 1861.¹¹ More than 92% of Montgomery’s soldiers had joined the army by the Battle of

⁸ Robertson, *4th Virginia Infantry*.

⁹ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 109.

¹⁰ Brock, *Hardesty’s Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia*, 403.

¹¹ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 10; Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 68–9.

Chart 2.1. Montgomery soldier enlistment by branch and year

Gettysburg. As chart 2.1 illustrates above, enlistments dropped dramatically in 1863 and 1864, and none of the soldiers in the database enlisted during the closing months of the war in 1865. Although residents worried about the Union threat in West Virginia’s Kanawha Valley, joining the Confederate Army with an urgency to protect home and hearth was therefore not a significant factor for Montgomery men during the opening years of the war. Moreover, these men likely would not have the same fear that their families and homes would be left unprotected to invading Union forces while away in the army. While many Northern Virginians deferred their entry into the army as long as possible in order to protect their personal property, Montgomery men were not dissuaded from enlisting early in the war.¹²

¹² Enlistment years in chart 2.1 are for first time enlistments in combatant units—infantry or cavalry. Many soldiers reenlisted within their company, unit, or branch, but others jumped from cavalry to infantry, vice versa, or to non-combatant jobs. The database’s 141 home guard volunteers who mustered with Wade’s Regiment Local Defense Troops (LDT) & Special Service (Montgomery County Home Guard) in July 1863, and the 87 men of the Fourth Regiment Virginia Reserve Infantry (“Preston’s Reserves”) in April 1864, are not included in chart 2.1. Some of the soldiers in the Montgomery database served with one or both of these units after enlisting earlier in the army and are therefore considered regular soldiers for the purpose of this study. Members of the home guard had different motivations from those who joined combat units. Many in the home guard became conscripts who in turn reported for duty with the “Preston’s Reserves”. Also, because most of the reserve infantrymen were conscripts and were thus compelled to join the army, this group should not be included when considering enlistment motivation.

COMMUNITY

Montgomery residents were not unique in their community kinship. The valleys in Montgomery formed natural communes where members were linked by their common environment. Similar soils encouraged neighbors to grow the same crops, and their families fell into the same seasonal rhythms of sowing and harvesting. Christiansburg farmer Theophilus Raney enlisted in the fall of 1861 and regularly wrote back to his wife from the Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry in the Army of Tennessee. Many of his letters focused on updating his wife on the status of their neighbors in the regiment. The letters do not contain much detail on battles and campaigns, nor do they contain motivating rhetoric of patriotism or duty. He often signed off after asking his wife to give his best regards to their neighbors and friends back in Christiansburg. Raney’s letters demonstrate the connection he had with his fellow residents, a connection that perhaps pressured him to join the army along with them.¹³

Social pressure within small communities compelled men to enlist in the war effort along with their neighbors. Community leaders (whether the town’s respected elders or professionals), clergy, wives, and family, “encouraged, prodded, or shamed” men to join the local volunteer units.¹⁴ The size of the soldier’s town of enlistment provides some indication whether the soldier faced this kind of community pressure. According to Sheehan-Dean’s statistical analysis, smaller communities had higher enlistment rates than cities and large towns. In small towns eligible men could not hide from their obligation to serve as their identities were known by all their neighbors. Neither Blacksburg nor Christiansburg would fall under Sheehan-Dean’s definition of a city or large town, so he would defend that these two towns would have higher enlistment rates than cities and large towns like Richmond or Lynchburg. This thesis does not compare Montgomery’s community enlistment rates to cities or towns outside county borders. However, Sheehan-Deans enlistment rate argument does not stand true within Montgomery County: Blacksburg and

Unless otherwise noted in the text, the statistics from the soldier sample consider only the combatants who were likely not conscripts. Compiled Service Records, Microcopy No. 324, Roll 1067

¹³ James I. Robertson, ed., “Civil War Letters to Blacksburg: The Correspondence of Pvt. Theophilus Raney,” *The Smithfield Review: Studies in the History of the Region West of the Blue Ridge* VIII (2004): 5–30.

¹⁴ Aaron C. Sheehan-Dean, “Virginia Soldiers (Confederate) During the Civil War,” *Encyclopedia Virginia* (Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, April 12, 2011), http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Virginia_Soldiers_Confederate_During_the_Civil_War#start_entry.

Christiansburg had *higher* enlistment rates than smaller communities across all enlistment years. However, in smaller communities like McDonalds Mills, Childress Store, and Alleghany Springs farmers made up far higher percentages of the population. As discussed in the previous chapter, farmers were less inclined to enlist when it meant leaving their crops. In Montgomery, opposed to Sheehan-Dean’s sample, occupation appears to have taken precedence to kowtowing to peer pressure to enlist.

Of course, the neighbors had to support the war for their influence to be an effective motivator. Feelings of loyalty were compounded by community pressure; historians have found letters and diaries wherein fellow soldiers from the same hometown sometimes reported on another soldier’s behavior in camp or battle.¹⁵ The majority of Montgomery soldiers whose letters survive are no different. Almost all the soldiers mentioned neighbors’ names along with combat reports on at least one occasion.

This section explores the external force of community, and how it influenced a soldier to join the army. Education, religion, tradition, and politics played important roles in these communities. The social and cultural factors associated with community are central to understand the residents and mentality of the county and these two methodological approaches (social and cultural) guide this investigation.

Community Protection

While those who enlisted were less likely to believe that leaving their families to join the army left their loved ones vulnerable to Yankee invaders, it would be untrue to suppose that the Montgomery home front was safe and secure due to its distance from Richmond and northern Virginia. Residents were fully aware of the importance of the railroad and that the bridge over the New River would be a prime target for Union forces to disrupt a key Confederate transportation and supply line. Additionally, the region’s natural resources vital for the war effort—salt from the Saltworks in nearby Saltville or saltpeter from various southwestern caves—would draw attention from their northern foe.¹⁶ With Union forces making incursions in the Shenandoah Valley, and pro-Union West Virginia only a couple counties away, the threat of

¹⁵ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 77–89.

¹⁶ For more on Southwest Virginia’s natural resources during the Civil War, see Robert C. Whisonant, “Mineral Fights: Civil War Battled for Southwestern Virginia’s Lead and Salt” *The Smithfield Review: Studies in the History of the Region West of the Blue Ridge* II (1998): 77–90.

a Yankee invasion was ubiquitous if not substantive during the first few years of the war. Many soldiers on the front fretted about their family’s safety back home. Those soldiers with concerns for their loved ones’ well-being would be unsettled to hear word of unrest back home. Union troops were not the only force to be feared; civilian Union sympathizers were a threat to safety as well.

The first near crisis came before the war’s first major battle and after over 200 of the county’s men had left for their unit training camps. Mary Caperton wrote to her soldier husband, George, in mid-May about the conditions around Blacksburg where she was staying with her sister-in-law at James Preston’s Whitethorn estate:

[Dr. Otey] and Gen. Preston seemed much concerned about the Union feeling in the county. There is a settlement [she is referring to a community west of Matamoras, perhaps Prices Fork] about a mile and a half from here composed of poor people who are very rampant just now. The Prices, who live upon Col. Preston’s bounty have gone over to the enemy. Dr. Otey says that he has negro evidence that they are inciting the slaves to rebellion. He said that one of his negro men came to him on Sunday and told him that one of the Prices met him the week before and asked if he knew what the people were fighting for and then went on to say that Lincoln would free the slaves but the only way he could do so would be to get rid of such men as the negro’s master and Major Kent, etc. and that to accomplish this the negroes would have to put their masters out of the way ... Gen Preston and Dr. Otey have been trying for some time to get their men to volunteer, but they will not. The Gen. is greatly excited and says that if they dare to vote against the act of succession that they shall suffer. I can not give you any idea of his feeling on this subject. He says we are in the midst of a revolution and if he is in the county on Thursday week and these men dare to oppose the actions of the convention that there will be blood spilled in Montgomery.¹⁷

Mrs. Caperton was not alone in her concerns for the safety of the community. Writing to one of his former tenants, Oliver Carden, wealthy farmer Davidson Charlton recounts the “troubles here at Home, we have Detected a Scoundral one of the Prices in attempting to incite the Negroes in our County to Robbing and murdering the whites but fortunately he was discovered by part of the Home guard and now have him secure in our Jail, we expect to have trouble at Prices fork yet.”¹⁸ Since Wade’s LDT was not formed until over two years after this incident, the home guard in reference was probably one of the regular patrols that existed in the county since the 1850s. However, men from local companies mustered and waiting to be organized into regular

¹⁷ Mary E. Caperton to George H. Caperton. May 14, 1861, p.1-2. Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

¹⁸ Davidson W. L. Charlton to Oliver H. P. Carden, May 23, 1861, p.2. Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

duty, like the “Montgomery Fencibles,” formed patrols as well. Davidson Charlton, then 62 years old at the start of the war, would muster with the LDT in July 1863. By then four of his five sons would already be in the army. Fourth Virginia Infantryman James Henning wrote to his company commander, David Edmundson, at the end of May 1861, about the state of the Montgomery County home front, specifically the home guards:

Every thing here is being reduced to system, in a military point of view: home-guards mounted + armed, dashing around, Patroll moving, the remnant of malitia being required to meet + drill weekly + youths + boys, forming into companies, to drill + prepare for service. In fact, every thing, excited to the highest pitch is moving, in defence of our country, and our homes.¹⁹

The “scoundrel,” stonecutter Enos Price, failed to get his neighbors and slaves to join an insurrection against slaveholders and secessionists before the secession ballot that month. He was indicted shortly after one of Dr. James Otey’s slaves informed his master of the plot that included an attempt to steal Otey’s livestock.²⁰ The secession vote ultimately passed in Montgomery, perhaps due to the efforts of men like Dr. Otey, who was purported to have worn “a large navy pistol and large knife, buckled around his waist. They will make an effort to have the young men of the settlement drafted.”²¹ Few of the Prices in the Matamoras community attempted to enlist in local military units, which corroborated the rumors of their Unionism, at least in the eyes of Mary Caperton. Indeed, Jacob Price, Sr., claimed loyalty to the U.S. during the war.²² Mrs. Caperton reported that the local secessionists, including Dr. Otey, were determined to get the Prices in Matamoras to vote in favor of the May secession referendum. A few nights later Mary’s imagination got the best of her during a storm. After lightning struck a neighbor’s barn, she heard calls for help and “the thought flashed across my mind that [perhaps] the Prices were about to attack us—but i made up my mind that i would be calm and bide my

¹⁹ James Henning to David Edmundson, May 28, 1861, p.1-2, Edmundson Family Papers, VHS.

²⁰ Reynolds, “A Pragmatic Loyalty,” 26. He broke jail while awaiting trial, much to the irritation of Fourth Virginia Infantry Lieutenant James Langhorne, who wrote his mother that “I hope they will hang that fellow Price he richly deserves it.” James Langhorne to Margaret Langhorne, May 25, 1861, p. 3, VHS.

²¹ Mary E. Caperton to George H. Caperton. May 14, 1861, p.1-2. Caperton Family Papers, VPI. “Since writing the above letter, our Election has taken place and the Vote was almost unanimous for secession.” Davidson Charlton to Oliver Carden, May 23, 1861, p. 4, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

²² RG 233, Case 12049.

time.”²³ After the war, several Montgomery residents claimed they were strong-armed into voting in favor of the ordinance for secession. Some claimed they voted for secession out of ignorance, but most claimed they were compelled by armed men through threats of violence and destruction of property.²⁴

Price’s failed insurrection would not be the last threat of a slave uprising in Montgomery, and some residents noted “some little uneasiness in this county about the negros.” A couple weeks later Mary Caperton wrote to her husband that “the excitement in this part of the country is beyond anything you can conceive of. Last week there was a rumor that 500 negros with 50 white men at their head were marching from Newburn in this direction. The home guard all turned out and were in hourly expectation of meeting with the enemy, when Dr. Otey returned home after a ride of 60 miles to inform them the report was without the least foundation.”²⁵ In response to Price’s plot and the whirlwind of similar rumors, residents formed safety committees in June 1861. Montgomery was the first county in the state to form such committees to prevent future false alarms about possible invasions from spreading and disrupting the peace. These committees took on the burden of “suppressing insurrection or repelling invasion.”²⁶

PEER PRESSURE: NEIGHBORS GO TO WAR

Historian James Robertson identified state and community pride and patriotism as key motivators that spurred friends and neighbors to volunteer for both the North and the South. “Boyish enthusiasm” was also prevalent on both sides, and the first wave of volunteers contained a youthfulness that would dwindle as the war’s long years took their toll. Among other reasons for going to war, Robertson suspected soldiers joined the army to fulfill a natural desire for adventure. Montgomery soldiers did not explicitly write that going to war was an adventure, but

²³ Mary E. Caperton to George H. Caperton. May 27, 1861, p.1. Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

²⁴ RG 233, Cases 13893, 21988, 14705, 8230, 179, and 14618. Historians should be wary to accept these claims of loyalty to the Union through the secession vote because testimonies were taken after the war with claimants’ hopes to get United States Government reimbursement for property taken by Union forces.

²⁵ Mary E. Caperton to George H. Caperton, May 9, 1861, *ibid*; Mary E. Caperton to George H. Caperton. June 4, 1861, p.2. *ibid*.

²⁶ Reynolds, “A Pragmatic Loyalty,” 25–6; Emma Edie to John C. Wade, May 23, 1861, Wade Family of Montgomery County, Virginia Papers; Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 106; and, Henry Thomas. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847-1861* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1934), 124–5.

Robertson found that army life offered men the opportunity take part in an “exciting new life-style” far removed from the farms and home communities which they had only known and never ventured from.²⁷ Caught up in the patriotic fervor, 191 Montgomery boys and men volunteered in the first month of the war; over one in five of the county’s enlistees joined in April 1861. All joined an infantry unit, the Fourth Virginia, and were almost a year younger (average age of 25.2) than the average infantryman who came from the county (average age of 26.1) during the remainder of the war. Seven men were over 40 while twenty-seven teenagers (14.2% of the 191) joined. However, over 23.6% of the remainder of the county’s infantrymen were in their teens at the time of their enlistment, as were nearly half of the forty-four 1864 enlistees. The “boyish enthusiasm” may have dulled by the end of the conflict, but that did not mean young men and boys stopped going to war; and, when it came to the draft, many young men did not have a choice.

Students and young apprenticed workers had to consider the impact to their career paths by dropping their studies to join the army. Their enthusiasm often got the best of them, however. In a mid-February 1861 diary entry, John Apperson detailed his conversation with the surgeon to whom he was apprenticed. Apperson considered joining one of the local militia companies but heeded the surgeon’s recommendation not to join. “I am sure now that such is good advice, at any rate I shall not now join unless my services were needed to defend my country; then I would not hesitate a moment.”²⁸ Apperson mustered for service as a hospital steward for the Fourth Virginia Infantry less than a week following the attack on Fort Sumter.

Prominent residents attempted to drum up new recruits during the opening months of the war. Before Virginia joined the Confederacy and army recruiters strove to make their quotas, respected neighbors and townsmen soapboxed for the Southern cause. Their patriotic rhetoric persuaded men to muster with local companies to protect their homes. On April 17, 1861, Blacksburg physician Harvey Black addressed town citizens to join the Fourth Virginia Infantry. “I stand before you today their advocate [He was referring to the previous orators urging men to join the regiment]. For I love the South and its institutions. It is the land of my birth and the home of my heart and I stand ready to lend my feeble aid to defend the rights of her sons. Which

²⁷ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 5–8.

²⁸ Diary entry of John Apperson, February 19, 1861, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

is far more dearer to them than Life!”²⁹ Dr. Black became the regiment’s surgeon in May and eventually headed the field hospital of the Second Corps in the Army of Northern Virginia. 319 of Montgomery’s citizens would eventually join him in the Fourth Virginia Infantry.

Not all soldiers were ready to join the Confederate Army at the beginning of the war and many held out until after the first enlistment wave. Davidson Charlton wrote to his friend Oliver Carden in the Fourth Virginia in June 1861: “Our Fourth Volunteer Company started to Lynchburg on last Wednesday, and our fifth Volunteer Company expects to start this week, and the seventh was organised on Saturday last [all from Montgomery]. There is no trouble now to raise a company of volunteers.³⁰ The demands of home delayed some men to enlist after the first year. Others waited until they could no longer escape the draft. Many soldiers looked down on their neighbors who appeared to be shirking their martial duty. “Our Army is recruiting rapidly. The abominable stragglers are coming, or rather being brought in by harnesses,” wrote Dr. Black to his wife Molly in September 1862, “...These stragglers are a disgrace to the Army and are intolerable pest to the citizens.”³¹ McPherson found many derogatory comments regarding stragglers came from men in the upper and middle class backgrounds. He determined most of those soldiers enlisted early in the war on grounds of duty, honor, and patriotism and looked down on conscripts and substitutes.³² In Montgomery, 81% of upper and middle class soldiers enlisted before the first conscription act was enforced in July 1862.

Conscription

Few existing records of Montgomery County soldiers indicate men who were conscripted and thus forced to join. Montgomery’s soldiers appear to be more willing to enlist during the first year than their peers in the Confederate Army. Most of the county’s soldiers were already under arms by the time the Conscription Acts were enforced and the measures did not seem to compel that many more men to join the Confederate Army. After the first year of fighting depleted the ranks and proved that the conflict would not be settled quickly, the Confederate Congress passed

²⁹ Draft of address to citizens of Blackburg, Virginia, Harvey Black, April 17, 1861, p.1. Black Family Papers, VPI.

³⁰ Davidson W. L. Charlton to Oliver H. P. Carden, June 3, 1861, p.1, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

³¹ Harvey Black to Mary Black, September 26, 1862, p.1, 2, Black Family Papers, VPI.

³² McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 8.

a national draft to force all men of military age eligible for service into the army, thereby removing a man’s previous freedom to stay out of the war if he wanted no part in the fighting. Fifteen percent of all men who would serve in Confederate Army—approximately 120,000—were conscripts; of those, 9% (70,000) were substitutes, and 22.5% (180,000) enlisted after 1861.³³ 46.5% of soldiers in the army joined after the war’s first year. Less than half that percentage of Montgomery soldiers, 21.0%, enlisted during the same period. There was also a lower percentage of conscripts identified in the Montgomery database. According to Confederate service records, most of the men who joined the Preston’s Reserves in May 1864 were conscripts.³⁴ Of the over 100 soldiers in the database who served in the Preston’s Reserves, 87 did not serve in any unit prior to the reserves, which indicates these men were probable conscripts. Since the average age for members of Preston’s Reserves was almost ten years older than the average for the regular soldiers, it is likely these older men were conscripted when the maximum draft age was increased. Additionally, fourteen other men’s service records note they were conscripted. In all, only a little over ten percent of Montgomery soldiers appear to be conscripted.

The draft removed the ideals of honor and patriotism that accompanied many men as they enlisted during the first year of the war of their own free will. The Confederate Congress passed the First Conscription Act on April 16, 1862, almost exactly a year after the conflict’s opening salvo. It was clear to the South that the war would not be over as soon as they imagined at the outset. Most of the soldiers in the field originally enlisted in spring 1861 for a period of one year. In order to keep the armies full and to stop the flood of veterans leaving the ranks, conscription seemed the best recourse and the contracts for soldiers already under arms were extended for two more years. In addition, all white male citizens of the Confederate States between the ages of 18 to 35 were subject to military service as members of the Confederate Army for three years. For men who joined the army out of a sense of patriotism and noble duty the act seemed a usurpation of freedom and many promptly deserted.³⁵ Moreover, conscription threatened to remove many

³³ Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 2.

³⁴ Patti O. Weaver and Jeffrey C. Weaver, *Reserves: The Virginia Regimental Histories Series* (Appomattox, Va.: H.E. Howard, 2002), 359.

³⁵ Robertson, *4th Virginia Infantry*, 12.

men from their homes and send them across the state to fight in a war they did not understand or fully support.³⁶ George Caperton realized the deleterious effect the draft would have to the army a few months before it was enacted. Believing the draft was the worst that could be done, and dishonored those reenlisting on their own will, he wrote the measure would “do more to harm by far to our cause than the little good that could possibly accrue from the measure.”³⁷

While many soldier letters spoke of requesting substitutes, only two in the entire database have records that indicate they were substitutes. An individual could hire a substitute who would normally be exempted from service. Procuring a substitute was difficult; the expense of paying someone else to take your place in combat was cost-prohibitive, and those who were normally exempted from service were not likely to pass the medical examination to be fit for service. Substitution was unpopular with the masses who saw the process as an easy out for wealthy males. Many were suspicious of substitutes who appeared to be mercenaries drawn by money and prone to desertion at the first possible instant.³⁸ One farmer, David Earhart, came from a well-off farming family and could afford a substitute after enlisting with Fourth Virginia Infantry in April 1862. Unfortunately, he could not find an eligible substitute who could pass the medical board before he fell at Chancellorsville.

The Conscription Acts did not have a profound effect on Montgomery County recruitment later in the war. Only 35 more Montgomery residents enlisted for cavalry or infantry duty after the Third Conscription Act was passed in February 1864 to include white males aged 17 to 50. In April 1864, 123 signed up for the Preston’s Reserves, including six who previously served in the regular service and twelve from the home guard. The average age for the Preston’s Reserves was over 34. Nearly all of the remaining soldiers who joined the regular service in 1864 were teenagers who were not eligible to enlist when the war broke out.

Some eligible Montgomery men managed to stay out of the Confederate Army the duration of the war. Nathan Look was originally from Massachusetts and moved to Southwest Virginia fourteen years before the outbreak of the Civil War. He remained out of the conflict but was nervous of getting drafted before war’s end. Writing home to his parents in Massachusetts in

³⁶ Daniel E. Sutherland, *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 49.

³⁷ Diary entry of George E. Caperton, January 17, 1862, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

³⁸ James Martin, “Civil War Conscription Laws,” Library of Congress, *In Custodia Legis: Law Librarians of Congress*, November 15, 2012, <http://blogs.loc.gov/law/2012/11/civil-war-conscription-laws/>.

June 1864, from behind Confederate lines in Montgomery County, he worried that “The last conscription act takes me unless I can make it appear to a board, that will sit here the 20th of this month, that [I] can be of more service to the country in carrying on my business than I would be in the army.” His brother, Josiah, he claimed, was in a similar situation but was allowed to remain at home as long as he raised “so much grain and meat and the Government gets the benefit of it at a much less than market price.”³⁹ Look, like nearly forty percent of Montgomery’s white males eligible for service, managed to avoid regular service. The Conscription Acts did not add many more men in the ranks from Montgomery and others, as most men eligible for service were already in the army.

Soldiers were understandably frustrated with their peers who dodged their “duty” to take up arms for the Southern cause. David Earhart wrote to his wife, Mollie, shortly after he mustered with the Fourth Virginia in camps at Christiansburg about the prospect of his officers finding more recruits in the area. He viewed his officers as apathetic in procuring recruits in Montgomery, claiming that while two officers were successful in getting around fifteen new soldiers, “if encouraged right 50-60 would volunteer.”⁴⁰ His exasperation comes out as “a great many of the Pulaskians have volenteerd + also the Giles men, but strange to say our officers have done all they could against volentering in this region + labored to make the men beleive that they were drafted + was not liable to further draft under this influence a complete damper has been cast over the encampment, but a reaction is about to take place + I think a [number] will volenter.”⁴¹ Before April 1862, 545 men had already answered the call to arms. 132 more joined in April along with Earhart, including 10 others in the Fourth Virginia Infantry. From Earhart’s point of view it may have appeared a dismal showing for Montgomery enlistees, but over fifteen percent of Montgomery’s soldiers mustered in one of seven different units for their first time in April 1862.

Not all men who enlisted after the First Conscription Act were necessarily conscripts, nor did they all try to avoid service as long as they could. Some were just too young to join the army earlier in the war. Others enlisted after conscription went into effect so as *not* to be labeled

³⁹ Nathan Look to parents, June 8, 1864, p. 1, Lincoln-Look Families, VPI.

⁴⁰ Earhart does not explain what “encouragement” his officers could use to persuade potential enlistees.

⁴¹ David G. Earhart to Mary C. Earhart, April 9, 1862, p.2-3, David Earhart Collection, VPI.

conscripts with the attached stigma and maintained the pride of entering on their own free will. Many took advantage of the furloughs, reenlistment bounties, and the ability to choose the unit they would serve. While the reenlistment bounty was a nice benefit in return for extending their service in the army, it is not likely men chose to remain in the army because of the \$50. The other benefits were also tempting and allowed men a little freedom to choose their unit and take some leave, especially when the Conscription Acts took the option of leaving the service away from men. Close to ten percent of Montgomery soldiers reenlisted for a \$50 bounty, and some, like 15-year-old Private James Walters of Christiansburg, attempted to reenlist more than once and was recorded as either having received or due multiple bounty payments.⁴² Walters did not necessarily need the bounty as he was the son of a farmer worth over \$5,000. After he enlisted with the Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry in April 1862, Walters transferring twice, fought with the Twenty-First Virginia Cavalry, and incurred hospitalizing injuries. He was captured in a hospital during his recovery and was eventually released by Union troops. Walters was listed as a deserter in November 1864, but was not alone; over 30% of Montgomery’s reenlistees deserted, all after the First Conscription Act.

Desertion

It may seem contradictory at first to devote time and effort exploring desertion in a thesis focused on why soldiers *joined* the army. On the contrary, it is important to examine desertion in the county to see just how committed enlistees—and the community—were to the Southern cause. Men who joined for ideological reasons tended to have more faith in their cause and, therefore, stuck with the army as long as possible. It appears that peer pressures played a significant role pushing men to muster in the army, but if their peers were not supportive soldiers were likely to give up their arms. This section examines the prevalence of desertion and a soldier’s background for men who enlisted of their own free will. This discussion is necessary in order to gauge the commitment of men who enlisted during the first wave, April 1861-April 1862. Deserters were not committed to see the war through to completion while serving as a soldier.

⁴² Weaver and Sherwood, *54th Virginia Infantry*; John E. Olson, *21st Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1989).

Sheehan-Dean calculated that almost 70% of Virginia’s white male population between ages 15 and 50 served in the Confederate Army and 89% of all eligible men in areas not controlled by the Union joined (see Appendix A).⁴³ He also estimated that around 15,000 men permanently left the ranks, yielding an overall desertion rate of 10.6%. Historians have conducted many surveys of desertion in the Confederate Army, and several specifically spotlight Virginia soldiers. Desertion numbers for Virginia range from 13,000 to 16,399.⁴⁴ However, due to poor record-keeping by Confederate authorities the true number of deserters will never be known.⁴⁵

Montgomery’s desertion rate of 21.6% was not unusual for the region. Chart 2.2 compares several studies of Virginia soldiers conducted in recent years. Sheehan-Dean and Jack Atkins both estimated that 10.6% of Virginia’s soldiers deserted during the war, and except for 1861, their distributions of deserters across the years are strikingly similar. Both scholars suggest that more deserters left the army in 1862 than in any other year of the war. In his study of desertion in the Confederate Army, historian Mark Weitz focuses on unit studies to similarly conclude that desertion in 1862 claimed a significant number of soldiers, making it the worst year of the war for some units.⁴⁶ Atkins further dissected desertion rates by Virginia’s five districts. Southwest Virginia deserters, it appears, were more in step with their fellow Army of Northern Virginia soldiers and their distribution is more in line with Glatthaar’s sample than Virginia at large. William Blair explores dissent on the home front to show that Virginia was not uniformly united to support the Confederate cause. He uses the Sixty-Third Virginia Infantry as case study, which actually lost more men to desertion in 1861.⁴⁷ Nearly 100 Montgomery men

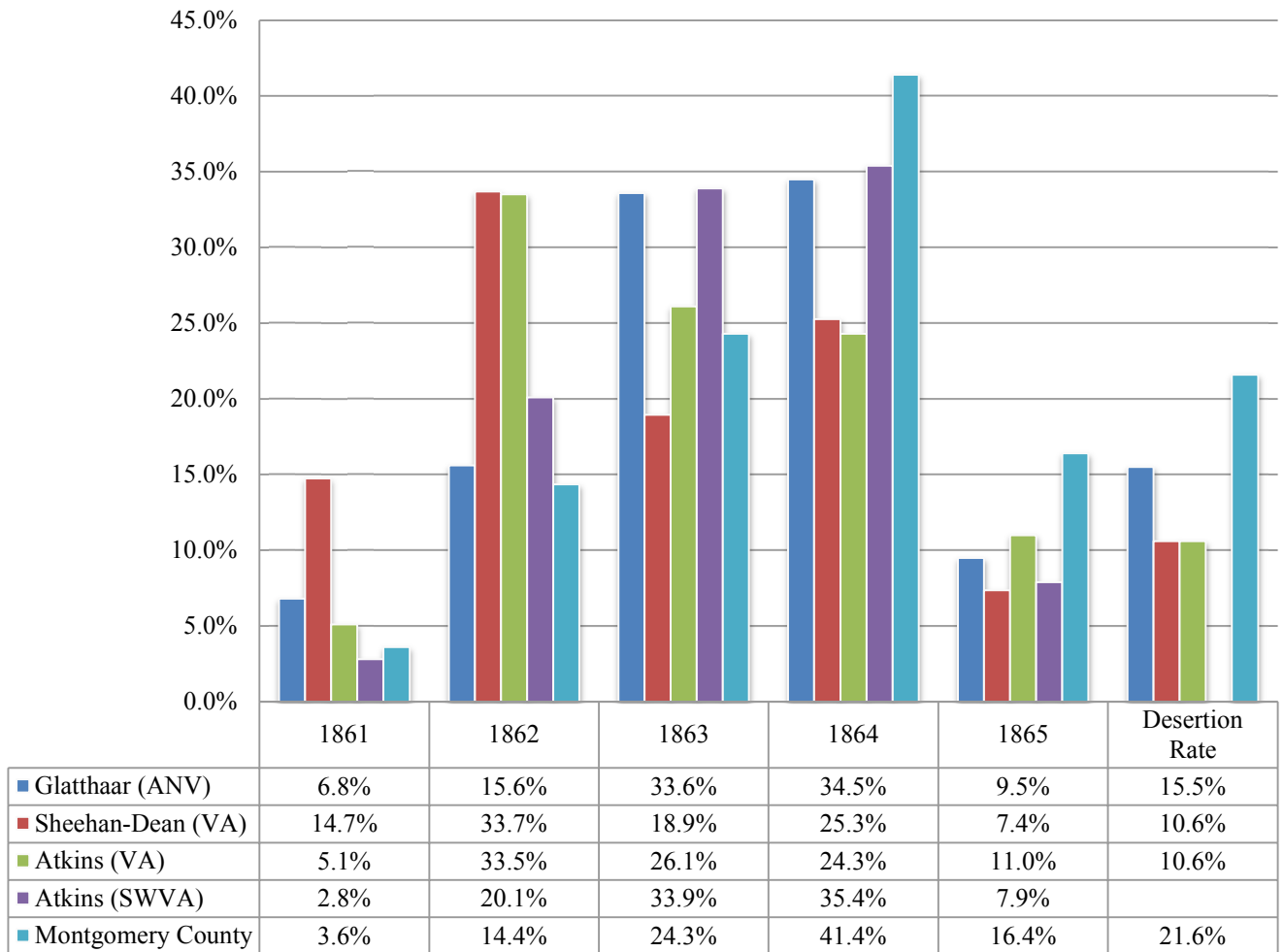
⁴³ Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 13.

⁴⁴ For more on desertion in Virginia, see Jack Lawrence Atkins, “‘It Is Useless to Conceal the Truth Any Longer’: Desertion of Virginia Soldiers From the Confederate Army” (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2007), 15; Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 227; and Ella Lonn, *Desertion during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998, reprint), 231. Lonn’s desertion rate of 11.6% is slightly higher than the one arrived at by Sheehan-Dean and Atkins.

⁴⁵ Mark A. Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), xii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁷ William Alan Blair, *Virginia’s Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Chart 2.2. Comparison of desertions by year

Source: Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia: A Statistical Portrait of the Troops Who Served Under Robert E. Lee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 13-15.

Aaron Charles Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 93, 227 n17.

Jack Lawrence Atkins, “‘It Is Useless to Conceal the Truth Any Longer’: Desertion of Virginia Soldiers From the Confederate Army” (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2007), 19.

Note: Sheehan-Dean did not explicitly indicate the desertion rate for each year. The percentages are based on the number of deserters in his sample presented in figure 2, “Permanent Absentees, 1861-1895,” of his *Why Confederates Fought*. Sheehan-Dean and Atkins both focus exclusively on Virginia soldiers while Glatthaar’s study covers all soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia. Atkins further broke his sample into five regions, including Southwest Virginia, but does not report an overall desertion rate for each region.

enlisted in Company D of that unit in April 1862, of which more than a third deserted by war’s end. The company’s desertion rate is significantly greater than the Montgomery average, thus the unit may not have provided Blair a reliable, representative case study.

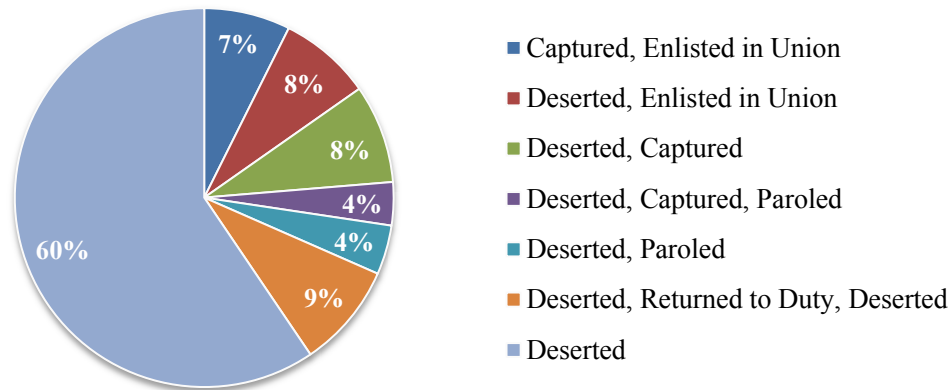
Montgomery deserters similarly abandoned their arms in waves as identified by Glaathaar and Atkins (specific to Southwest Virginia). Montgomery County and Southwest Virginia both experienced more deserters in 1864 than in any other year of the war. Desertion grew rapidly every year for Montgomery’s soldiers until hitting its zenith in 1864.

Montgomery’s 22.6% desertion rate is considerably higher than both Sheehan-Dean’s and Atkins’ 10.6%, and also higher than Glatthaar’s 15.5%. Chart 2.3 breaks down the percentages of each type of Montgomery County deserters.⁴⁸

Although parts of Montgomery, specifically Blacksburg and Christiansburg, were temporarily occupied by Union soldiers in 1864, for the vast majority of the war the county was safely behind Confederate lines. Montgomery deserters would be on the lookout for home guardsmen and other Confederate agents, but men from counties behind Union lines would fear being caught by Yankees as well. Captain John Francis wrote to a fellow officer in the Sixty-Third Virginia Infantry, Michael A. Lucas, on December 2, 1863, about the effort to cull deserters in Montgomery County: “High time here a deserter cant stay here now the home guard + Police guard are runing them all time they have run George Surface + the Lambert + Poff Craud to the [January] Regts Praying Jim Surface went with them.”⁴⁹ The county’s landscape of mountains and secluded valleys made it easier for deserters to stay hidden. Mary Price carried

⁴⁸ A soldier in the Montgomery database was recorded as deserter of the Confederate Army if he was listed on his company’s last muster as a deserter, if his last muster entry was AWOL and it appeared he never returned to duty, if he was captured and enlisted in the Union forces, or, if he deserted and was captured by Union forces. Men listed as AWOL for an extended period of time but then reappeared in the muster rolls were not recorded as deserters. Men returning from furloughs or hospitalizations were often listed as AWOL if they did not muster with the company on time. Unfortunately, due to rapid troop movements and difficulties in transportation, a soldier was not always able to find his parent command in a timely fashion. While some men may have taken liberties with extending their furlough without permission, they should not be considered permanent losses to the Confederate Army as is the case with deserters. Men who were listed as a deserter, captured, and paroled counted toward the desertion rate, but men who were simply listed as captured and paroled were not counted. Additionally, some of those listed in an official record as captured and enlisting in the US forces may have actually deserted with the intention to join the Union. Since we may never know their true intentions the service record entries are the default answer, especially when pertaining to permanent losses within the Confederate ranks.

⁴⁹ John Francis to Michael A. Lucas, December 2, 1863, p.1, John Nicolay Papers, VPI.

Chart 2.3. Montgomery County’s permanent losses by type of desertion

food in old cloth bags up Brush Mountain to feed the deserters holed up in the mines and quarries.⁵⁰ Deserters hid to not endanger family, as the home guard had authority to arrest civilians if they harbored deserters.

Community support for or against the Confederate cause was an important factor in desertion. Areas with a lack of commitment to the Confederacy had higher rates of desertion. Sheehan-Dean’s, Glatthaar’s, and Atkins’ research reveals that desertion rates in Virginia were higher earlier in the war, especially in 1862. Montgomery and Southwest Virginia soldier desertion rates increased through the years, with both peaking in 1864. Montgomery County’s high enlistment rate, coupled with lower desertion rate, during the first two years of the war suggests that Montgomery was more committed to the Southern cause at the beginning of the war, but enthusiasm waned as the war dragged on. Pockets of Montgomery residents—whether out of compassion toward deserters, frustration with the Confederate government, or both—aided deserters passing through the county back to their homes.

In his thesis, Atkins determined that Southwest Virginia had a higher desertion percentage than other areas of the state. Neighboring counties also had higher percentages of deserters, including Floyd County in which over 23% deserted.⁵¹ Like Montgomery, Floyd’s two

⁵⁰ Reynolds, “A Pragmatic Loyalty,” 55; RG 233, Case 537.

⁵¹ Paul R. Dotson, “Desertion and Unionism In Floyd County, Virginia, 1861-1865,” *The Smithfield Review: Studies in the History of the Region West of the Blue Ridge II* (1998): 93.

highest desertion years were 1863 and 1864.⁵² Floyd County is an extreme example of divided loyalty; residents initially supported war and then rapidly disdained it. The county became known as “Sisson’s Kingdom” near the end of war, named after a gang of deserters led by two men of that name.⁵³ However, not all of those who assisted and protected deserters or disrupted Confederate operations in the county were Floyd residents. Montgomery resident Levi Beckelheimer “assisted in relieving some Union prisoners about May 1863 in Floyd County Virginia. ... I with some others fired our guns at the Rebels, which caused their release.”⁵⁴ Support for deserters was not to the same extent in Montgomery County, but the fact that neighboring counties also had higher rates of desertion suggests that a 21.6% desertion rate is not overly inflated.⁵⁵

In general, deserters from the first enlistment wave were poorer, older, more likely to have family obligations, and were not as invested in slavery as their peers. Where a quarter of all enlistees were from the upper class, only 12.1% of deserters were from the same class. Deserters from the middle class made up only a little higher than the proportion of enlistees from that class; however, where 54.0% of enlistees were from the lower class, 65.1% of these men deserted. Table 2.1 on page 79 shows family statistics for men who enlisted during the first year. Nearly two out of five deserters (36.9%) were the head of their household, over a third were married (34.2%), and almost a tenth (9.4%) were from a home headed by a female. They were older on average at 26.4 years old. Only 8.1% came from slaveowning homes, including four who owned slaves. These deserters may have supported going to war originally, but ultimately determined that they were better served to stay at home—or at least out of the army.

The Montgomery deserters who enlisted during the first year but later joined the Union Army were younger, poorer, had fewer family obligations, and little attachment to slavery.

⁵² Ibid., 97.

⁵³ Ibid., 91; For more on desertion and disloyalty in Floyd County, see Paul R. Dotson, “‘Sisson’s Kingdom’: Loyalty Divisions in Floyd County, Virginia, 1861-1865” (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1997).

⁵⁴ RG 217, Case 48615.

⁵⁵ Dotson used Floyd County enlistment and desertion information from Agnew’s report. 23% of the 1,329 Floyd enlistees abandoned the Confederate cause. Dotson compared this percentage to Lonn’s data to conclude that Floyd’s desertion rate was over twice that of the rest of the state. N. J. Agnew, “A Listing of Men from Floyd County Who Served as Confederate Soldiers in the Civil War or Between the States, 1861-1865: Compiled from the Records of Camp III,” typed manuscript (Floyd County Historical Society Papers, n.d.), VPI; Dotson, “Sisson’s Kingdom,” 36.

Called “galvanized Yankees,” most of these soldiers joined the Union Army after their capture to avoid lengthy imprisonment under harsh conditions. According to historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown, some soldiers deserted the Southern cause out of desperation or loss of faith, some because they were from Unionist districts, and others because they were poor illiterates who would never be able to own their own slave and did not want to fight for those who could.⁵⁶ Daniel Sutherland agrees, speculating that class resentment, draft evasion, or even pure self-interest were possible reasons for joining the Union; once they saw the Confederacy’s failure to protect their homes from invaders men switched to the winning side. Only one of the 23 Montgomery men from the first enlistment wave who either deserted or were captured before enlisting in the Union Army owned a slave. The average net worth for these 23 deserters was less than a third of their neighbors who did not abandon the Confederacy. Where over a quarter of the enlistment wave from the upper class, only 17.4% of these deserters belonged to the top two economic classes. In addition, compared to those soldiers who did not desert, they were less likely to be married or the head of the household and did not appear to be the family breadwinner. Their absence⁵⁷ probably would not affect their families as much as the loss of a head of household’s would, although nearly half can be found living in Montgomery County on the 1870 census. Over half had a brother and/or father serving alongside in the Confederate Army. They were also a few years younger on average (22.7 years old) at the time of their enlistment. These men and boys joined the estimated 4,693 other Virginians who deserted and enlisted in the Union Army and Navy.⁵⁸

Montgomery County, like much of the Southern home front, grew tired of the war as it dragged on. Lorenzo Hylton of Company D in the Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry wrote to his wife Barbara on December 28, 1862, “I hop and trust that this horrible war will be brought to an end be fore long for I am gitting tierd of it I would like to git home once more to stay there ain’t

⁵⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1890s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 227.

⁵⁷ Not just absence due to being away in the army (Confederate or Union). Deserters could not return home without jeopardizing their family’s or the own safety lest they be caught by the home guard. Joining

⁵⁸ Weitz projected this amount based on a sample of 638. He found a pattern of oath-swearing deserters running in an unbroken line of counties southwest from Rockingham (19) through Augusta (22), Rockbridge (19), Botetourt (12), Montgomery (14), Floyd (14), Carroll (10), Washington (39). Parentheses indicate number of “galvanized Yankees” from listed county. Other patterns were for counties on the North Carolina border, in Norfolk, and in Richmond. Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter*, 131–3.

any use of trying to git out to stay out of survice so that a boddy just as well stay in survice one plase as an other.”⁵⁹ Most residents depended on the family production unit for planting, harvesting, and managing the farms. Rampant inflation meant poor and even moderately wealthy non-slaveowners could not use slaves to make up lost labor caused by family members in Confederate service. In their scholarship on the home front, historians Kenneth Noe and Daniel Sutherland examined Confederate defeat not just through battlefield losses but also the collapse of will of society on the home front.⁶⁰ Lack of community support exacerbated life in the army for Southern soldiers after debilitating defeats. In his study of Civil War soldiers’ political awareness, historian Joseph Frank contends that politics was the defining feature of people’s armies North and South, and political convictions served important roles in motivating men and gauging the loyalty of officers: “politics was a decisive factor affecting relations between the home front and the men in the ranks: troops demanded that the home front suppress dissidents who undermined the parent society’s resolve and jeopardized its support for the army.”⁶¹

GENDER AND FAMILIAL INFLUENCE

Women, whether mothers, daughters, wives, or friends, affected men’s decisions to enlist and to stay in the army. Some women felt strongly for secession and pushed their husbands to join the army to support the new nation. Since they could not shoulder arms and muster with their husbands, sons, and brothers, some women may have pushed a male to enlist to act as their agent to fight for the Confederacy. Thus, some women may have influenced their man’s concept of honor, convincing them that joining was the honorable thing to do. Recent scholarship argues Southern women strongly supported secession and slavery, often more enthusiastically than men.

⁵⁹ Lorenzo Hylton to Barbara Hylton, December 28, 1862, p.1-2, Huff-Hylton Families Papers, VPI.

⁶⁰ Daniel E. Sutherland, *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 3. See also Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*; Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*; and, Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson, *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

⁶¹ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, vii

Most of the Southwest Virginia women whose papers survive strongly expressed their support for secession.⁶²

Women who supported the war grew irritated with community men who had not yet joined the army. This frustration, along with concerns that their homes were not adequately protected, led some women to consider taking action. As volunteer units mustered for service during the first few months of the war, home guards formed from those men not able or willing to enlist in the army. Interestingly, it was reported that Montgomery women who could not enlist tried to join the home guard or create a unit of their own. Emma Edie wrote to her husband, John C. Wade, about the conditions back in Christiansburg in May 1861: “There are a great many men left behind for home guards. I did not know that there was as many left behind as there is. . . . There are 2 companies here now and the Ladies are a going to make up a female company.”⁶³ Mary Caperton vented her frustration to her husband at the end of May 1861, and what little she could do to fight the Yankee forces:

The prospect for the last day or two seems to grow darker and darker. . . . [The Federals] have Hampton and really it looks now as if our troops would stand still and allow Lincoln’s men to walk quietly in and take possession of all our towns. I almost feel as if I could start off my-self and offer my feeble aid to repel the invaders. Oh! this wicked wicked war. Where will it end. Should we gain our independence it will indeed be bought at a sacrifice—a sacrifice of life without record.⁶⁴

Although it was only a couple months into the war, and before the first major battle, Mrs. Caperton expressed her distress with the South’s apparent lack of ability to block Yankee invasion. She further described a recent discussion she had with James Preston about the possibility of Northern incursion on Montgomery soil (through Unionist West Virginia):

Mr. Preston asked me yesterday if the Federal army reached Montgomery what i would do. I told him i could not encourage a spirit of braggadocia in my-self or any one else, but if they came i would stand my ground and never waiver. He Said

⁶² Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 172n. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and, George Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

⁶³ Emma Edie to John C. Wade, May 23, 1861, p. 1, Wade Family of Montgomery County, Virginia Papers, VHS. Early war home guard discussed in letter from Davidson Charlton to Oliver Carden, May 23, 1861, p. 2, Charlton Family Papers, VPI; and, James Henning to David Edmundson, May 28, 1861, p.1-2, Edmundson Family Papers, VHS.

⁶⁴ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 31, 1861, p.1 Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

“well you will do, you are game.” Sarah Anne is talking about marching to the depot and tearing up the rail road her-self.⁶⁵

Montgomery women assisted in other ways, including sending tents to men in the Fourth Virginia Infantry. Three Montgomery County companies from the unit got together to draft resolutions to thank ladies back home for making tents for them. Lieutenant James Langhorne was present at the meeting and recalled that “before the meeting adjourned three deafening cheers were given for the ladies of Montgomery [this resolution are in the “(New) Star”].⁶⁶

Still, women knew the grim reality of war and the chance their loved one may not return from battle. Wives and mothers expressed support as well as concerns for their soldiers’ safety. Like many wives, Mrs. Caperton was still hesitant about sending her husband to war; she and Sarah Preston, George’s sister, were “anxious” that he would “get an appointment in the army...I knew it was not patriotic of me to [say] so, but that i felt pleased at the idea of the cavelry not being called into service.”⁶⁷ George enlisted in the Thirtieth Virginia Volunteers Mounted Infantry as a surgeon. Mary still thought the mounted rifles dangerous and that George did her an “injustice” by joining the mounted company. However, she wrote him that “I shall feel the greatest interest in it and shall do all i can to strengthen you. I shall remember that i am a soldier’s wife and try to bear my part bravely. it is a trial but God will sustain us.”⁶⁸ Mary Lee advised her husband William Lee not to join. Regardless, he enlisted as a private of Company C, Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry, in September 1861. He died in battle seven months later. After his death she helped cook to feed deserters in area, including for her brother John K. Lovern.⁶⁹

As the war dragged on it was often the women who kept up hope, as Dr. Black’s assistant, John Apperson, noted in his diary.⁷⁰ However, women felt the impact of Confederate set-backs and vented their frustrations. Christiansburg resident Ginger Wade wrote to her husband John Wade, an officer with the Fourth Virginia Infantry, after General Jackson’s death

⁶⁵ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 31, 1861, p. 1, Ibid.

⁶⁶ James Langhorne to Kent Langhorne, July 14, 1861, p. 2, Langhorne Family Papers, VHS

⁶⁷ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 6, 1861, p. 2, Ibid.

⁶⁸ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 17, 1861, p. 1, Ibid.

⁶⁹ RG 233, Case 2068.

⁷⁰ “Some people try to keep up hopes—generally ladies.” Diary entry of John Apperson, April 16, 1865, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

that, “A gloom has been cast over everybody by the death of Gen Jackson I feel as if I could have died to have saved him but try to think its all for the best. Perhaps we put our trust in the man too much + God has seen fit to remove him but I feel almost like giving up.”⁷¹

Frequent correspondence with home boosted soldier’s morale. While Theophilus Raney complained about not getting much mail from his wife, George Caperton received mail on a weekly basis for most of the beginning of the war.⁷² Mary reminded George of the toll that separation had on her psyche, even after only a couple months apart. “...[R]emember how much i have at stake and how intimately my happiness is connected with your well-being. Unless you have something of the same feeling it would be hard for you to realize how desolate i am without you my dear husband. God grant that this separation may be of short duration but i can scarcely hope for it soon.”⁷³ Less than a month later she wrote again about the “trial of parting with you again would be almost more than i could bear. I shall try from this time forth to do all i can to sustain you. The separation is painful to both of us, but our ‘duty is straight before us’ and we must bear our part of the burden.”⁷⁴ Such was the duty and hardship faced by many wives on the home front.

Men who enlisted at the beginning of the war had fewer family obligations than those who joined later. Table 2.1 depicts female influencers on enlistment during the war. Soldiers left behind wives, mothers, and sisters to face the uncertainty of battle. They were less inclined to live with their mothers, but more likely to live in a house headed by a female compared to later years. Although they were slightly older, they were less likely to be married than men who joined during the two subsequent years.⁷⁵ Only a fifth of the first year volunteers were the head of their household. Men who volunteered after the first year came from households with a greater percentage of female inhabitants. These men may have joined later in order to continue to

⁷¹ Ginger Wade to John Wade, May 13, 1863, p. 1, Wade Family of Montgomery County, Virginia Papers, VHS; Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 125.

⁷² Lack of mail from wife mentioned in letters from February 4, 1862 and January 21, 1864, Robertson, “Civil War Letters to Blacksburg: The Correspondence of Pvt. Theophilus Raney.”

⁷³ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 20, 1861, p. 1, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

⁷⁴ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, June 10, 1861, p. 1, Ibid.

⁷⁵ This is not to say that the men going to war were not noticeably young to their neighbors. Shortly after the First Battle of Manassas, one observer wrote: “Almost all the young men in this neighbourhood has volunteered.” Diary entry of William Guerrant, July 31, 1861, Guerrant Papers, VHS.

Table 2.1. Women’s influence on enlistment through the years

Enlistment Segment	% Head of Household	Avg Household Size	Avg # Females in Household	Avg % Female in Household	% Married	% Lived with Mothers	% Female Head of Household	Avg Age
Apr-May61	20.4	7.2	3.2	39.8	19.6	47.4	7.4	24.5
Apr61-Apr62	34.0	7.0	3.1	41.8	31.9	46.3	6.3	25.5
Post Apr 62	29.0	7.1	3.2	43.4	27.7	51.6	9.0	23.9

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eight Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

provide for and protect the family, as they were more likely to be married and the head of the household. The men who enlisted during the first wave of volunteers had fewer females in the house, were less likely to be married, and much less likely to be the head of their household. These factors gave these men the ability to up and leave their families to enlist in the army, an opportunity family men did not have. Married soldiers had an average net worth of \$2,473, much lower than their unmarried comrades. They were also much older than their county comrades-in-arms, 31.6 years old on average. Single men came from houses with a net worth averaging \$7,192, and were significantly younger at 22.4 years old.

Affluent men had more offspring who could and did serve in the army—higher wealth meant the family could survive without the breadwinner or laborers. In the upper class, 53.5% wore the Confederate uniform alongside brothers and/or fathers. Only 42.9% of the middle class and 27.8% of the lower class served with family members. 37.6% of all soldiers fought alongside family members.⁷⁶

Family compelled many men to stay with the Confederate Army. While none of the surviving letters for Montgomery soldiers indicate family and friends asked soldiers to leave the ranks, there were dozens of letters of support. Davidson Charlton wrote to his friend Oliver

⁷⁶ 23.5% of upper class soldiers were sons and fathers serving together, compared to 13.7% of middle class and 9.3% of lower class.

Carden a couple months after Carden enlisted, “You must still write to us and let us know how you are all doing, give my Respects to all the Boys without distinction and tell them we old fellows at home will try to Raise all the Bread and meat we can for them that they may have.”⁷⁷ Charlton was too old to fight, but he offered the food and support from folks back home. “Oliver I sometimes think that i must take up my Musket and come to the Battlefield and help you all fight, and all that keeps me from it is this, there must be some left to Raise Bread and meat for the army, and if we all go to the army, there will be none left to Raise a support for those who have left for the Battlefield, therefore seeing so many of our young men Rallying to their Country standard, it Constrains me to admit that it is my duty to stay at home and to the Best I can for the General welfare of all.”⁷⁸ Age could not keep Charlton out of the fray for long, and in July 1863 he joined the home guard with 139 fellow Montgomery residents. The home guard average age of 46.1 was almost twice that of the regular army.

Children

Montgomery’s sons and fathers marched to war, and in some cases fathers and their sons marched together. Eleven fathers joined the army with their sons, but only a few actually joined the same unit. Out of the eleven regular service fathers, one was killed and two were wounded. 12.4% of all regular soldiers had a father who served the Confederacy in some capacity—whether regular, home guard, or reserve duty. The casualty rate for these sons was 39.4%, only a little higher than the 33.0% for all Montgomery soldiers, perhaps indicative of a higher family devotion to the cause. However, fathers with sons in the army were more cautious on the field, where sons with fathers serving may have been more reckless. Age may have played a factor in the casualty rates. The average age for the fathers was 43.2 and the average age for sons with fathers in the service was 19.8. The average age for casualties in the latter group was 20.5 years, and the average age for all Montgomery regular soldier casualties was 24.7 years.

Families who sent fathers and sons were more likely to own slaves and have a higher net worth. Where fathers joined regular units, 27.3% owned slaves and the average worth was \$14,430. Add to that number fathers who joined reserves—likely conscripted—the slave-owning

⁷⁷ Davidson W. L. Charlton to Oliver H. P. Carden, June 3, 1861, p.1, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

percentage and net worth decrease to 20.8% and \$10,576, respectively. Add again the fathers who were in the home guard and the numbers rise to 32.1% slaveowning and an average net worth of \$12,409. Davidson Charlton was worth \$12,875 in 1860. He joined the home guard in July 1863, but not before four of his sons enlisted in the Confederate cause. He wrote to his friend Oliver in May 1861, after two of his sons joined the Fourth Virginia, “I suppose Milton [a third son who enlisted later] has informed you that he has Volunteered to go to the army, I give my sons up Freely in such a cause as this, the cause of Freedom and of Equal Rights ... and as I cannot help them to fight in Battle, that I will try to Raise all the Bredd [sic] and I can feed them whilst they are in the army, fighting against Old Abe and the Black Republicans.”⁷⁹

POLITICS AND PROPAGANDA

The political climate was one of the many factors that spurred men to enlist early in the war. In his study of the political motivation of Northern and Southern soldiers, historian Joseph Frank determined that politics were central to army in several ways, including recruiting and organizing.⁸⁰ Soldiers were a product of their community, which instilled in them their initial political ideologies and awareness. Upper class soldiers tended to show higher level of political sophistication. Frank found that 56% of upper-class soldiers whose letters and diaries he reviewed used politically reflective language. Officers especially were politically more articulate than the typical enlisted soldier, with 45.7% of all officers writing about the day’s politics compared to 28% of enlisted soldiers.⁸¹ A search of keywords within Montgomery soldiers’ letters and diaries, such as “Lincoln,” “Republican,” “government,” “politics,” and “slavery,” reveals surprising results compared to Frank: 22.2% of officers and 61.5% of enlisted included political language in their correspondence.

In Montgomery County, political discourse was stimulated by newspapers and speeches. A day following the Confederate assault on Fort Sumter, Christiansburg’s weekly newspaper, *The New Star*, urged readers that the anticipated war had come and it was then time for Virginia

⁷⁹ Davidson Charlton to Oliver Carden, May 23, 1861, p. 3, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

⁸⁰ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 11, 31.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 31, 35.

to choose sides; specifically, to “unite with the South.”⁸² *The New Star* had already presented its “prospectus” to readers, declaring that the newspaper “will be devoted to the principles and interests of the Democratic party, as the advocates and defenders of *equal rights* among the States and will be identified with the South in all its political actions.”⁸³ The newspapers brought in by the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, provided Montgomery residents with news of the outside world. Newspaper rhetoric skewed folks’ perceptions of the politics outside the New River.

The *Abingdon Democrat*, which promised “Correct Principles, and True Men,” reprinted a *Lynchburg Republican* article critical of a speech given by President Lincoln in Philadelphia. The author warned readers: “If any of his black republican apologists in Virginia, who have been and are excusing him on the plea of indiscretion in some of his remarks, heretofore made How like ye his position, Virginians? Are you willing to wait ... not withstanding the repeated warnings ye have had, till the heel of the aggressor is on your necks?” Provocative language challenged Virginians to “Arise, in your might, and remember the motto on our standard, ‘Sic Semper Tyrannis.’ Join our brethern [sic] of the South, who have so nobly spurned the sectional fanatics, and let us be and show ourselves equal to the ... fame of Virginia.”⁸⁴

Montgomery communities regularly received newspapers from other parts of the state, including the *Lynchburg Daily Virginian* during the war and *Abingdon Democrat* before the war. Newspapers presented readers the language and grandiloquence of their politicians: “... of all the causes which justify the action of the Southern States, I know of none of greater gravity and more alarming magnitude than that now developed, of the denial of right of secession.” No doubt the editor’s comments at the end of the article calling the speech “unsurpassed by any thing of the kind we have seen,” influenced readers to consider their actions should it come down to Virginians to pick sides with the South or North.⁸⁵

⁸² “The True Issue,” *The New Star*, April 13, 1861, Vol. 6, No.36.

⁸³ Emphasis original. “Prospectus of the New Star,” *The New Star*, April 16, 1861, Vol. 6, No.27.

⁸⁴ “Lincoln’s Philadelphia Speech,” *Abingdon Democrat*, March 8, 1861, Vol. 8, No. 37.

⁸⁵ “Senator Benjamin on States’ Rights,” *The New Star*, February, 16, 1861, Vol. 6, No.27. Reprint of Louisiana Senator Judah P. Benjamin’s farewell speech to the U.S. Senate on February 4, 1861, with the editor’s comments.

The New Star made no attempt to hide its contempt for the Union. After Fort Sumter the editor presented reader with a weighted ultimatum: “Whether to vote for disunion and side with the South, or vote to side with the north. ... The true issue, then, is, shall we join our enemies at the North or shall we go with our natural friends in the South?” The editor then challenged voters’ honor and loyalty:

Shall the interests and honor of Virginia be placed in the hands of the treacherous and cowardly Abe Lincoln, or shall they be under the care of the honorable and brave Jefferson Davis? We know it is hard to brake [sic] up old associations, and our business transactions having been connected heretofore with the North, custom and ideas of interest weigh heavily against a withdrawal, but all our sympathies, our social feelings and general conviction, urge us to unite with the South.⁸⁶

Reinforcing the rhetoric of the Christiansburg paper was the oratory of Montgomery residents like Dr. Black: “in act of rebellion, we save ourselves...and unite ourselves with a people whose interests are our interests, and whose destiny is our destiny.” His speech to drum up volunteers in Blacksburg for what would become the Fourth Virginia Infantry asked men to join the Southern cause because their allegiance to their Southern neighbors supplanted the Union call to arms to put down the rising rebellion. Dr. Black insisted that breaking ties with the Union was not because “we love Plymouth Rock or Bunker Hill less; but we love Yorktown, Cowpens, and [McHenry?] more. We do it not that we hated the Union when there was a Union, but we have in our bosoms a love for liberty that the allurness of no Union can overcome—a love that no creed or armed band can ever subdue.”⁸⁷ Nearly 190 Montgomery men joined in April 1861, a quarter of whom were from Blacksburg and may have been persuaded by Dr. Black’s speech.⁸⁸

Christiansburg lawyer James C. Taylor wrote to Governor Letcher on the day Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to quell the unrest in the South. “Our community has been thrown into the most intense excitement by the news, that Lincoln has made a requisition [sic] from Virginia Please do not ask us to join a northern army to fight our southern friends, neighbors, fathers, & brothers.”⁸⁹ Previously a captain in the county’s pre-war Seventy-Fifth Virginia Militia, Taylor

⁸⁶ “The True Issue,” *The New Star*, April 13, 1861, Vol. 6, No.36.

⁸⁷ Draft of address to citizens of Blacksburg, Virginia, Harvey Black, April 17, 1861, p. 5, Black Family Papers, VPI.

⁸⁸ Considering that Blacksburg soldiers made up only 15.1% of all Montgomery soldiers, an April 1861 enlistment proportion of 25.8% seems fairly significant.

enlisted that fall and rose to the rank of major in the Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry before resigning after he was wounded.

“And when we run up the stars and stripes of the [Southern] Confederacy,” Dr. Black affirmed to the April 1861 crowd, “we declare ourselves no longer subject to the rule of Abraham Lincoln, or his republican myrmidons.”⁹⁰ Other men, like Davidson Charlton, had other choice words for Lincoln, as he wrote his friend Oliver Carden about supplying soldiers in the field with “plenty to eat whilt [sic] they have to be in the field against the Illinois Babboon and his mirmadons and Cut throats.”⁹¹ Both authors derided the purported mindless obedience to Lincoln by his political allies and Union soldiers.

WEALTH, CLASS, AND THE PRESSURE TO MAINTAIN STATUS QUO

Many factors contributed to a man’s urge to enlist, and historians cannot take reasons individually without considering most or all the others. According to historian Reid Mitchell, racism and fear of slave insurrection motivated some Confederate volunteers, others thought the South possessed a culture so distinct from the North that they deserved a separate nation, and many went to war because they simply hated Yankees.⁹² The institution of slavery formed the basis of the economic opportunity and distinctive culture of the South. Southerners feared Northerners’ desire to restrict or abolish slavery threatened to destroy the South’s prosperity.⁹³ James McPherson and later historians maintain that Confederate liberty and slavery were the

⁸⁹ James C. Taylor to John Letcher, April 15, 1861, Letters Received, Governor’s Office, Executive Department, Virginia State Library, in Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 104.

⁹⁰ Draft of address to citizens of Blacksburg, Virginia, Harvey Black, April 17, 1861, p. 5, Black Family y Papers, VPI.

⁹¹ Davidson W. L. Charlton to Oliver H. P. Carden, June 3, 1861, p. 3, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

⁹² Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 4; Barton, *Goodmen: The Character of Civil War Soldiers*, 10–12. Historian Eugene Genovese claims that “slavery gave South a social system and civilization with a distinct class structure, political community, economy, ideology, and set of psychological patterns.” However, Thomas Govan argues that slavery, not culture, was the cause of war and that North and South shared a common culture. He claims that the South was culturally not too different from the North and did not believe there were two cultures crowding each other out in 1861. See Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1965); and, Thomas P. Govan, “Americans Below the Potomac,” in Charles G. Sellers, ed., *The Southerner as American* (NY: E. P. Dutton, 1966), 19-39.

⁹³ Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 4.

“twin goals” for which Confederates fought and that Southerners enlisted and remained in ranks to preserve legal slavery.⁹⁴ Many Southern whites hated the Yankee on deeply-seated racial reasons; particularly, Southerners believed Northerners encouraged slaves to rebel, and eventually feared they would impose equality of races in the South. The end of slavery would remove the important distinction between the races that allowed even the poorest of Southern whites to have power over the subjugated black chattel.

Some Southerners felt that maintaining the status quo was best for whites *and* blacks. William B. Preston, Confederate States Senator and father of the Fourth Virginia Infantry’s Major Waller Preston, wrote that “Industry, Economy calmness + courage will conquer all.” The Preston family owned fifty slaves in 1860 and their household net worth was astronomically higher than the average at \$383,330. Preston continued to state his belief that “All over Virginia the Negroes are quiet + much alarmed at the state of things. They are afraid + docile + obedient than ever known and only want to be strictly managed, kept at home, and at work.”⁹⁵ As farfetched as Preston’s theory that slaves wanted to be strictly managed, it pales in comparison to *The New Star*’s editorial:

While the North is mad on negrophilism, they never once look through their insanity to the true state of the negroe in the South. They are far better off here, than even the poorer class of whites in the North; yet, this same people would gladly place in the hands of the negro the pike and the torch, to murder their only benefactors and destroy the property of their true friends. The slave here, knows he is better cared for as a slave than he would be among the pseudo-philanthropists of the North. On recent occasions, in our town, the negroes worked so hard and so faithfully to protect the property of their masters and extinguish the flames, that our citizens, as a reward for their services, gave them a supper on last Tuesday night.⁹⁶

More than a few Montgomery residents believed it was in blacks’ best interests to stay enslaved. According to Kenneth Noe’s sample of ‘reluctant rebels’, slavery served as both the initial and the sustaining motivator and in some cases the combat motivator as well. His sample suggested that slavery in some manner motivated anywhere from a third to a half of late enlistees in the

⁹⁴ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 20; Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 46.

⁹⁵ William B. Preston to a Mr. Linkous, May 4, 1861, Alice Preston Moore Collection of Preston Family Papers, VPI.

⁹⁶ “A Nut for Abolitionists,” *The New Star*, February 16, 1861, Vol. 6, No.27, p. 2.

Confederate Army, especially in the Lower South.⁹⁷ When it became apparent that the Confederacy was going to fail and they could not preserve white supremacy, many soldiers deserted.⁹⁸ Fear of racial chaos and the inability to keep ownership of their black status symbols shook Southern whites’ commitment to the government.

It is true that white supremacy may have been a motivating factor for men in Montgomery and the rest of the South. After getting word that his wife was sharing too many private concerns with their slaves, David Earhart wrote to her that “the negroes should be treated as servants and not be allowed to give or be consulted in your own private affairs never make a confident of your house servants or hired persons, because they are dependent on you + your opinions are theirs to please and flatter you.”⁹⁹ The language many Montgomery soldiers used in letters and diaries indicate they felt the races were unequal, and the fact that so many enlisted in the Confederate Army in the first couple years of the war indicate that they supported a Southern pro-slavery government. A higher percentage of Montgomery soldiers owned slaves or lived with slaveowners than the county average as well¹⁰⁰. However, not one soldier’s letter survives in which they explicitly claimed that they enlisted to defend slavery. In his history of the Fourth Virginia Infantry, James Robertson argued that most Southerners took up arms to defend homeland, not to defend slavery.¹⁰¹ Most of the surviving manuscripts include at least one mention of the author enlisting to protect their home. Perhaps Montgomery men just were not as open about their pro-slavery thoughts when penning their letters home. Ultimately, all Confederates knew they were fighting to protect their way of life—and for them that included slavery and all that came with it.

⁹⁷ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 59.

⁹⁸ Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue, *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 45.

⁹⁹ David Earhart to Mary Earhart, October 30, 1862, p. 1, David Earhart Collection, VPI.

¹⁰⁰ Montgomery sample slaveowning percentage is 15.8%.

¹⁰¹ Robertson, *4th Virginia Infantry*, 9. See also Anne S. Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

CLASS

James McPherson suggests that combat performance improved from the lower to the middle and upper classes—but this makes sense considering that officers came from the higher classes and their position of command did not allow them to act cowardly during battle.¹⁰² Although McPherson does not reveal the breakdown of the classes in his sample, Glatthaar determined that of Lee’s army, 24.7% belonged to the upper class, 26.9% to the middle class, and 48.4% to the lower class.¹⁰³ Officers and enlisted ranks often follow class divisions. Enlisted soldiers were predominantly from non-slaveholding families, poorly educated, and lower class. Officers tended to be better educated (many held professions before and after the war), more likely to own slaves, and more inclined to come from the upper classes. Where 19.7% of all Montgomery households owned slaves, 48.5% of officers, 24.5% of non-commissioned officers, and 14.7% of enlisted soldiers owned slaves. The average net worth for Montgomery households was \$5,790, while the average net worth for officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted were \$17,736, \$7,381, and \$3,573, respectively. McPherson used rank as a surrogate for class, placing officers in the upper class.¹⁰⁴ While this works in a pinch, officers were not always from the upper class. In fact, only 57.7% of Montgomery County’s 104 officers were from the upper class; 18.3% were from the middle class and 24.0% hailed from the lower class.

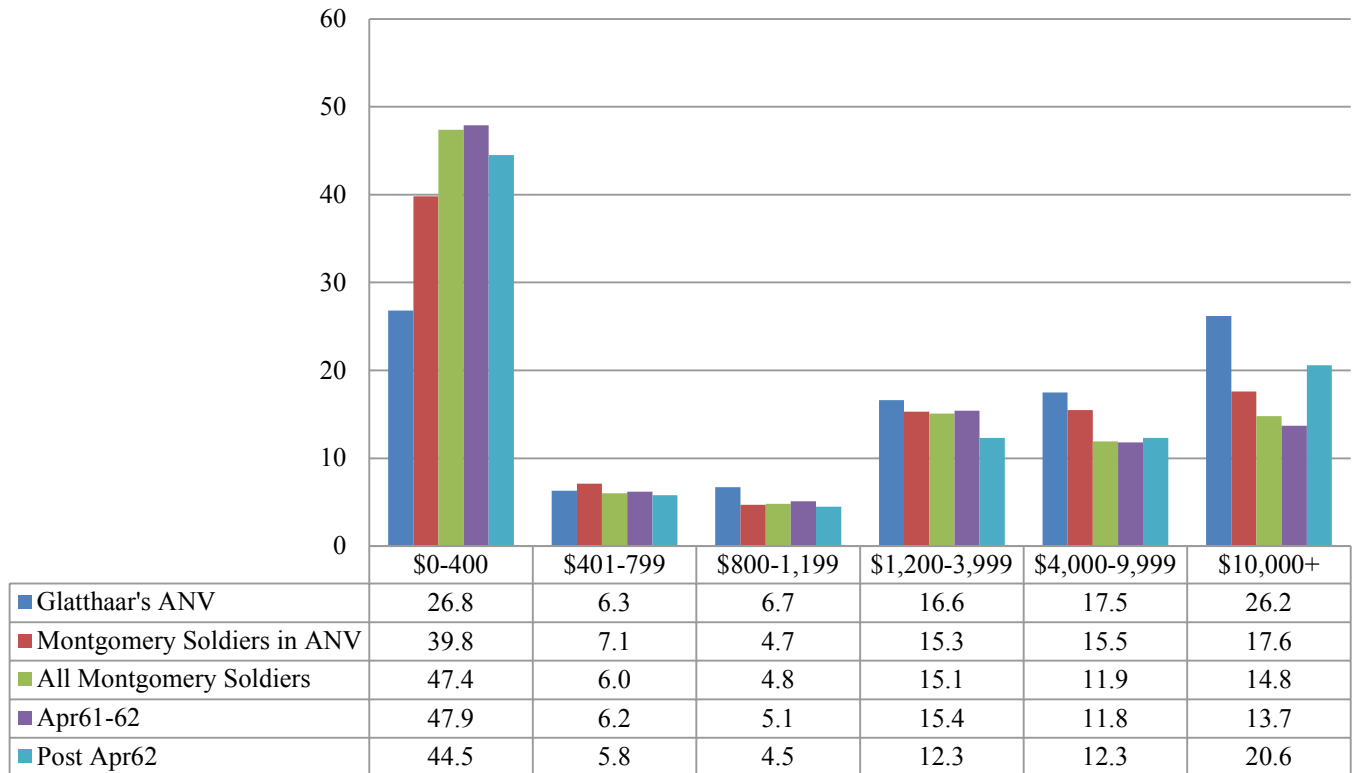
Montgomery soldiers were considerably less well-off than their peers in the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV). Mary Black wrote her husband Harvey in late 1863 about the state of things back in Montgomery: “When will it end? I think something must be done before spring to bring peace ... even the well off are starting to complain, and if they are, what will become of the poor & widows?”¹⁰⁵ No doubt every soldier thought about his family’s financial welfare back home as he saw mass inflation take its toll on the country around him. Chart 2.4 compares the household wealth of Montgomery soldiers with Glatthaar’s ANV sample. Because not every Montgomery soldier fought in the ANV, there are two population sets: one for all Montgomery soldiers and one for just the soldiers who enlisted in units belonging to the ANV. A little over a quarter of the soldiers in Glatthaar’s sample came from a household with a total net wealth of

¹⁰² McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 8.

¹⁰³ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 101.

¹⁰⁵ Mary Black to Harvey Black, November 29, 1863, p. 1, Black Family Papers, VPI.

Chart 2.4. Montgomery soldier household wealth compared to the Army of Northern Virginia

Source: Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia: A Statistical Portrait of the Troops Who Served Under Robert E. Lee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 8-11.

Joseph C. G. Kennedy, “Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

Note: The wealth divisions in this chart are not the same as the class divisions in this thesis (Lower [Low] through Upper [High]). While Glatthaar’s top two tiers match up with the Upper (High) and Upper (Low) classes, the other four do not line up with the classes used in this thesis. The percentages for the poorer four groups are calculated based on the monetary limits, not this thesis’ class divisions, in order to compare against Glatthaar’s wealth divisions.

\$400 or less, and about a third came from a home with accumulated wealth less than \$800. In comparison, nearly two in five Montgomery soldiers in the ANV and over half of all Montgomery soldiers were from households in the poorest segment. The middle segments were comparable between Glatthaar’s sample and Montgomery, but there was a greater disparity in the wealthier divisions. Over a quarter of Glatthaar’s ANV soldiers hailed from households worth \$10,000 or more, while less than one in five of all Montgomery ANV soldiers and only 14.5% of all Montgomery soldiers could say the same. As previously explained, the spike in Upper (High) enlistment after April 1862 is due to the influx of younger, wealthier men; many of whom already had a sibling in the army and were too young to enlist in war’s the first year. Still, as already discussed in chapter one wealthier men were more likely to enlist early in the war, with nearly a half of all upper class soldiers joining during the first two months.

Attempting to measure a soldier’s dedication to the Southern cause can reveal how strongly men who volunteered during the first year of the war believed the cause worth fighting—and dying—for. Desertion rates are one way to measure commitment; mortality rates are another. Men not totally dedicated to the cause would be less likely to incur fatal wounds. Men who may have joined the army who believed the cause worth fighting for, but not dying for, would be the ones to shirk their duties during battle. Examples of this phenomenon are men who found a way on the sick call roll, malingerers, or those who broke off and stayed behind the battle line as their comrades advanced into the din.¹⁰⁶ According to surviving records, 56 men were killed in battle or died from their wounds, and 64 died from non-combat-related causes. The mortality rate (killed in battle or otherwise died) of 12.9% for all Montgomery soldiers was lower than Glatthaar’s average for the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) sample (24.5%). The rate for Montgomery soldiers killed in action, 6.0%, was half the rate Glatthaar calculated for the ANV (12.3%) or McPherson uses for all Confederates (11-12%).¹⁰⁷ Another 177 men, or 20.1%, were wounded at least once during the war. The wounded percentage is closer to

¹⁰⁶ The soldier’s environment is a recent trend in Civil War scholarship. Kathryn Meier investigates the effects of soldier’s often abysmal camp life on their mental health. Many soldiers suffered from “Soldier’s Heart,” or what today’s doctors would classify as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from not just fighting but from the rough conditions of army life in general. The psychological fatigue on soldiers may account for why some men were not physically able to fight and so went to the medical officer for treatment, remained behind the lines, or outright deserted. See Kathryn Shively Meier, *Nature’s Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁷ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 16–7; McPherson, *What They Fought For*, 17.

Glatthaar’s 25.0%; however, he found that 49.4% of all soldiers in his sample were killed, wounded, or otherwise died during the war. Only one in three Montgomery combatants would meet one of those same fates.¹⁰⁸ Only 7.3% of men who volunteered during the first year were killed in battle, and 22.4% were wounded. In all, 16.0% of all first year enlistees died or were killed during the war. Still, only 38.3% of first year enlistees were killed, wounded, or died during the war. The mortality rate of this group is higher than the rate for all Montgomery soldiers, but these men had the chance to serve longer and therefore ran a higher risk of dying in battle or from disease. Most of these men fought in units attached to the ANV or Army of Tennessee; therefore they were engaged in several major campaigns. The lower mortality rates of Montgomery soldiers compared to those in the ANV may not mean that they were less committed—Montgomery soldiers could have just been luckier not to get wounded or killed.

Montgomery County’s soldiers who became casualties appear to have been more willing to take risks than their peers. Among the killed or dead, men came from households averaging 6.6 members (less than the soldier average of 7.0, but higher than the county average of 5.9), with a female ratio of 39.2% (less than both the soldier average, 42.1%, and county average, 49.2%). Over a quarter of soldiers, 28.1%, headed their household (less than the soldier average of 33.7%), and 28.1% were married (less than the soldier average of 31.6%). Over half, 50.9%, lived with their mother (more than soldier average of 47.3%) and 7.9% lived in a home headed by a female (more than soldier average of 6.1%). Mortal casualties were 24.9 years old on average (less than soldier average of 25.3). All these traits indicate Montgomery casualties were more likely to live with their parents—they probably contributed to the family as a laborer or another source of income but their families did not likely heavily rely on them for financial stability.

Wounded soldiers, whether injured once or multiple times, came from slightly larger families of 7.3 members and a higher female average of 41.2%. Fewer, 27.1%, were heads of their household and slightly fewer were married. Less than half, 49.1%, lived with their mothers and 6.2% lived in a female-headed home. Wounded soldiers were also only around 24.6 years old.

The fortunate soldiers who escaped the conflict unscathed came from homes with 7.0 members and a 42.5% female ratio. The numbers of heads of household, 36.5%, and married

¹⁰⁸ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 16–7.

Table 2.2. Desertion, death, and injury by class

Class	% of Class who Deserted	Class % of all who Deserted	% of Class Killed or Died	Class % of all Killed or Died	% of Class Wounded	Class % of all Wounded
Upper (High)	<i>10.1</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>11.7</i>	<i>13.2</i>	<i>27.3</i>	<i>20.0</i>
Upper (Low)	<i>13.1</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>17.8</i>	<i>16.7</i>	<i>22.4</i>	<i>13.7</i>
Middle (High)	<i>27.2</i>	<i>11.5</i>	<i>11.1</i>	<i>7.9</i>	<i>16.0</i>	<i>7.4</i>
Middle (Low)	<i>21.4</i>	<i>11.0</i>	<i>15.3</i>	<i>13.2</i>	<i>17.3</i>	<i>9.7</i>
Lower (High)	<i>21.1</i>	<i>10.5</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>21.6</i>	<i>12.0</i>
Lower (Low)	<i>26.9</i>	<i>52.4</i>	<i>11.6</i>	<i>37.7</i>	<i>18.1</i>	<i>38.3</i>

soldiers, 33.5%, were significantly higher. Fewer lived with their mother, 44.7%, or in a house headed by a female, 5.2%. They were older than the average at 25.6 years old. Therefore, married men who had more mouths to feed at home appeared to take fewer risks in combat. Perhaps luck has something to do with it, but it appears they were less likely to get wounded or killed during the war because they knew their families depended on them for food, and when not at war, protection.

Not only were wealthier men quick to enlist early in the war, they were also more likely to be killed or injured on the battlefield than to desert. Table 2.2 compares wounded in action and permanent losses of Montgomery soldiers, whether through desertion, killed in action, or death within the classes. Part of this may be because 57.7% of Montgomery’s officers were from the upper classes according to the 1860 census, including 35.6% from the Upper (High) class. Officers were less likely to desert and fewer than one in twelve (7.7%) permanently abandoned the army, compared to almost one in four (24.4%) enlisted soldiers. They were just as likely to be killed in battle as their enlisted troops, but less likely to die of disease or other causes. Because upper class officers were able to supplement their army rations of food, blankets, and clothing with care packages sent from home on a more-regular basis than their enlisted counterparts, they tended to be healthier and more able to withstand disease. Officers also had

access to better medical care. Although they were injured more than enlisted, 25.0% compared to 19.3%, only 4.8% died from causes other than combat compared to 7.8% of enlisted. 13.4% of 19.3%, only 4.8% died from causes other than combat compared to 7.8% of enlisted. 13.4% of all Montgomery combatants were killed in action or died, and 20.4% were wounded during the war.

Of the killed in action or death in service, 18.4% either owned or lived with slaves. Over a quarter (26.0%) of those wounded in action and 18.6% of those who escaped the war unscathed owned or lived in a house with slaves. Nearly one in three slaveowners were officers; add soldiers from families that owned slaves, and one in four were officers. Nearly half (47.5%) of all officers owned or lived with slaves. The upper classes were more likely to own slaves or need slave labor and so fought to maintain their enslaved investments.

* * *

In his study of Virginia soldier motivation, Sheehan-Dean reasoned that poorer areas sent more men to fight for the Confederacy because men in those communities had fewer opportunities for economic advancement.¹⁰⁹ However, he also found that Virginia counties with higher slave populations had higher enlistment rates, which shows that wealthier counties also sent a high proportion of its population to the Confederate Army. As determined in chapter one, Montgomery was not considered a poor county at the start of the war, as the county’s aggregate wealth was above the average for Virginia. It also had above average slaveownership and slave population compared to the rest of the state, although not as prominent as in the eastern portion. Montgomery was one of eleven counties with slave population between 10-25% (20.9% of Montgomery was enslaved) with an enlistment rate of 51-75%.¹¹⁰ In Montgomery there were high proportions of both poor and wealthy men who enlisted in the Confederate Army. The

¹⁰⁹ Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 30.

¹¹⁰ As discussed in the introduction, Sheehan-Dean places Montgomery’s enlistment rate in the 75%+ category. Because of this error I include Montgomery in a different group of counties on Sheehan-Dean’s Table 2. Montgomery does agree with the rules Sheehan-Dean created for his Table 3, where enlistment rates for average household wealth of \$5,342.80 or more was 51-75%. Montgomery’s average household wealth was \$5,790 with a 61.8% enlistment rate. *Ibid.*, 35–6.

Civil War was a poor man’s fight because they had much at stake in antebellum South, if not financially. Without slavery, poor white males would lose their power over blacks.

As explored in this chapter, there were many deep social forces that affected men’s motivation to enlist. Historians studying Civil War enlistment, in an attempt to analyze all the probable reasons affecting soldier motivation across an entire army or side, miss the blends of motivational forces that are unique to smaller regions and communities. The broad stroke approach based on class or other demographics is useful for a summary view of enlistment motivation but misses the idiosyncrasies of distinct areas like Montgomery County. While those large scale projects help a general reader understand motivation, this thesis is one that cautions historians about trying to explain enlistment in such a way, as Montgomery soldier demographics do not always line up with the broader-scope projects of Glatthaar, Sheehan-Dean, and McPherson.

The external forces within a soldier’s community compelled him to enlist in the army during the first year of the war. Mothers, wives, family responsibilities, political rhetoric, and the expectation to maintain the antebellum status quo (especially wealth) all contributed to this decision. However, what compelled men to enlist did not always make them stay in the army, and more than a fifth of all Montgomery County soldiers lacked an entrenched commitment to the Southern cause and deserted during the war. The internal, ideological, and deep-seated impetuses for men to enlist are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

“OUR CAUSE IS JUST”: PERSONAL MOTIVATION

“I am again in camp. Thoughts wandering to my mountain home,” wrote First Lieutenant James Charlton to his friend Oliver Carden in early 1864. “The land of my childhood’s home and oh; it grieved my sad heart to leave my once happy and pleasant home and those was dear to me as life but I parted with a lite heart full of hope that soon we would be freed from this cruel war and welcome peace and quietude to our once happy home; when i staped upon the train that was to bare me off and took that hand of yours my heart throbbd with emotion that know tung can express I felt that I would sink prostrated but hope told me to bear up that future would bring relief.”¹ Lieutenant Charlton had enlisted in the Fourth Virginia Infantry as a Fourth Sergeant in April 1861. While in the Fourth Virginia he was wounded, captured, exchanged, and promoted to officer. He resigned in July 1863 due to medical reasons but decided to return to service in March 1864 as an officer in the Fourteenth Virginia Cavalry. Many wounded or ill soldiers tried to join the cavalry if they could not keep up with the physical demands of the infantry. Charlton was wounded again, captured again in April 1865, and released in June 1865 after the war was over. His letter in the spring of 1864 indicates that after three years of tiring service he was homesick, no doubt like many of his compatriots. It took a resilient body and spirit to stay in the Confederate forces for three years. Lieutenant Charlton survived imprisonment and multiple wounds during his service that spanned the duration of the war.

Nearly a quarter of the 190 men who joined the Fourth Virginia Infantry with James Charlton in April 1861 would survive in the service until 1865. Their enlistments would be wearisome and precarious as part of Virginia’s “Stonewall Brigade”; the Fourth Virginia was present for action at every major battle in the eastern theater. Perhaps heavy fighting persuaded nearly half (45.3%) of the Montgomery April 1861 volunteers to transfer to other units (67.4% to the cavalry, 5% to the home guard, 4% to the infantry, and the remainder to various other duties

¹ James P. Charlton to Oliver H. P. Carden, March 27, 1864, p. 1, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

like ordnance bureau, navy, reserves, and hospital duty) during the war. Over 13% of the April 1861 soldiers who stayed in Confederate service until 1865 would die or be killed in the closing months of the war, while nearly as many would desert the Confederate cause as it appeared hope of victory was lost. The Fourth Virginia Infantry surrendered at Appomattox with only 7 officers and 38 men, and of those few it appears that only a couple remained of the Montgomery April 1861 volunteers.² Similarly, only 28.8% of all Montgomery soldiers who joined the war in the first year were counted among the Confederate ranks at the beginning of 1865. 37.6% of those men transferred to at least one other unit during the war; again, mostly cavalry, but if they were not physically able to continue the hardships of regular duty they mustered with the Montgomery home guard.

As influential as communal and familial forces were to a soldier's psyche, it took strong personal convictions to join the ranks and risk life and limb for the South. The previous chapter explored the external forces that are the focus in the recent trend in history to determine motivation in Civil War soldiers. However, some of today's scholars are concerned there is an overemphasis on socioeconomic data and a tendency to overlook ideological and cultural influences.³ Economic data is easier to quantify and analyze, but it provides an incomplete picture of all the factors that motivate human beings during a stressful wartime environment. Paying insufficient attention to literary evidence misses the pride, fear, optimism, and frustration felt by soldiers and their families. Economic studies certainly help to reveal what soldiers left out of their letters, but they fail to convey a sense of the passions that drove men to enlist in the army and leave their families and friends behind for what they thought might be weeks, months, or forever should they give their ultimate sacrifice.

Economic and demographic analysis helps scholars identify trends and probable traits for enlisting soldiers, but that data misses the voices of soldiers. Scholars have tried various ways to analyze soldiers' writings to find trends. Some counted the number of times certain words or phrases were written or how many times a particular emotion was conveyed. In one such example, McPherson found that planters and slaveholding professionals mentioned patriotic

² Robertson, *4th Virginia Infantry*, 50.

³ Noel Fisher, "Feelin' Mighty Southern: Recent Scholarship on Southern Appalachia in the Civil War," *Civil War History* 47, no. 4 (December 2001): 345.

motives twice as often as other soldiers.⁴ While these works are no doubt important in their own ways and add to the historical conversation, they are problematic because they can overlook the context of such words within the letters or entire correspondence of individual soldiers.

Additionally, literary analysis can be more time-consuming with little or no evidence to show for the countless hours spent scouring manuscript collections. Kenneth Noe utilized a sample of 320 men for his research on the ‘reluctant rebels’ who enlisted after the first surge of volunteers. Of those men, only eight specifically mentioned their reasons for not enlisting after Fort Sumter.⁵ Compiling and then comparing names from regimental histories, company muster rolls, service records, and census records allowed me to create the database of 1,141 Montgomery residents who served the Confederacy in regular, reserve, or home guard service. However, primary sources are only available for less than five percent of Montgomery County’s soldiers. After reading through the available manuscript collections, fewer than twenty collections provided sufficient evidence of enlistment motivation. Obviously, the literate are overrepresented in this group, as are officers, who make up over half the group. None were unskilled laborers, and most (54.8%) were farmers. Over a third were from Blacksburg (overrepresented), and the average author was from a home with a net worth of almost \$36,000—far above the average of \$5,738. Only 9.7% deserted during the war, while 41.9% were injured (only three were killed in action and one died in prison). Fewer than a third were married (29.0%), while two thirds (68.2%) of the unmarried soldiers lived with their mothers. 86% fought in the regular army with the remainder in the home guard. Finally, 51.6% either owned slaves or lived in a house that held slaves.

The available Montgomery County literary sampling contrasts greatly with James McPherson’s sample of 429 Confederate soldiers for his research in *For Cause and Comrades*. While 13.4% of Montgomery soldiers were either killed or died during the war (not much higher than the Confederate average of 11-12%), only 9.7% of the soldiers for whom letters are available were killed in action. 29% of McPherson’s sample were killed or mortally wounded,

⁴ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 110. Historian Michael Barton argued that expressions of patriotism mattered, but essentially dismissed them as non-ideological ‘psychosocial’ values. Impetuous, verbose, and concerned with ‘gallantry,’ Confederates—especially the officers—according to Barton, cared relatively little about abstract notions of freedom and democracy. Barton’s findings are not supported in either McPherson’s research or in the Montgomery County study. Barton, *Goodmen: The Character of Civil War Soldiers*, 5, 24, 31–33, 40–43

⁵ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 7.

between two and three times the Confederate combat mortality average.⁶ He attributes the high mortality rate in his sample to the supposition that families were more likely to keep letters and diaries of men who died during the war as a way to preserve their memory. Only 34.9% of McPherson’s sample of Confederates were farmers—a little over half of the percentage of farmers in my literary sample but still far below the percentage of soldier-farmers in Montgomery and the rest of the South (refer to table 1.5). Officers made up around the same percentage of both McPherson’s and my literary samples—47%. He also used officers as a stand-in for class in his research instead of checking the net worth of each individual through census records or other means.⁷ While this methodology may have been satisfactory for a large scale analysis of soldier motivation, such an assumption can create inadequate results. Although most officers were from the upper class, holding a commission was not an indication of class in Montgomery County. Additionally, nearly half of McPherson’s sample was officers, yet we know that the upper class made up only around a quarter of the soldier population. This example is one reason why a balanced, focused study using both socioeconomic and literary evidence is important for the current trend of studying soldier motivation.

No amount of socioeconomic data can fully answer *why* a soldier enlisted. The literary evidence from soldiers and their families from Montgomery County includes references to religion, duty, honor, politics, ideology, and masculinity. The letters and diary entries bring a human element to the statistics analyzed in the previous chapter. After all, these soldiers were men and boys faced with the very real possibility of loss of life or limb. For many, it took insurmountable courage to volunteer for their state. In this chapter, we see some of the reasons men enlisted in their own words, as well as encouragement from friends, neighbors, and loved ones. The following pages analyze the internal motivators in available evidence that compelled Montgomery residents to voluntarily enlist in the Confederate Army early in the war.

⁶ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, ix.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 101. One reason for the overrepresentation of officers in this sample is that many of the letters are between officers within the collections.

RELIGION AND FAITH

Together, faith and religion were one of the cornerstones for a complete upbringing in Southern culture. After narrowly escaping unscathed from the Battle of Sharpsburg (he found a bullet hole in his hat⁸), Fourth Virginia Infantry private David Earhart wrote to his wife Mollie, “Receive my best love to yourself + George make a good + industrious boy of him teach him that his first duty is to god then to his country.”⁹ George was born after David left for the war, and died a few months before David’s luck ran out at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Earhart’s letters, like many of his fellow soldiers’, are filled with references to God and faith. For those men who enlisted, duty to God did not prohibit them from joining the army and serving their country; these men used faith to strengthen their courage through the uncertainty of war.¹⁰ Faith helped soldiers and their families deal with loss both on the battlefield and back home, and to get them through the uncertainty of war. “We trust in God,” wrote Mary Caperton to her husband George, “He can bring light out of darkness.”¹¹ In *Embattled Courage*, Gerald Linderman noted that the “Leave all to Him” mentality was a formula on which many soldiers drew for courage in battle. Godliness was not only a plea for individual survival but for favorable outcomes of entire battles.¹² Soldiers also drew strength from the encouraging words of their families and friends who were confident God supported their cause.

Ministers and chaplains guided men through the tribulations of the unknown and kept soldiers’ faith in the Southern war effort. “We had preaching in camp today by a Mr. Shelburn from Montgomery,” John Apperson penned in his diary, “His sermon was eulogized very much. ... Then with exhortations to the soldiers of our army—to do our whole duty as men—both in

⁸ “I had a hole shot in my hat missed the head the thickness of the lining, I thought it was the hardest place we were ever in, + expected to be killd evry instant, I resolved to be a better man if I come out Safe.” David G. Earhart to Mary C. Earhart, September 19, 1862, p. 3, David Earhart Collection, VPI.

⁹ David G. Earhart to Mary C. Earhart, September 19, 1862, p. 3, 4, Ibid.

¹⁰ Yet not every religion supported the war raging among them. One pacifist sect was the Quakers. The HOA that permeated Montgomery County during the war traced its roots to the anti-Confederate, anti-slavery Quaker belt in western North Carolina. Although the HOA was prevalent in Montgomery County, there were no Quaker churches in the county prior to or during the war.

¹¹ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 9, 1861, p. 2, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

¹² Ibid., 9-10.

camp and in battle.”¹³ Clergy became the “official custodians of the popular conscience” in the ranks, according to Sydney Ahlstrom.¹⁴ Religion and faith played important roles in motivating and comforting the men in ranks.¹⁵ Men who sacrificed their lives and their families’ livelihoods could find comfort in the reassurance that their service in the war was justified.

Most Confederates believed that God was on their side, regardless of their religious persuasion or degree of faith. For many soldiers, faith that they were on the same side as God helped them accept the inevitable death and destruction that came with battle. Mary Caperton wrote her husband with concerns that his life and soul was in danger and pleaded with him to “Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you ... God in mercy watch over us and protect us from evil.”¹⁶ A couple of days later she still lamented her husband’s decision to go off to war, but found consolation in her faith: “Oh! this wicked, wicked war, but we are right now, to defend our state and if we trust in God the victory will be ours.”¹⁷ Confederate victories were taken as a sign of God’s favor in the cause of the Confederacy.

In some cases religious identity strengthened a volunteer’s commitment to their national cause; in others it created tensions between their competing duties.¹⁸ The principal cause for a religious soldier’s depression was not that he would be killed in battle, but that God might not forgive him for violating commandments.¹⁹ Several soldiers noted their discomfort with the grisly reality of warfare requiring men to kill each other. On New Year’s Eve of 1861, George Caperton wrote: “This is the last day of the year, would i could write the last day of a most

¹³ Diary entry of John Apperson, December 15, 1861, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

¹⁴ Sydney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People* (New Haven,: Yale University Press, 1972), 672. See also, Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 154–5.

¹⁵ See Samuel J. Watson, “Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies,” *The Journal of Military History* 58, no. 1 (January 1994): 29–55; Drew Gilpin Faust, “Christian Soldiers: The Meaning of Revivalism in the Confederate Army,” *The Journal of Southern History* 53, no. 1 (February 1987): 63–90. Faust determines that religion was critical to a Southerner’s concept of nation, which relied on defining Confederates as God’s chosen people.

¹⁶ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 27, 1861, p. 2, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

¹⁷ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 29, 1861, p. 1, Ibid.

¹⁸ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, “The Blue and Gray in Black and White: Assessing the Scholarship on Civil War Soldiers,” in Aaron C. Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 3.

¹⁹ David Rolfs, “‘No Nearer Heaven Now but Rather Farther Off’: The Religious Compromises and Conflicts of Northern Soldiers,” in Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View from the Ground*, 136.

unholy and iniquitous war; but alas many long years may go by before peace is restored to our unhappy land.”²⁰ Earlier that year a fellow Fourth Virginia wrote, “I think times are more ominous of evil now than ever...the next we hear perhaps will be pregnant with the thrilling scenes of the battle field; may the Great God avert it; may He stop the tide that will stain American shores with blood.”²¹ Conflicted soldiers may have been more likely to desert, especially as Confederate losses mounted and it appeared that the South was no longer in God’s favor. However, none of the Montgomery soldiers who left behind letters and diaries referencing God deserted.

A soldier’s willingness to kill should not be neglected. The tacit understanding of studying why a man wanted to join the army is that scholars are also looking for whether a soldier was ready to die in battle. What is often overlooked in studies of soldier motivation is their willingness to kill, which should require equal attention as willingness to enlist. Unfortunately, although a few soldiers wrote along the lines of wanting to “demolish evy yanky,” there is little surviving evidence from Montgomery soldiers that they were ready to kill.²² This shortage is not likely due to families destroying evidence of their kin’s apparent “bloodthirstiness.” Rather, the act of killing another human, especially a former countryman, would have been a traumatic and a harsh reality of war that men would not be comfortable with expressing in writing—especially in a letter to family and friends.

MASCULINITY AND HONOR

“Though there are now only seven stars in the galaxy of the South, there soon will be another, Virginia, whose manhood seemed to have been drowned, whose zeal seemed to have quenched, has awakened from her slumber, and will soon add another star to the galaxy of the South.”²³ Such was Dr. Harvey Black’s appeal to the men assembled in Blacksburg to listen to

²⁰ Diary entry of George Caperton, December 31, 1861, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

²¹ Diary entry of John Apperson, April 9, 1861, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

²² Letter from unidentified brother to Waddy Charlton, July 12, 1861, p. 2, Charlton, Waddy Letter, “Civil War Small Manuscripts Collection, Ms2003-014,” VPI.

²³ Draft of address to citizens of Blacksburg, Virginia, Harvey Black, April 17, 1861, p.6, Black Family Papers, VPI.

the recruiters for the future Fourth Virginia Infantry. Honor and masculinity were major factors in war propaganda and in soldier letters. Like their brethren across the state, Southwest Virginians seethed at what they perceived as Northern insults during the secession crisis and feared that their reputations and, for some, their masculinity stood in the balance.²⁴ Southerners felt degraded and disgraced by the North, and secession seemed the only recourse to express their anger and frustration with the political system. Increased anger and frustration borne over years of criticism of slaveholding exacerbated Southerners to their tipping point.²⁵

In *The Militant South* (1956), historian John Franklin argued that a sense of personal insecurity and an old-world concept of honor in the militant South produced a peculiar temperament in the Southerner. Antebellum Southerners were insecure because they felt their political institutions were weak—e.g., pitted against their Northern political foes—forcing them to depend on themselves for their own protection and the protection of their families and women. Their militancy was mostly encouraged by their concept of honor, deduced Franklin.²⁶ Wiley Sword identified what he called the ‘Virginia mystique’, that Virginians felt they were bred of superior “cavalier” heritage. Stereotypes in Old South novels were that Virginians were planter descendants of the Norman aristocracy who ruled England. Virginians perpetuated manly virtues of refined manners, aristocratic behavior, and strong sense of honor. ‘Yankees’ were burdened with inferior Saxon ancestry and from lower socioeconomic class.²⁷ Likewise, the term ‘Yankee’ encapsulated the idea of a pathetic foe. The “hypocritical reformers, cold industrialists, money-grubbers, and self-righteous Puritans” were the natural-born adversary of everything Southern, observed historian Jason Phillips.²⁸ Southerners challenged Northern claims to higher civilization and loftier war aims by stressing the righteousness of their exercise of self-defense. By painting Yankees with the same brush that colonists and patriots used to mark enemies,

²⁴ Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad*, 8.

²⁵ Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 154.

²⁶ John H. Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956).

²⁷ Wiley Sword, *Southern Invincibility: A History of the Confederate Heart* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 30.

²⁸ Jason Phillips, “A Brother’s War? Exploring Confederate Perceptions of the Enemy,” in Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View from the Ground*, , 71–72.

Southerners “legitimized themselves as the heirs of the spirit of 1776.”²⁹ After all, many Confederates believed the average “blue belly” was an immigrant who enlisted for pay and fought without patriotic motives.³⁰ Montgomery soldiers wrote that they felt honor demanded they defend their state against an “arrogant and sectional” North.³¹

Many Southerners enlisted, Bell Wiley maintained, because they hated Yankees insults and especially Northerners’ constant criticism of slavery and the South, not to mention the North’s apparent willingness to destroy Southern society as Southerners knew it.³² Montgomery resident Henry Fowlkes wrote to his children from what he thought was his deathbed shortly after the end of hostilities:

Remember, my dearest children, that you are the lineal and hereditary representative of a long line of gentlemen—men who were gentlemen when that word had a distinctive significance—long, long before Virginia had lost her independence, her freedom, and her respectability and became what she is this day, a miserable down-fallen province to be trampled upon and spit upon by every perverse Yankee — who struts in brief authority over the ruins of a fabric whose beauty and glory he can no more appreciate than he can the beauty of virtue or the respectability of honesty. When I think of it, my children, if it were not for you all, I feel ready to go and leave the disgusting scene.³³

Men like Fowlkes, especially slaveowners, feared the end of the gentlemanly, aristocratic identity of the South by their Northern counterparts. They believed Yankees did not understand, let alone appreciate, the honor and gentility of their Southern culture. Thus, Southerners could depict their adversaries as uncivilized and justify their decisions to take up arms to defend their state from Northern invaders.

The letters of Noe’s ‘reluctant rebels’ suggested that, in their eyes, duty was merely the reverse of the guilt and shame they apparently felt for not enlisting sooner. Such comments place those latter enlistees in what some historians define as the southern honor culture. Honor embodied much of a traditional, masculine warrior code.³⁴ Modern definitions equate honor with

²⁹ Sheehan-Dean, *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, 71.

³⁰ Steven E. Woodworth, *The American Civil War: A Handbook of Literature and Research* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 456.

³¹ Diary entry of John Apperson, February 12, 1861, p. 1, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

³² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 309.

³³ Henry Fowlkes to children, October 12, 1865, p. 6-7, Henry M. Fowlkes Letters, VPI.

respect, distinction, glory, and integrity. However, nineteenth century Southern notions of honor required that an individual have a reputation for honesty and integrity, martial courage and strength, self-sufficiency, and a willingness to use violence to defend perceived violations of any of the above.³⁵ Montgomery residents, like other Southerners at the time, felt that honor required they take up arms and fight their Northern foes. It was their duty to protect the honor of their state and themselves. As many Southerners believed, honor required their state to “break off all social relations with an arrogant and sectional north—rend assunder the bonds that now hold her to a people who would rob her of her honor and virtue and trample her to death by downright, outright oppression.”³⁶ Honor, more than duty—or duty understood as honor—drove Confederate enlistments and even the resolve to give their life in battle.³⁷ Rhetoric in Montgomery soldiers’ correspondence and journals reveal that honor drove many to join the army.

Lieutenant James Langhorne enlisted in the Fourth Virginia Infantry in April 1861 with early enthusiasm and determination: “I do hope from the bottom of my soul that a peace measure can be agreed upon in every way satisfactory to the honor and interest of the South and that this horrible civil war may be arrested, but if the north wont grant us honorable and just terms of separation, and refuses to recognize us as a free government we must compel her to do so by the force of arms, or die one and all of us in noble defence of our rights.”³⁸ Lieutenant Langhorne was wounded, captured, and died in defense of the rights for which he enlisted. He wrote his mother early in the war about the possible dreadful result of his service:

...rest assured if any thing happens to me you will be immediately informed of it and if I die in this fight Ma I intend to die worthy of the mother that bore me and of the Father that taught me to be a free man + to have honor. Therefore Ma if I fall in this struggle you will have the great comfort that I died bravly and in a

³⁴ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 38. Elisabeth Laterbach Laskin argued that after the Conscription Acts, honor motivated men to enlist rather than debase themselves by submitting to the government as draftees. “Good Old Rebels: Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2003, 110-15.

³⁵ Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, xiv; See also, Brett McKay and Kate McKay, “Manly Honor Part V: Honor in the American South,” Blog, *The Art of Manliness*, November 26, 2012, <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2012/11/26/manly-honor-part-v-honor-in-the-american-south/>; and, John H. Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956)..

³⁶ Diary entry of John Apperson, February 22, 1861 Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

³⁷ Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*., xiv.

³⁸ James Langhorne to Margaret Langhorne, June 26, 1861, p. 3, Langhorne Family Papers, VHS.

noble + just cause, if the north subjugates the South I never want to live to be 21 years old when I am at that age to be [regarded] an effective citizen of my state I want to breath the breath of a freeman or not breath at all.³⁹

Surgeon John Apperson also resolved to “honorably” fight non-secessionists before the outbreak of war. Although he ultimately enlisted and joined the medical staff away from the fighting, he felt obligated to act “as I always try to do upon right and honor, and if this involved me into a difficulty, I enter it with a bold heart and determined purpose, hoping for my character and deportment to bear me out honorably.”⁴⁰ Apperson recounted a scuffle between pro- and anti-secession factions in his town before Virginia seceded. The fight was broken up before Apperson could hope to see the anti-secessionist “whipped.” Enraged, he voiced his opinion to those gathered in the street: “...[A]ny man that would not fight for the south in case it were necessary at this juncture—they were not worthy of the name of a man. This I declared aloud, boldly and openly.”⁴¹

The masculine ideal of honor led Southern men to emasculate their Northern adversary. Their language pegged Union troops as weak and trepidatious. Men like 26-year-old farmer John Heavener of the Fourth Virginia Infantry joined at the beginning of the war because he believed he could “whip the Yankees” before his one year enlistment contract expired.⁴² Fellow Fourth Virginia infantryman David Earhart wrote his wife Mollie and father during the Peninsular Campaign that, “We expect a hard fight to day, Our soldiers fight like bull dogs, the enemy fight desperately.” He closed the letter, “Send word to Mollie I am well and have always been at my post + hope soon to see the Yankies drove in disgrace from Virginia.”⁴³ Davidson Charlton’s language was more direct in a letter to his friend in the Fourth Virginia: “... cast yourselves and cause Before the almighty god and pray him to Bless you and the great cause of the Whole

³⁹ Emphasis original. James Langhorne to Margaret Langhorne, June 12, 1861, p. 3, Langhorne Family Papers, VHS. Langhorne also wrote of honor and duty: “if there is an attack I expect to do my part of the fighting, and if I should fall, I want you my dear + honored Father to know how much I love and honor you, and my dear Mother If I die I shall die bravely + if I live I hope to have added something to my name.” Emphasis original. James Langhorne to Jonathon Langhorne, May 21, 1861, p. 4, Langhorne Family Papers, VHS.

⁴⁰ Diary entry of John Apperson, February 12, 1861, p. 1, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

⁴¹ Diary entry of John Apperson, February 4, 1861, p. 1, Ibid.

⁴² Dorothy H. Bodell, *The Heavener Family of Montgomery County, Virginia, 1797-1982* (Blacksburg, Va.: D.H. Bodell, 1983).

⁴³ David G. Earhart to Mary C. Earhart, June 28, 1862, p. 1, 2, David Earhart Collection, VPI.

South, and if you have to fight he will be a shield between you and your Vile enemies of the North and will cause them to Retreat before you like cowards which they are[.]”⁴⁴ David Edmundson, while as an officer in the Twenty-First Virginia Cavalry, wrote to his sister after a recent fight against the Yankees: “when they heard of our advance [to support another unit they were fighting] they immediately fled across to their quarter on the opposite of the river I dont think we can get a fight out of the cowardly scoundrals.”⁴⁵ Of course, when the Confederate Army was on the losing side of a battle, the rhetoric was that “Our men were not whipped but overpowered by superior numbers... We are retreating slowly, the enemy advancing very Caustiously.”⁴⁶

Joshua Chamberlain, when asked why he determined to return to the battlefield after only partially recovering from a near-fatal wound, said that “honor and manliness” required that he return to the front.⁴⁷ According to Reid Mitchell, Union soldiers, like those Confederates from Montgomery, joined with friends, neighbors, family in units, and instances of cowardice in battle would get back to his community and embarrass him.⁴⁸ Fear of what family and friends might think—peer pressure—provided one reason to enlist and then fight. Mary Caperton wrote to her husband training in Lynchburg about the gossip back in Blacksburg. A family friend of the Prestons, with whom Mary was staying, determined that he was “young and strong and healthy and he felt it his duty to engage in active service.”⁴⁹

Following the news of Fort Sumter, the *Lynchburg Daily Virginian* called on readers that “War, grim-visaged war, has at length reared its horrid front amongst us, that the greatest of human calamities, civil war is ... absolutely upon us,” and the next day called out that “Virginia expects every son to do his duty.”⁵⁰ The tide of dutiful enlistment seemed to be ebbing too soon for John Apperson. Following the defeats at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, he pleaded to his

⁴⁴ Davidson Charlton to Oliver Carden, May 23, 1861, p. 2, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

⁴⁵ David Edmundson to sister Sally Edmundson, n. d., p. 1, Edmundson Family Papers, VHS.

⁴⁶ Harvey Black to unknown recipient, n. d., Langhorne Family Papers, VHS.

⁴⁷ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 170.

⁴⁸ Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 214.

⁴⁹ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 4, 1861, p. 1, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

⁵⁰ *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, April 16, 1861; *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, April 17, 1861.

journal: “We have two horrid defeats to follow each other in rapid succession. Why is it? Has the chivalry of the South died? Or is our cause less important than it was a few months ago? Do we feel less patriotic and liberty loving than we did when we first rushed to the fields to secure our rights, our honor and our all? I hope not.”⁵¹ A few weeks later he continued to lament in his diary:

For some weeks past the men of the 4th Reg. seems to care nothing about the position they held as men fighting for liberty and right. . . . It is to be regretted that there seems to be a want of interest among us. The enthusiasm that has prompted many to leave home has faded and left in its stead a don’t care-feeling. Our men must rouse up. The time is rapidly approaching when we must take the field for a summer campaign that promises to be active and bloody. He that shuns the duties imposed upon him as a soldier is unworthy of the rich boon of freedom.⁵²

Men like Apperson were frustrated by the perceived lack effort by soldiers to fight for the success of the Southern cause. Those exasperated soldiers were “willing to go through anything...when the enemy is pouring in us with overwhelming forces,” while it appeared their confederates were giving up.⁵³

Confederates enlisted to protect Southern culture and society, maintain economic opportunity, and honorably defend hearth and home from Northern invaders they perceived as fanatics and savages.⁵⁴ Montgomery residents viewed Northerners as unreasonable and tyrannical, and vowed to fight to the death. Honor and masculine duty demanded nothing less.

MONTGOMERY’S POLITICIZED CITIZEN-SOLDIERS

Joseph Frank suggests politics was a defining feature of the “people’s armies” of the North and South. Political convictions served an important role in motivating men and gauging the loyalty of officers.⁵⁵ Frank adds political agenda to the list scholars usually associate with combat or sustaining motivations: personal gain, fear of punishment for desertion, unit loyalty,

⁵¹ Diary entry of John Apperson, February 25, 1862, p. 1, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

⁵² Diary entry of John Apperson, March 8, 1862, p. 1, Ibid. 62

⁵³ James Charlton to Oliver Carden, April 26, 1862, p. 1, Charlton Family Papers, VPI.

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 1–35; Crush, Charles W., Charles W. Crush Collection, VPI, 101.

⁵⁵ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet.*, vii

small group bonds, personal sense of duty. However, none of the evidence from Montgomery soldiers indicated that financial gains motivated them to enlist. Some men reenlisted for a bounty, but there is no indication whether the money was the reason to stay committed to the cause or simply an added benefit.⁵⁶ Slaveowners faced economic ruin with Confederate failure and the emancipation of slaves. Although planters may not have personally gained wealth with Confederate victory, Southern success meant maintaining the economic status quo.⁵⁷

Additionally, none of the authors who deserted mentioned concerns of punishment if caught, and not one soldier indicated he remained in the army due to loyalty to his unit or group bonds. Many modern historians have used the Second World War as a case study for understanding soldiers’ motivations during wartime. Shortly after the conflict subsided, a group of psychologists, sociologists, and military analysts constructed a combat motivation paradigm through a four volume work published in 1949 entitled *The American Soldier*.⁵⁸ This paradigm of ‘primary group cohesion’ suggested that solidarity held each member of the group accountable to the whole unit. But, what may have explained why American GIs fought on the front lines, or why most did not shirk their duties once they had gone to war, did not explain what prompted men (the ones who were not drafted) to take up arms and leave their loved ones at home. Also, what may effectively answer the question of soldiers’ motivation during twentieth century global conflicts does not necessarily work for a nineteenth century civil war. At least in Montgomery, not one soldier’s letters shows evidence of unit loyalty or ‘primary group cohesion’.

Thus, the usual motivators Frank identifies are more twentieth century notions than nineteenth. Some men were “animated by political convictions,” where politics urged men not only to enlist but to fight as well. Frank argues that the Civil War was a total war, which required a “new kind of soldier, the citizen-soldier,” who must be politically motivated to believe that the cause warranted a commitment to violence to see it through.⁵⁹ Citizen-soldiers were therefore

⁵⁶ Enlisting for money should not be seen as a character flaw. Scholars like Noe contend that bounties should be understood as another response to the Southern man’s imperative to defend home and hearth. When soldiers accepted money to fight, it was usually out of need rather than greed. They could provide for families and thus protect them financially. Bounties were therefore a way to defend home. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 11, 121.

⁵⁷ The Preston family relied heavily on slave labor for their Smithfield Plantation. After the war, plantation operations became bogged down in labor shortages and Smithfield suffered as a result. Newlee Family Papers, VPI.

⁵⁸ Stouffer, et al, *The American Soldier*.

politically motivated to enlist. The politicized soldiers were the backbone of these armies.⁶⁰ Total war required total commitment to defeat the enemy; the entire society—in this case Southern society—had to work as a whole for self-preservation. Rhetoric was grounded in the local political setting. “Family heritage and local loyalties were exceedingly important components,” adds historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown, where “sons followed patriarchal patterns.”⁶¹ Montgomery soldiers’ understanding of the conflict affected by family and roots to the region and their language came out vehemently opposed to the Northern aggressors.

Christiansburg Private Robert King of the Fifty-Fourth Virginia Infantry wrote his wife after his unit captured Princeton: “We give the Yankeys one good whipping if they never get another ... I only hope they may get just such a licking every where they go and i pray to God to spead the time when the northern Rogues and vandles shal be driven to their [dens] and sealed there to [invade] our soil no more forever.”⁶² Southern soldiers’ hatred for those in the North was due to a variety of reasons. In his massive study of the common soldier, historian Bell Wiley found that few soldiers described the North’s violation of states’ rights as the leading cause for enlisting. Many rank-and-file soldiers heard community leaders denounce the Federal government on this scope, but Wiley doubted whether many soldiers either understood or cared about the Constitutional issues at stake.⁶³ Instead, Wiley argued what many recent historians accept—that the threat to slavery was resented rather widely among all classes. Planters resented the threat to their rights of chattel property. While poor whites did not feel that their unattainable privilege of owning slaves was under attack, recent historians have found evidence that white Southerners were widely concerned with defending white supremacy.⁶⁴ Of Noe’s late-enlisting Confederates, only three men spoke out against what they saw as a war to preserve slavery for

⁵⁹ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 11, 146.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶¹ Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 194.

⁶² Robert King to Louisa King, May 22, 1862, in Weaver and Sherwood, *54th Virginia Infantry*, 15.

⁶³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 309.

⁶⁴ For more on Confederates and white supremacy motivations, see Logue, “Who Joined the Confederate Army? Soldiers, Civilians, and Communities in Mississippi,” *passim*; Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 17–18; Colin Woodward, “Marching Masters: Slavery, Race, and the Confederate Army, 1861-1865” (Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2005), *passim*.

Southern aristocrats.⁶⁵ The available surviving letters neither explicitly confirm Montgomery soldiers enlisting and fighting to retain white supremacy nor do soldiers mention the fight to retain slaves. Interestingly, support for states’ rights and hateful language of their Northern foe was common to many Montgomery soldiers from all classes.

While the Southern defense of white supremacy was a bigoted cause, Montgomery soldiers instead labeled their enemies as the intolerant peoples. David Earhart wrote to his wife Mollie at the dawn of 1863 that “We would have peace soon if the Yanks could see themselves as others does; But Linlcoln [sic] and his Government are verry proud and bigoted and it will be hard very hard for them to give up their pretension and designs on the south, this being the case it is hard telling when the war will end perhaps not till the year [1865].”⁶⁶ A week later he wrote to two slaves living on his farm that he was “tired an sick at seeing such battlefields [Sharpsburg and Fredericksburg] and all because the pride + bigotry of the people of the north.”⁶⁷ After Fredericksburg, surgeon’s assistant John Apperson complained to his diary of tending to Union casualties:

We have some 8 or 9 Yankees who are claiming the attention of our surgeons. I admit that my feelings towards them are not such as should belong to anyone towards an enemy. But who can forbear to feel hatred towards such a race? It required more than humanity to bear the sight of those who burn our homes, turn our mother and sisters out in the woods for shelter in dreary winter, all for the purpose of making slaves of us to an infernal theory that “all men are equal.”⁶⁸

Southerners’ hatred for their enemy rose during the war, while Confederate nationalism reinforced the creation and exaggeration of differences.⁶⁹ Studies of Confederate letters and diaries reveal that over time they viewed the Union as invaders. Confederate perceptions of their enemy worsened as the war worsened. “God graces that this bloody struggle may soon cease,” wrote Dr. Black to his wife, “though I hope it may never cease if it has to be in subjection to the

⁶⁵ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 9–10.

⁶⁶ David Earhart to Mary Earhart, January 3, 1863, p. 2-3, David Earhart Collection, VPI.

⁶⁷ David Earhart to Archy and Jeff, January 9, 1863, p. 1, Ibid.

⁶⁸ This diary entry epitomizes the animosity felt by many Southerners toward their foe, but also includes the feeling of many Southerners against the notion of racial equality. Diary entry of John Apperson, December 15, 1862, p. 1, Apperson Family Papers, VPI.

⁶⁹ Phillips, “A Brother’s War?” in Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View from the Ground*, 69.

Northern vandals we fight."⁷⁰ Lieutenant Langhorne's youthful enthusiasm led him to exaggerate the strength of the Southern army, although he was not alone in these assertions:

[if we fight or not at this place] it will only be a little skirmish, and we will just as surely whip [the north] as we fight. This is the difference of feeling that exists in the two armies there is not a man in Southern Army, who does not in his heart believe that he can whip three Yankees, he would consider it beneath [his] manhood to count upon whipping a less number in any sort of a fight. Now look at the feeling on the other side, you can not find a man in the northern army but has a holy horror of a Kentucky rifleman and they hold the Tennesseans + western Virginians in no less dread, they are not willing to meet us anywhere with any thing like equal force, and with such feelings as this animating the two armies how they can ever hope to subdue us is beyond my comprehension and it is wonderful to me how it can dwell in the minds even of sensible families, that half a million of people such as compose the Southern Confederacy can be subdued in a short time the united world could not subdue us under ten years.⁷¹

PATRIOTISM AND IDEOLOGY

Close family ties, a foe perceived as brutally threatening, fears of racial disruption, and conceptions of manhood and womanhood, among many other factors, promoted a sense of identity tied to the Virginian/Confederate ideology. "[We] engaged in a Cause we considered just + rightsous," and "[W]ith our just Cause we feel that the victory is secure" were Montgomery soldiers' and residents' sentiments during the buildup and anticipation for an upcoming battle.⁷² "This is indeed a sad sad time to us all and we can only trust god to bring light out of darkness," wrote one wife, "I feel that our cause is a just one and that the right will yet prevail."⁷³ Wives and families had to back the war effort to support their soldiers.

Patriotic and ideological language in letters, speeches, and diaries had masculine undertones. Manly ideals of patriotism, duty, and honor all affected a soldier's motivation to enlist. Patriotism may be the love for one's land and country, but an individual would need a certain amount of courage to support his drive to join the war. Courage may mean bravery today,

⁷⁰ Harvey Black to Mary Black, August 31, 1862, p. 2, Black Family Papers, VPI.

⁷¹ Emphasis original. James Langhorne to Margaret Langhorne, June 26, 1861, p. 4-5, Langhorne Family Papers, VHS

⁷² Robert Ellett to Mary (no last name), May 22, 1865, p. 3, Ellett Family Papers, VPI; Harvey Black to Mary Black, May 3, 1864, p. 1, Black Family Papers, VPI.

⁷³ Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 12, 1861, p. 2, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

but in the nineteenth century it carried connotations of manliness.⁷⁴ Recruiters like Dr. Black used patriotic rhetoric to drum up volunteers: "Free was I born; free have I lived; and free will I expire, and our base fetter weighs my hands around in its cankering tyranny!"⁷⁵ In a letter to his wife, Dr. Black equated patriotism with masculine ideals. "Liberty is a very precious jewel and none the less praised by many who will throw the burden of acquiring it to others." Black was not about to entrust the burden of shouldering arms and fighting for Southern independence solely on other men. He was more than willing to step up and do his part. "I would rather serve for 10 years than make use of such pretexts to keep out of service. There is no patriotism in men who are able to go (not into) service & will seek work subterfuge to keep out of this."⁷⁶ Those men who were not patriotic were less manly, and their lack of attachment to Confederate ideology raised the question of loyalty. Men who enlisted after 1862 were commonly described as being without patriotism, honor, or interest in the cause.⁷⁷

The war tore many families apart, especially when relatives fought on opposing sides. Dr. Black wrote to his wife Mollie in May 1863, "I had hoped that none of our near relatives would engage in the war on the Yankee side. but with young men it was hardly to be expected that they could be Kept aloof from the struggle and it has been a cause of great pleasure and almost of surprise to me that my brothers have not engaged in it." Dr. Black mentioned that his family was still living in Ohio, and that he believed "scores of them are in the field" for the Union. The possibility of fighting his family did not diminish his resolve: "Were all my brothers in the field it would not alter my course to continue in this war until our independence is achieved. Our future happiness and prosperity as a nation and as individuals depends upon our success. and while it grieves us to find them invading our homes we are consoled by the thoughts that our children will reap the rewards of our Sacrifices."⁷⁸ Men like Dr. Black placed the prize of

⁷⁴ Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 8.

⁷⁵ Draft of address to citizens of Blacksburg, Virginia, Harvey Black, April 17, 1861, p. 5, Black Family Papers, VPI.

⁷⁶ Harvey Black to Mary Black, April 23, 1862, p. 2, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 9; Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, "Cowards and Heroes: Group Loyalty in the American Civil War," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118, no. 2 (May 2003): 525.

⁷⁸ Harvey Black to Mary Black, May 10, 1863, p. 3, Black Family Papers, VPI.

Southern independence ahead of family. It is difficult for modern historians to understand how soldiers could place devotion to their homeland over their own families.

George Junkin was born in Pennsylvania, one of the 4.2% of Montgomery’s soldiers born out of the county and one of only eleven born north of the Mason-Dixon Line. A graduate of Virginia Military Institute and son of a reverend, he settled in Montgomery as a teacher and married the daughter of a wealthy farmer, Rice Montague. He enlisted in the Fourth Virginia Infantry in the spring of 1861 and was in Harper’s Ferry with his unit when his father came down from Pennsylvania to try to convince him to leave the army. James Langhorne, a friend of Junkin and an officer in the Fourth Virginia, wrote about the encounter to his mother back in Montgomery County:

his father came...to try and get him to resign his place here and go north, but he resisted the tearful request of his father + letters from his mother written in a state of almost utter distraction begging her son not to fight against the S[t]ate that gave him birth, and his parents, but he was not to be persuaded he could not give up the loyal principals of his noble heart & made the sacrifice of all family connection, for I know his father will disi[n]herit him, + Ma I think that a man who would make such sacrifices as these ought to be rewarded by every show of kindness from those who know he has made them.⁷⁹

In December 1862, Captain Junkin was appointed a company commander, a role he filled—apart from the time he was captured and then released—until after General Lee’s surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. During the “last engagement on the soil of Virginia” in western Montgomery County—the only action in the county—Captain Junkin was listed as the last soldier shot in action in Virginia during the Civil War.⁸⁰

Like Dr. Black, Junkin’s ideological zeal was greater than blood relations. Lieutenant Langhorne continued his letter home about his friend:

... a soldier he is in every sense of the word. He is very differently situated to any of us, he is fighting against the S[t]ate that gave him birth, Father, Mother, Bro. & Sister, and for what because he thinks our cause is just...he has not the sweet assurance that we have that we are fighting for “our own, our native land,” but he is fighting for justice which is inspiration enough for a noble soul like his.⁸¹

⁷⁹ James Langhorne to Margaret Langhorne, June 12, 1861, p. 5, Langhorne Family Papers, VHS.

⁸⁰ Charles W. Crush, “Charles W. Crush Collection,” VPI, 110, 16.

⁸¹ James Langhorne to Margaret Langhorne, June 12, 1861, p. 4-5, Langhorne Family Papers, VHS.

However, historian Sarris rejects ideological interpretations of wartime loyalties. In his community study of two Georgia counties, he suggests there are more complex issues at hand than those offered by scholars of enlistment motivation, like McPherson, who believe ideological concerns were a primary motivator. Sarris found that Confederates in his sample put local, immediate interests ahead of the southern nation. Junkin was a newcomer to Montgomery County, and his parents were still living in the North. His passion for the Confederate cause goes against Sarris’ argument, and similarly demonstrates the uniqueness inherent to community studies.

* * *

The ideological school holds the historiographical battlefield for the moment—150 years after the war—replacing the earlier scholars, like Wiley, who stressed social and cultural pressures over ideas and causes. This rising group of historians argues for the primacy of ideology and protection of slavery/white supremacy, with each offering differing weighting of the motivational components.⁸² Ultimately, it depends on the individual historian’s interpretation of ideological motives, and their ability to massage the literature to find the evidence they need to support his or her argument.

There is room for more than ideological and political motives in today’s discourse on enlistment motivation. Any complete study of soldier enlistment motivation needs to include social, economic, and cultural motives as well. It would be a fallacy to believe that one or only a few motives governed all soldiers’ decisions to enlist and fight. The reasons for enlistment are as varied as the many communities from which all the soldiers departed to join the war and it is an injustice to try to argue that all Civil War soldiers enlisted for a limited number of reasons, especially based on literary evidence alone.

⁸² Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 6.

CONCLUSION

A CHARGE TO HISTORIANS

The Civil War ended for the few Montgomery soldiers who remained with General Lee during the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia in Appomattox, but it was not until a few days later that residents saw the last of the hostilities on Virginia soil. On April 12, 1865, a detachment of a Michigan Cavalry Regiment skirmished with a portion of the Twenty-Fifth Virginia Cavalry in an area just west of Christiansburg called “Seven Mile Tree.” The two Union fatalities and four Confederate wounded were the last casualties in Virginia during the war. Captain George Junkin, the northern-born rebel who disobeyed his parents’ wishes to return to Pennsylvania, was the last recorded casualty of the war in Virginia.¹

How do historians explain Junkin’s motivations to join the Confederate Army? Did he enlist for strictly ideological reasons, as an act of defiance toward his parents, to protect the adopted community of his wife and in-laws, or some combination of these and other factors? Is it appropriate to weigh one or several reasons heavier than others? Moreover, is it possible for historians to boil down soldier enlistment motivations to just a few factors? Yes, these factors are present to some degree in just about every part of the South, but historians do not give motivation justice by neglecting to determine the appropriate mix of these factors at each level and locale.

Analysis of the socioeconomic factors pulled from the soldier database—in particular class and slaveownership—reveals that Montgomery County soldiers tended to enlist in order to maintain their status quo. Within the mixture of Montgomery County’s enlistment factors, the urge to maintain social and economic status is perhaps the strongest but not the easiest to identify as it required investigating class, slaveownership, and occupations among Montgomery’s soldiers. Historians who rely solely on literary evidence would not be able to find this enlistment trend that was not written about by soldiers. The same scholars would therefore surmise that ideological motivations such as patriotism, masculinity, and honor compelled men to enlist.

¹ Charles W. Crush, “Charles W. Crush Collection,” VPI, 111, 16.

These ideas are present in Montgomery soldiers' writings and likewise neglecting letters and diaries in favor of census data would miss those ideological factors.

Since Wiley painted in-depth portraits of the Civil War soldier—Confederate and Union—scholars of the Civil War have taken it upon themselves to determine what compelled men in the mid-nineteenth century to take up arms against their American brethren. There have been many convincing works historians on this topic laying claim to the answer of soldiers' enlistment motivations, ranging from Linderman's focus on the core value of courage to McPherson's ideological principles of patriotism.² However, none provides a key that decodes motivations to a neat list that explains why men joined the war.

Finding a "one size fits all" solution should not be the goal of Civil War scholars. Historian Gary Gallagher pleads fellow scholars to replicate Glatthaar's painstaking statistical analysis of the Army of Northern Virginia with the Army of Tennessee, Trans-Mississippi forces, and other groups of Confederate soldiers.³ Such works could consider enlistment motivations at the unit level, encapsulating motivations during their formation. Adding unit data together could reveal enlistment motivations for a small region, such as a county. Since most neighbors joined the same outfit, these studies have a good chance to capture motivations for a community's soldiers over time and how war affected their reasons for joining, whether in 1861 or any later year of the war.

We need to encourage and charge local historians with this task so that they may help their communities understand the past. Just as the overarching enlistment studies of McPherson and Sheehan-Dean do not fully explain the enlistment motivations of Montgomery County men, this thesis should not be used to explain motivations for soldiers in other Southern states, other parts of Virginia, or even neighboring counties. The fluctuations in enlistment and desertion numbers across the state and region indicate that the commitment to the Southern cause was as varied as the communities sending men to the army. Local historians are needed to put the findings together in a way that makes sense for their unique community. Community residents will then have a better understanding of their heritage and not be potentially led astray by the broad histories that do not correctly explain why their ancestors joined the Confederacy.

² While Linderman, Mitchell, and Barton stressed the importance of character motivating Civil War soldiers, historians like McPherson, Hess, and Frank placed ideological factors at the forefront of motivation.

³ Gary W. Gallagher, "Disaffection, Persistence, and Nation: Some Directions in Recent Scholarship on the Confederacy," *Civil War History* 55, no. 3 (September 2009): 351.

Because the Civil War for the Confederates was very much based on regional loyalty, it makes sense to study motivation at the community level and not the national or even the state level. Soldiers understood the conflict at the local level and how it affected their families and homes. Historians have broken motivations into factors such as patriotism, honor, and courage, but Confederate motivation needs to be understood at the regional and local levels. By getting to know communities intimately, scholars can better understand what motivated soldiers and interpret their behavior with more confidence. Local historians can flesh out stories to provide insights overlooked by scholars trying to cover too much ground in one book. The best way to understand the impact of the war on the South is to examine it at the community level, where one may measure and evaluate the consequences of war as they affected a single, concentrated area of people, both soldiers and civilians, who witnessed the war there. As historian Daniel Sutherland encourages, “this is one area of research where it is important not to miss the trees for the forest.”⁴

⁴ Sutherland, *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, 7–8.

APPENDIX A

EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis considers not only soldiers' diaries and letters, but those of farmers, clergy, and other residents in Montgomery County, to see the support for the war and to identify to what extent various motivators affected a soldier's will to enlist. In order to understand enlistment patterns and motivations for soldiers from Montgomery, I set out to compile a database that includes as many Confederate soldiers, reservists, and home guardsmen as possible from Montgomery County. The database of Montgomery soldiers referenced throughout this thesis is not meant to be a representative sample of the county; instead, I attempted to create a master roster of every male who left Montgomery to fight in the Confederate forces. Names appearing on muster rolls and unit histories were verified against military and census records. Many names appeared on the rolls of companies that mustered in Montgomery and were filled predominantly with her residents, but I did not include any man in the database unless I found other evidence of Montgomery County residency (including 1850 or 1870 census records). The following demographic data was collected from service and census records (as available or applicable): full name, rank (at beginning and end of service), age, occupation, post office, prior service, initial enlistment location/date/company/unit/type (branch), transfer date/company/unit/type (branch), enlistment end date, service information (including type of discharge, desertion, casualty data), real estate, personal estate, personal or combined household worth, head of household (including female head of household), size of family (including number of females), household information (including living with wife, mother, father), birthplace, literacy, slaveownership, and residence in 1870 (if a deserter). I compiled this data in a spreadsheet where I could easily manage, sort, and mine the socioeconomic and demographic statistics for this project.

I scoured every infantry and cavalry unit regimental roster that mustered in Montgomery or nearby to create my database. Although several men transferred into the artillery after first

enlisting in another branch, it does not appear that any enlisted first into an artillery unit.¹ After carefully reviewing records to delete duplicate entries often created when a soldier enlisted in two or more units, and removing men who did not appear to be a Montgomery resident prior to enlisting, I arrived at a total of 1,141 men. If a soldier was not in the 1860 census I checked his military record to see if he identified himself as a resident of the county as opposed to an outsider who enlisted in Montgomery.² First, I went through the list to confirm that the individual was actually from Montgomery County by searching Schedule 1 of the 1860 census. I also checked the 1850 and 1870 censuses to see if a soldier resided at any time in the county. Since the 1860 census was conducted a year before the war, it is possible that a soldier could have moved to Montgomery after the 1860 census before enlisting and continued to reside in the county until at least 1870. There is no official tally for how many soldiers joined from Montgomery County, although a few sources estimate that the number was roughly 1,000.³ Given that men rarely traveled more than a county or two away to enlist, and the strong tendency to in the same unit enlist with family and neighbors, it seems unlikely that my database is missing many Montgomery soldiers.

It is extremely difficult to calculate how many Virginians fought for the Confederacy, let alone how many men were eligible to fight. Aaron Sheehan-Dean calculated that almost 70% of Virginia's white male population between ages 15 and 50 was eligible to serve in the Confederate Army and that 89% of all eligible men in areas not controlled by the Union joined. Sheehan-Dean arrived at the percentage of eligible Virginia men of 89.1% after estimating that there were approximately 155,231 Virginia men who enlisted in the Confederate Army. First, he calculated the number of infantrymen, cavalrymen, and artillerymen in Virginia units, and then combined them to arrive at a figure of 164,577 men. Then, he attempted to "count by county" to reduce duplicate entries, arriving at the estimate of 155,231 individual Virginians in Confederate uniform—less than 1% above the *Official Records* estimate of 153,876 Virginia soldiers. He then calculated a base number of 249,805 possible enlistees between the ages of 15 and 50 from the

¹ It is not surprising that few Montgomery men joined the artillery. Glatthaar found that artillerymen were more likely to come from cities and urban areas. Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 46.

² I used www.ancestry.com to ease my search within Montgomery's Schedule 1, while www.fold3.com allowed me to find a soldier's military record.

³ Brock, *Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia*; Charles W. Crush, *Montgomery County, Virginia: The First Hundred Years* (Athens, Ga.: Iberian Pub. Co., 1990), 72.

1860 census. Next, he subtracted 25,603 men exempted by Confederate draft officials and 49,961 men estimated by the Conscription Board who were unavailable for service due to Union occupation in Virginia. Sheehan-Dean's 155,231 Virginia soldiers, divided by the number of Virginians available for service, results in the rate of 89.1% for eligible Virginians who fought for the Confederacy.⁴

This percentage seems quite high, and although there is no doubt that Sheehan-Dean took care with his calculations to arrive at his estimated enlistment rate, there are several problems with his total of 155,231 Virginia soldiers. Accepting this number implies a transfer rate of only 6.0% for Virginians between Virginia units. In the case of Montgomery County, approximately 21.8% of soldiers transferred at least once during the war.⁵ Montgomery may not be representative of the rest of the state, but Joseph Glatthaar similarly found that 23% of his Virginia soldier sample transferred. Applying a 21.5% transfer rate to Sheehan-Dean's 164,577 men in Virginia units yields a total of 128,699 individual Virginians in uniform, which results in a 73.9% enlistment rate for eligible Virginians. While this would mean nearly three-quarters of eligible Confederates enlisted in the army, it is considerably lower than Sheehan-Dean's almost one-in-nine enlistment rate. Another issue with Sheehan-Dean's numbers is that not all the men who served in Virginia regiments were originally from Virginia, or even lived in Virginia prior to enlisting. Although few soldiers fit in this category, it is another variable that could have lowered Sheehan-Dean's 89.1% enlistment rate if those men were removed. Finally, Sheehan-Dean's numbers are army-centric. He calculated the number of infantry, cavalry, and artillery men as a ratio of all men medically eligible able to enlist (not in areas controlled by the Union Army) in Virginia. This method does not account for the hundreds of men from Virginia who fought in the Confederate Navy, which actually would have slightly increased the 89.1% if sailors were taken into account. Regardless, calculating the number and percentages of Virginia soldiers who enlisted in Confederate forces is a difficult—maybe impossible—task. While this appendix is critical of Sheehan-Dean's numbers, I recognize that his calculations appear as the best approximation for Virginia Confederate enlistment rates so far by historians, if not a little high.

⁴ Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 13, 198–199.

⁵ Glatthaar similarly found that 53 out of his sample of 230 Virginia soldiers served in more than one unit, revealing a transfer rate of 23%. Joseph Glatthaar to William C. Davis, May 14, 2014.

In 1860 there were 1,881 free white males between the ages of 15 and 50 in Montgomery County. Applying Sheehan-Dean's 89.1 eligibility percentage to Montgomery results in approximately 1,676 males who were physically qualified to serve in the army. Of this number, Sheehan-Dean supposes over 75% of Montgomery's able-bodied males enlisted, or at least 1,257 men.⁶ If I consider only those soldiers in Montgomery destined for regular service—infantry and cavalry (no artillerymen)—only 915 soldiers remain in my database, more than 343 short of Sheehan-Dean's required 1,257 men to reach a >75% enlistment rate for the county. This shortfall would mean I was missing over a quarter of Montgomery's soldiers in my database. It seems unlikely that my database is missing nearly 350 soldiers who travelled outside the vicinity to enlist. A major error contributing to Sheehan-Dean's overestimation of Montgomery's enlistment rate was how he linked soldiers to their county of residence. If he could not find a soldier's county of residence he used the county of enlistment. Since Christiansburg was an important communications hub along the railroad, men from surrounding counties flocked to the town to enlist.⁷ This reason, perhaps more than any other, is why Sheehan-Dean overestimated Montgomery County's enlistment rate. Applying the 73.9% enlistment rate for eligible Virginians to Montgomery County yields a total possible number of enlistees of 1,389. Montgomery's 915 regular infantrymen and cavalrymen in service means that 65.8% of eligible county men enlisted.

Montgomery's overall 65.8 enlistment percentage is in line with Sheehan-Dean's calculations for neighboring counties. By his own admission, counties with enlistment rates over 75% typically had slaves numbering more than 50% of the total population.⁸ Montgomery, by comparison, was only 20.9% slave in 1860. Sheehan-Dean's over-estimation can be likely attributed to the small sample population he used for the county and region. In his sample of 993 Virginia soldiers only 196 were from the Southwest.⁹ Additionally, I took extra care to remove duplicate enlistments in my database to ensure my enlistment percentage was not inflated and to

⁶Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 26, 198–9. Sheehan-Dean used a database of Virginia soldiers numbering 993 men, 196 from Southwest Virginia. He then calculated enlistment rates for each county and determined that Montgomery County had greater than 75% enlistment rate of eligible men.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 199–200.

⁸ Aaron C. Sheehan-Dean, "Virginia Soldiers (Confederate) During the Civil War."

⁹ Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 198–9.

keep my data from being skewed. An advantage of focusing on one area was the ability to compare unit enlistment data to ensure soldiers were not double or triple counted as they transferred between companies. However, Sheehan-Dean's over-estimation of Montgomery's—and perhaps other counties'—enlistment percentages does not undermine the significance of the rest of his research.

The 65.8% enlistment percentage covers all of Montgomery County's enlistment. I wanted to break this percentage by the two phases investigated in this thesis; specifically, I wanted to compare the percentage of eligible males who enlisted prior to May 1862 to that of men who enlisted after that point. According to the 1860 census, 1,209 males lived in Montgomery who would have been 18-35 years old between the start of the war to the end of April 1862.¹⁰ Applying the medically eligible 73.9% to this total yields a pool of 893 possible enlistees. Approximately 672 Montgomery men aged 18 to 35 years old enlisted during the first year of the war, resulting in a 75.2% enlistment rate. To determine the enlistment rate for the remainder of the war, I calculated the total male population between ages 17-50 and applied the 73.9% eligibility percentage to get 1,375 males who would be eligible to fight in the war during any point.¹¹ I then subtracted the approximately 722 males who already enlisted to arrive at a total of 653 men remaining in the county after April 1862 eligible to enlist in the Confederate Army. Although not unexpected, the enlistment rate of eligible males plummets to 23.7% after the first year.

In order to compare soldiers to the county at large, I used an online calculator to determine the number of households (304) required to create a sample of the 1,452 Montgomery families with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5%.¹² The random sample was created by selecting every fifth household listed on Schedule 1 of the 1860 census, plus the

¹⁰ I multiplied the 437 males aged 15-19 by 3/5 to determine how many would be 18 or older during the first year of the war. I also multiplied the 468 males aged 30-39 by 1/2 to determine how many would be 35 or younger during the first year of the war.

¹¹ I multiplied the 537 males aged 10-14 by 2/5 to determine how many would be 17 or older during the war's later years. I included all 263 males aged 40-49 because the negligible number of men who would be 55 by the end of the war would not grossly affect the calculations.

¹² <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm#one>

household appearing in the middle of every sixth page. I refer to this sample consisting of 304 households as the “county sample” throughout this thesis to differentiate it from the soldier database.

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