

War in the Pine Barrens: The Civil War Era in South-Central and Southeastern Alabama

by

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Abstract

When the American Civil War erupted in 1861, the eight counties that comprised south-central and southeastern Alabama responded by sending thousands of men to fight in southern armies. This corner of the Confederacy, and especially the southernmost counties that straddled the Alabama/Florida border, has been identified in the past as an area where poverty reigned, Unionism was disproportionately strong, shirkers routinely escaped military service, raiders and bushwhackers created havoc on the home front, and deserters outnumbered the faithful when it came to hard fighting. Previous histories of the region rely heavily upon events and circumstances that took place during the final months of the war, and give the impression that the people in this part of the state played an inconsequential role in supporting the southern war effort. This study challenges the traditional interpretations of the area, arguing instead that a majority of white Alabamians in the region supported slavery, supported secession, and supported the Confederate war effort for the bulk of the conflict. In addition, if previous studies of the region are correct, soldier morale should have disintegrated much earlier in the conflict as the home front collapsed. Instead, the opposite appears to have been the case. The region's soldiers fought well during the 1864 Overland Campaign as well as the Franklin-Nashville Campaign later that year, arguably the two bloodiest campaigns of the entire war. Finally, much of the state's history has concentrated on the Tennessee Valley, the hill counties, and the Black Belt, with south-central and southeastern Alabama barely an afterthought. This study brings much-needed attention to a region of the state largely ignored by historians. It deserves a more prominent place in the state's historical record.

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Introduction

The Battle of Gettysburg was a bloody affair for the Army of Northern Virginia's 15th Alabama Infantry. On July 2, 1863, the second day of a three-day fight, the regiment's multiple assaults against the extreme Federal left anchored atop Little Round Top failed to take the ground. The intensity of the struggle was especially keen at the points where Confederates temporarily breached the Union line. There, hand-to-hand combat signified the engagement's ferocity as the Federals beat back their Rebel attackers. By dark, dozens of Alabamians from the 15th Alabama and hundreds of other men from both sides were either dead, wounded, or missing. Union Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain of the 20th Maine Infantry remembered that men were everywhere "torn and broken, staggering, creeping, quivering on the earth."¹

Twenty-nine-year-old Pvt. Crawford Dillard and eighteen-year-old Pvt. Warren Jones both made the charge up Little Round Top that day as members of the Dale County Beauregards, officially recognized as Company E, 15th Alabama Infantry. Back home the men were neighbors and had joined the Beauregards along with dozens of relatives and friends as "later enlistees" in March 1862.² Dillard was the oldest of four brothers, all of whom eventually enlisted to fight with the company. Along with his wife Mary and two young children he farmed a small plot of land just outside Newton, Alabama. They owned no slaves, although, according to the 1860 census, Dillard's father owned two young slave children. Their total net worth was about

¹ Glenn W. LaFantasie, *Twilight at Little Round Top: July 2, 1863 - The Tide Turns at Gettysburg* (Random House, 2007), 183.

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

\$1,000. Warren Jones, on the other hand, was one of five teenage boys still living at home when the war began. His father Moses, a widower who had migrated from Georgia in the mid-1850s, owned a large farm, five slaves, and enjoyed a net worth of nearly \$20,000. Crawford Dillard survived the Battle of Gettysburg, fought in no fewer than thirty engagements as a Confederate soldier, and remained committed to the war effort for the duration of the conflict. Warren Jones died on July 16, 1863, from wounds he received during the assault at Little Round Top.³

These two men, their families, and the community they represented are just a small sampling of whites from southeastern Alabama—known during the antebellum period as the Pine Barrens or Pine Lands and more recently identified as the Wiregrass—who supported the Confederate war effort during the American Civil War. In 1860 the Pine Barrens included the counties of Conecuh, Covington, Coffee, Dale, and Henry, as well as the northernmost counties of Butler, Pike, and Barbour. This corner of the Confederacy, and especially the southernmost counties, has been identified in the past as an area where poverty reigned, Unionism was disproportionately strong, shirkers routinely escaped military service, raiders and bushwhackers created havoc on the home front, and deserters outnumbered the faithful in southern armies. While all of these factors in various degrees were certainly part of the Pine Barren story, several counter-observations are worth consideration.

First, historians going back as far as the early twentieth century tended to rely solely upon anecdotal evidence or else upon oral or written accounts produced years after the war to shape their perceptions of the Pine Barrens. Walter Lynwood Fleming's antiquated *Civil War and*

³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census, Population, Dale, Alabama*, 225 (microfilm), and *Slave Schedule*, 7–8 (microfilm). Alabama Department of Archives and History, "Alabama Civil War Service Database," <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/civilwar/soldier.cfm?id=51059> (accessed February 3, 2011), and <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/civilwar/soldier.cfm?id=106944> (accessed February 3, 2011). See also Record of Dale County Beauregards Company "E" Fifteenth Regiment of Alabama Volunteer Infantry, Muster Rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

Reconstruction in Alabama, for example, leans on information “obtained from relatives (all of whom were ‘Union’ men before the war) and from neighbors who were acquainted with the conditions of that section of the country.”⁴ Others depended too heavily upon amateur histories, a practice fraught with potential problems. Consequently, historians have limited their scope and focused on the most well-known and controversial events: the burning of the Coffee County Courthouse in Elba by Pine Barren Unionists; the mayhem committed by John Ward and his band of Confederate deserters-turned-outlaws; and the exploits of Joseph Sanders, a former Confederate captain who joined the 1st Florida Cavalry (U.S.) and led raids throughout the panhandle of Florida and into the Alabama Pine Barrens. While these events are important to understanding the region’s history, it is vital to consider each one within a broader context of historical events.

Meanwhile, historians such as Malcolm McMillan, David Williams, Georgia Lee Tatum, Mark Weitz, and Bessie Martin all have argued in various ways that Pine Barren disloyalty contributed to a general crisis of disaffection so pervasive that the Confederacy eventually collapsed from internal weakness. The conclusions these authors reach, at least in reference to the Pine Barrens, rely heavily upon events and circumstances that took place during the final year of the war, and give the impression that Pine Barren Alabamians played an inconsequential role in supporting the southern war effort. But what about the first years of the war? Did war fever spread throughout the region in 1861 as furiously as it did in the Black Belt, or did the Pine Barrens retain its Unionist sentiments from the beginning, as some historians have suggested? How did families and communities respond and cope as the war continued and the casualties mounted? Was there a turning point at which Alabamians in the region no longer supported the

⁴ Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905), 123; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901).

war, and if so, when and why? While it is manifestly important to discuss the events that took place during the final year of the war, it is equally important to place them within the larger context of the war and the region as a whole.⁵

It does not help that there is no book-length scholarly treatment of the Alabama Pine Barrens during the Civil War era. Those historians who have written about the region have done so briefly within the framework of broader topics. McMillan, for example, includes the Pine Barrens only as part of a larger study on Alabama's Civil War governors. Georgia Lee Tatum and David Williams both wrote Civil War books that argue in favor of internal collapse, but none deal more than cursorily with the Pine Barrens. Mark Weitz, Bessie Martin, and Ella Lonn addressed Confederate desertion, but even with Martin's emphasis on Alabama, none of those authors viewed the region as a central focus of their research. The Pine Barrens consistently exists on the historiographical margins.

A more detailed survey of the historiography is important to understanding the context of the arguments as well as the ebb and flow of interpretive thought. The so-called internalist school of interpretation contends that Confederate military and political failure occurred as a result of internal hemorrhaging on the home front. In the 1960s, fueled by the emergence of the "new social history" and the skepticism engendered by the Vietnam War, internalist scholars emphasized class conflict, disaffection, localism, and persistent Unionism as the foundational pillars of their argument. Internalists also challenged the political and military histories that

⁵ Malcolm C. McMillan, *The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governors and Alabama's Wartime Home Front, 1861-1865* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1986); David Williams, *Rich Man's War: Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); David Williams, *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War* (New York: New Press, 2013); David Williams, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934); Mark A Weitz, *More Damning Than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Bessie Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops From the Confederate Army: A Study in Sectionalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932).

dominated the field for the first half of the nineteenth century. They favored a bottom-up approach that embraced traditionally underrepresented groups such as the poorer classes, African Americans, and women.

Histories of the internalist persuasion abound, but several influenced the field more than others. Paul D. Escott's *Many Excellent People* focuses on class warfare, a staple argument of many internalist historians. In North Carolina, antidemocratic planter-elites maintained a stranglehold on political institutions and vigorously protected their sociocultural status. Lower-class whites resented such treatment and often attempted to challenge planter power. "The men who benefitted from aristocratic customs and laws," Escott argues, "fought tenaciously to protect their power and privilege during the Civil War and Reconstruction."⁶ In another book, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism*, Escott asserts that economic malaise, political problems, and class resentments weakened home front morale and "started an internal collapse which preceded and promoted military defeat."⁷ Early in the war Jefferson Davis provided strong leadership and cultivated a strong sense of nationalism among most Confederate citizens. It soon became clear, however, that most members of the planter class were not willing to make necessary sacrifices. Many continued to live lavish lifestyles and exempted themselves from military service thanks to the "twenty negro law." Escott contends that the Davis administration failed to act decisively to help those who were suffering, and when he finally did, it was too little, too late.

In *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William Still continued the internal discussion by arguing that, on the whole, the

⁶ Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), xviii.

⁷ Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), ix.

Confederacy did not die for lack of manpower, supplies, or even manufacturing, but failed instead for the simple reason that the citizenry lacked the will to win. Confederate defensive strategy was not flawed, but Confederate nationalism, shallow from the beginning, could not hold up under the pressures of war. “The quashing of Confederate arms occurred,” they argued, “because Confederates chose not to mobilize their home front as well as they had their fighting front.”⁸ Southerners were ambiguous about their new nation, they wrestled with guilt over slavery, and they believed that military losses were a result of God’s disfavor, in that He was punishing the South for slavery. Ironically, according to this interpretation, the nationalism the Confederacy needed to win the war did not develop until Reconstruction.⁹

Two additional internalist studies that address Confederate nationalism are Drew Gilpin Faust’s *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism* and George C. Rable’s *Civil Wars*. Faust argues that Confederate nationalism was a process whereby newspaper editors, educators, clergymen, politicians, and others cultivated a common national identity. Flags, monuments, songs, poems, and literary works symbolized the degree of patriotism many southerners felt. Yet internal contradictions and weaknesses undermined ideological strengths. Comparatively high illiteracy rates, for example, as well as the South’s failure to modernize its printing technologies, hampered Confederate journalists’ efforts to spread the nationalistic message. Ministers invoked the favor of God, but warned of the Almighty’s wrath against greed and materialism. Elites walked a tightrope between their conservative vision and lower-class demands for political reforms. Even the institution of slavery, the planters’ ultimate bulwark against change, underwent important reforms. In the end, the Confederacy’s attempt to effect “change without

⁸ Richard E. Beringer, et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 297.

⁹ Richard Nelson Current and T. Harry Williams, *Why the North Won the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960).

change” still failed.¹⁰ Rable, meanwhile, argues that wealthy white women’s initial enthusiasm for the war effort waned as home front hardships grew increasingly demanding. Even so, these women never abandoned their assumptions of race and class that characterized antebellum white society. Yeoman-class and poor white women were hit especially hard by the absence of husbands and sons. They assumed all of the farm duties of their husbands as well as household chores, cooking, washing, and child rearing. Due to extreme hardship many of these women begged their husbands to return home and even petitioned the Confederate government for relief.¹¹ Importantly, both Faust and Rable emphasizes crumbling home front circumstances, especially among white women and the lower classes.

In 1989, Maris Vinovskis published a landmark article that posited the question, “Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?” He argues that “surprisingly little has been written about the personal experiences of ordinary soldiers or civilians during [the Civil War].”¹² The resulting flood of local histories, most of which reinforced the internalist perspective, have since answered Vinovskis’s question and filled a much needed gap in the historiography. Wayne K. Durrill’s study of eastern North Carolina’s Washington County explores the bloody conflict over land and loyalty that took place between pro-Confederate planters and pro-Union yeoman. Durrill’s analysis suggests that the class tensions that had simmered just beneath the surface for years before to the Civil War came quickly to a head once the war began. On the opposite side of the state, John Inscoe and Gordon McKinney contended that most western North Carolinians initially supported the Confederacy, but wartime disruptions to the region’s economy, the

¹⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 21.

¹¹ George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

¹² Maris A. Vinovskis, “Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations,” *Journal of American History* 76, (June 1989): 34–58.

conscription policy, and the loss of male laborers to the army contributed to growing political opposition against the war. The ensuing guerrilla war between Union and Confederate partisans resulted in the murder of dozens of mountain citizens, further fragmenting the community and undermining the Confederacy's war effort. Noel Fisher demonstrates that guerrilla violence in neighboring East Tennessee far surpassed that of western North Carolina. Union loyalists in the region resisted secession, defied Confederate conscription policy, protected deserters from government officials, and waged their own civil war against their pro-Confederate secessionist neighbors. Secessionists in turn used similar tactics to try and weed out loyalist leaders and establish Confederate control of the region. Unionism eventually won out, and eastern Tennessee became a thorn in the Confederacy's flesh for the duration of the war. Chapters in John Inscoe's and Robert Kenzer's compilation of essays, *Enemies of the Country*, similarly explore pockets of Unionism in various locales throughout the Confederacy, while Richard McCaslin and Thomas Dyer address Unionism (and extreme partisan violence in McCaslin's case) in Cooke County, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia, respectively.¹³

To be sure, internalist histories contribute to a greater understanding of the Civil War. Yet a growing number of recent historians have challenged the internalist school and found numerous chinks in their interpretive armor. Gary Gallagher and James McPherson have been the foremost proponents of the external interpretation. Gallagher argues that a majority of Confederate civilians remained firmly devoted to their new country. As the war progressed

¹³ Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer, eds., *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); Richard B. McCaslin, *Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Texas, 1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Thomas G. Dyer, *Secret Yankees: The Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Confederate nationalism came to be associated less with the government in Richmond and more with General Robert E. Lee's successful Army of Northern Virginia. As long as Lee's army fought well, the home front remained committed. Gallagher further contends that by limiting their studies to select and perhaps atypical areas of the Confederacy, historians have focused too much on the trees and not enough on the forest. The real question for Gallagher then is not why the Confederacy lost, but why it was able to fight for so long and endure so much. "Although class tension, unhappiness with intrusive government policies, desertion, and war weariness all form part of the Confederate mosaic," he writes, "they must be set against the larger picture of thousands of soldiers persevering against mounting odds, civilians enduring great human and material hardship in pursuit of independence, and southern white society maintaining remarkable resiliency until the last stage of the war."¹⁴

Like Gallagher, McPherson also emphasizes an external interpretation. One of his underlying arguments is that the worst signs of discontent in both the North and the South usually followed defeats on the military front. For example, the peace societies that gained footholds on both sides of the conflict grew stronger when battlefield fortunes turned sour. Conversely, victory on the battlefield led to improved social, political, and military morale for the winners. Lincoln's chances for reelection in May 1864 were slim, but by the fall—following Gen. Philip Sheridan's victories in the Shenandoah Valley and Gen. William T. Sherman's successful march to the sea—his reelection was assured.¹⁵ McPherson makes it clear that in his view, internalists have exaggerated the extent to which states' rights sentiments, internal conflict,

¹⁴ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 4; Also see Gary W. Gallagher, "Disaffection, Persistence, and Nation: Some Directions in Recent Scholarship on the Confederacy," *Civil War History* 55 (2009): 329–53.

¹⁵ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

class warfare, lack of will, and guilt over slavery harmed the Confederacy. Ultimately, results on the battlefield determined the direction of things on the home front.¹⁶

Historians of the externalist school have also written their share of local histories. It is this portion of the historiography that can best provide the framework for the study of the Alabama Pine Barrens. William Blair, a Gallagher student, argues that Virginians remained strongly nationalistic right up until the end of the war, when battlefield losses finally took their toll on civilian morale. Steps taken by the Confederate Congress quelled much of the civil unrest that had taken place earlier in the war. “Beginning in January 1864 the war became more of a rich man’s fight,” Blair contends, “as the Confederate government ended substitution, forced men who had purchased substitutes into the army, and instituted procedures that allowed the needy and soldiers’ families to purchase food at government-controlled prices.”¹⁷ All of these actions strengthened home front morale, which allowed Confederate armies to remain in contention far longer than they would have otherwise.

Martin Crawford similarly posits an externalist argument. Appalachian Ashe County, located in northwestern North Carolina, sent hundreds of its young men to fight for the Confederacy. Initially opposed to secession, Ashe County eventually supported separation and remained staunchly loyal to the Confederacy throughout most of the war. Countering traditional negative stereotypes of the region, Crawford shows that Ashe County was socio-economically linked with the state and the nation and enjoyed a vibrant political system. Issues such as slavery

¹⁶ James M. McPherson, “American Victory, American Defeat,” in *Why the Confederacy Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15–42.

¹⁷ William Blair, *Virginia’s Private War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.

and internal improvements as well as a vibrant two-party system linked Ashe with communities all across the country.¹⁸

Jacqueline Glass Campbell meanwhile examines women in North and South Carolina. She argues that home front loyalty remained strong even in the face of Union military invasion. As Union soldiers rampaged through Columbia, South Carolina, many of the city's white women, furious that their homes and neighborhoods were being destroyed, took out their frustrations on Yankee soldiers. Union soldiers' diaries and letters attest to the ill treatment meted out by these women. The situation in North Carolina was somewhat different. Deprivations on the home front led many women to protest openly the state's failure to address their concerns. But as they witnessed northern soldiers destroy personal property and harass their neighbors they fixed their discontent and hatred on the Yankee invaders, thus reaffirming their loyalty to the Confederacy and contempt for the Union.¹⁹

Most notably, Mark Wetherington's study of Wiregrass Georgia strengthens the externalist school by challenging common misconceptions about a region generally thought to have been less dedicated to the war effort. The author argues that race consciousness, as opposed to class consciousness, drove the majority of Wiregrass whites to support the Confederacy. By 1860 the slave-driven, cotton-based market economy challenged the subsistence culture that had dominated the region for decades. A growing number of households either owned slaves directly or were connected indirectly through kinship relations with those who did. "They believed that whites were inherently superior to blacks," Wetherington contends, "and understood that their own slightly elevated social status was dependent on racial

¹⁸ Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

¹⁹ Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North From the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

slavery.”²⁰ Consequently, support for secession and the war effort came naturally as a way to stave off northern domination and black emancipation.

This study concludes that white Alabamians in the Pine Barrens, like their Georgian counterparts as described by Wetherington, were committed to the fledgling market economy of the antebellum years and to the institution of slavery that symbolized the market’s growth in the South. These socio-economic factors laid the foundation for how Pine Barrens residents responded to the Civil War. The booming cotton economy paved the way for many yeoman farmers to become slaveowners and allowed some slave owners to expand their work force. Even smallholders who owned no slave property had a stake in the system. Solomon and Christian Easters and John and Francis Peacock, for example, owned small farms in the Gainers Store community in Pike County, Alabama, just a few miles north of the county line. Solomon and Francis were siblings. Their father William Easters—a large slaveholder by Pine Barren standards with fourteen slaves—lived within a few miles of both farms. It is not difficult to imagine the ways that small landowners such as Solomon and John benefitted from William’s slaveholding status; circumstances that could arguably make them de facto slave owners by virtue of kinship.

Yet landless tenant farmers, overseers, teachers, and slaveless skilled tradesmen such as blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, saddlers, and furniture makers likewise benefitted from the system as they hired out to slaveholders. Whites in the Pine Barrens, regardless of their slaveowning status, were no less devoted to white supremacy than their Black Belt counterparts. By 1860, a majority of these Alabamians were prepared to do whatever it took to preserve their vision of political, economic, and social freedom, even if it meant keeping an entire race in a

²⁰ Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk’s Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 8.

state of perpetual slavery. Slaves, meanwhile, toiled under a repressive system of exploitation not unlike those in other sparsely-settled areas of the South.

By the outbreak of war the Democratic Party was the party of choice for a majority of Pine Barren Alabamians. Yet this had not always been the case. From the 1840s to the late 1850s, most of the counties in the region identified with the Whig Party. This was especially true in Conecuh, Covington, Butler, Pike, and Barbour, the counties most likely to identify with the Black Belt. The Eufaula Regency, a politically powerful faction of states' rights Whigs, advocated secession as early as 1849. Over time, the group convinced more and more people that Alabama's destiny as a slave state could only be realized outside the Union. Residents of Henry, Dale, and Coffee counties, among the poorest counties with the fewest slaves, remained staunchly Democratic throughout most of the antebellum period. The resiliency of the region's Whig Party, and its later surrogate, the American or Know Nothing Party, demonstrates the effectiveness of party leaders such as Thomas H. Watts and Henry Hilliard. Whig dominance declined in the late 1850s as sectional animosity drove at least some Whigs to the Democracy. Former Whigs-turned-secessionist-Democrats such as John Gill Shorter, for instance, helped convert Eufaula into a Democratic stronghold by the time of the Civil War.²¹ Every Pine Barren county except Conecuh voted to send immediate secessionists to the secession convention in 1860. When war came the region was ready to support the Confederate cause.

²¹ For a sampling of political histories of Alabama see Lewy Dorman, *Party Politics in Alabama from 1850 Through 1860* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1935); Austin Venable, "Alabama's 'War of the Roses,'" *Alabama Review* 8 (October 1955): 243-59; Grady McWhiney, "Were the Whigs a Class Party in Alabama?" *Journal of Southern History* 23 (November 1957): 510-22; Thomas B. Alexander, "Persistent Whiggery in Alabama and the Lower Class, 1860-1867," *Alabama Review* 12 (January 1959): 35-52; Thomas B. Alexander, et al., "Who Were the Alabama Whigs?" *Alabama Review* 16 (January 1963): 5-19; Allen W. Jones, "Unionism and Disaffection in South Alabama: The Case of Alfred Holley," *Alabama Review* 24 (April 1971): 114-42; J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power In a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

Inasmuch as the Pine Barren counties were some of the least populated counties in the state, it is remarkable that so many men assembled, organized, drilled, and headed off to war. Yet thousands of men volunteered to serve in companies with colorful names such as the Coffee Rangers, Covington Grays, and Dale Beauregards. The Brundidge Guards, for example, mustered nearly 200 men and officers during the first three years of the war, most of them residents of Brundidge in Pike County and the Rocky Head community in Dale.²² A number of important questions remain unanswered. How did poor and yeoman farmers transition from citizen to soldier, and what were the motivating factors behind their decision to enlist? How did Pine Barren units perform during the first two years of the war? What role did women play in the transition from peacetime to war, and how did women adjust to the absence of men in a region where every family member played a key role in the economic stability of the household?

As the war dragged on into its third and fourth years, problems at home and on the battlefield grew increasingly more challenging. Many historians have argued that conscription, class warfare, food and salt shortages, rising casualty rates, and Union incursions into Alabama turned Pine Barren Alabamians against the war. Yet the evidence suggests that most Pine Barren whites still continued to support the war effort. Governors John Gill Shorter and Thomas Watts went to great lengths to support the families of indigent soldiers, and southeast Alabama appears to have received its share of the aid. In late 1862 the Alabama legislature appropriated \$2 million for indigent soldiers' families and passed a revenue bill (derisively known as the extortion act by its opponents) that taxed slave property at substantially higher rates. Despite conflict between Confederate enrolling officers and Alabama authorities, conscription and recruitment continued to bear fruit. The final year of the war was the most challenging for both

²² Muster Roll, Brundidge Guards, Company "F" Fifteenth Regiment of Alabama Volunteer Infantry, Muster Rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

soldiers and civilians alike. The southernmost counties dealt with increasing numbers of bushwhackers, deserters, and Unionists. Confederate citizens often found themselves under siege from friend and foe alike. Yet despite these circumstances, most Pine Barren soldiers remained loyal to the end, distinguishing themselves in battles such as Cold Harbor, the Wilderness, and Franklin.

Historians must always ask themselves, so what? Why does this study really matter? First, it challenges the popular internalist perspective that the Confederacy died from within, arguing instead that the majority of white Alabamians in south-central and southeastern Alabama supported slavery, supported secession, and supported the Confederate war effort for the bulk of the conflict. Reflecting modern historical practice, it also considers soldiers as extensions of their community.²³ Because most soldiers served in companies composed of friends and family from their own towns and neighborhoods, their experiences on and off the battlefield were especially relevant to how their communities viewed and responded to the war. As Mark Wetherington has observed, “In many respects the company was an extension of the community and reflected the families, kinship circles, and neighborhoods that made up the county.”²⁴ In addition, if previous internalist studies of the region are correct, soldier morale should have disintegrated much earlier in the conflict as the home front collapsed. Instead, the opposite appears to have been the case. Pine Barren companies fought well during the 1864 Overland Campaign as well as the Franklin-Nashville Campaign later that year, the two bloodiest campaigns of the entire war. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study seeks to redress

²³ See Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988); James Matthew Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front* (Ivan R. Dee, 1994); Kenneth W. Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Inscoc and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*; Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War*; Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight*; Aaron Charles Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²⁴ Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight*, 81.

the historiographical imbalance by focusing solely on the usually ignored Pine Barrens. As one historian from Dothan, Alabama, recently lamented in correspondence with the author, “I heartily agree that there’s a big hole in Alabama history shaped like the Wiregrass.” Much of the state’s history has concentrated on the Tennessee Valley, the hill counties, and the Black Belt, with south-central and southeastern Alabama barely an afterthought. Yet, the Pine Barrens played a central role in the Indian wars of the 1830s, became an important producer of hogs and cattle, produced some of the state’s most prominent politicians, bolstered the Whig Party’s base of support, and raised several of the Civil War’s most distinguished regiments. As such, this region deserves a more prominent place in the state’s historical record.

Chapter 1

“The Wilderness is All Before You”: Settlement

In present-day Conecuh County, Alabama, just southeast of Evergreen, County Road 25 winds through the rural countryside. The paved but narrow road is only about five miles long and connects two equally inconspicuous highways. While the trees, wildlife, and farmland provide relaxing views, there is nothing to indicate the presence of a once-thriving community: no signs, no historical markers, no buildings, no ruins. Yet nearly two centuries ago the area along modern County Road 25 was the site of a comparatively small but flourishing community centered on the county seat town of Sparta. In 1860, with a population of at least 1,000 inhabitants, there were four merchants, two blacksmiths, three grocers, a wheelwright, a judge, and numerous farmers, laborers, overseers, and slaves. Sarah Kennedy made a good living as a hotel keeper. M. J. Murphy served as the town’s constable. E. W. Martin was the community’s only lawyer. Brothers William and Samuel McCormick were chair makers. And Ellen Williams served as the town’s school teacher.¹

For much of the antebellum period Sparta was also home to one of a handful of land offices in Alabama. During its three decades of operation, the Sparta Land Office issued more than five thousand land patents to settlers in the present-day counties of Escambia, Covington, Conecuh, Geneva, Henry, Dale, Coffee, Pike, and Barbour. From 1820 to the town’s demise at the end of the Civil War, the residents of Sparta and the land-hungry settlers who passed through

¹ United States Census, Conecuh County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 2.

its streets were active participants in the historical development of the Pine Barrens.² This chapter explores the settlement and maturation of the region they knew: its geographical features; confrontations between Native Americans and whites; migration and settlement; the spread of revival and the establishment of churches; and the evolution of communities and towns.

The Pine Barrens of south central and southeastern Alabama encompassed an area from the Chattahoochee River west to the Old Federal Road, and north from the Florida/Alabama line (Ellicott's Line) to the thirty-second parallel (see Figure 1.1). Throughout most of the nineteenth-century the most conspicuous features of the region's landscape were its immense forests of longleaf and slash pine trees. The longleaf pine, so named because its needles averaged from eight to twelve inches in length, was by far the most prevalent species, with specimens growing often to one hundred feet or more. Basil Hall's vivid descriptions of the pine forests he encountered in southeastern Georgia in 1828 would have been equally applicable to the forests in southern Alabama. "It was a long time before I got tired of the scenery of these pine barrens," he noted. "There was something . . . very graceful in the millions of tall and slender columns, growing up in solitude, not crowded upon one another, but gradually appearing to come closer and closer, till they formed a compact mass, beyond which nothing was to be seen."³ After surveying the ridges just west of the Conecuh River for the Alabama, Florida, and Georgia Railroad, William Campbell noted that "the growth of pine along these vallies, and on

² In March 1865, Union raiders burned Sparta's courthouse, railroad depot, and a number of other structures. A year later, construction began on a new courthouse in the more populous and more centrally located town of Greenville. By the turn of the twentieth century Sparta was all but abandoned. Marilyn Davis Hahn, *Old Sparta and Elba Land Office Records and Military Warrants, 1822-1860* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1983), iii-x.

³ Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828*, vol. 3 (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1829), 256.



Figure 1.1. The Pine Barren Region.

the bordering ridges, is not surpassed by the most luxuriant forests of Georgia or the Carolinas.”⁴ Stands of timber discouraged undergrowth and promoted a distinctly open environment on the forest floor. One historian has observed that not unlike longleaf forests throughout the coastal plain, “the general flatness of the land and absence of thick undergrowth enabled the traveler to pass through the pine forests with as much ease as over a prairie.” Only the oak, hickory, elm,

⁴ William S. Campbell, *Report on the Alabama, Florida and Georgia Railroad* (E.G. Dorsey, 1838), 13–14.

and other hardwoods species that populated creek and river bottomlands interrupted an otherwise continuous expanse of virgin pine timberland.⁵

Perhaps equally conspicuous as the longleaf pine was the abundant wiregrass, *aristida stricta*, that grew beneath the evergreen canopy. Wiregrass flourished throughout the Pine Barrens but was especially pervasive in the southeastern corner of the state. It grew in large clumps, four to eight inches wide at the base, with hundreds of round, wire-like blades rising from each clump, often reaching heights of eighteen inches or more. Seeding was rare and took place only when the main clump was exposed to fire. Indeed, frequent fires, both man-made and natural, benefitted the forest's ecosystem by suppressing invasive undergrowth, regenerating new wiregrass growth, and promoting the development of new seed pods. The tender new grass shoots were an excellent source of nutritious forage for grazing livestock, a fact readily apparent to the region's Native American inhabitants as well as to early nineteenth-century pioneering whites who migrated to the area. "In this section stock rearing is profitable," observed Lewis Troost, an engineer with the Mobile and Alabama Railroad, "and is attended with little trouble; the piney woods bordering on the streams affording natural perennial pastures."⁶

The creeks and rivers that drained the Pine Barrens provided the most fertile bottomland in the entire region. The Chattahoochee River, for example, not only formed the eastern boundary of the region and the state but its bottom land eventually became home to some of the wealthiest plantations in the Pine Barrens. From its source in the Appalachian Mountains of

⁵ Nollie W. Hickman, *Mississippi Harvest: Lumbering in the Longleaf Pine Belt, 1840-1915* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1962), 2; William Byrd, "Wiregrass: The Transformation of Southeast Alabama, 1880-1930" (PhD diss., Auburn University, 2009), 13.

⁶ Ronald Uchytel, "Aristida Stricta" (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1992), <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/graminoid/aristr/all.html>; Joseph Hodgson, ed., *The Alabama Manual and Statistical Register for 1869 Showing the Geographical Position, Commercial Advantages, Agricultural and Manufactural Resources, and National Importance of the State of Alabama-A Statistical Guide for the Immigrant and Hand Book for the Citizen* (Montgomery, Alabama: Mail Building, 1869), 18.

northern Georgia, the river flows south 418 miles, where it converges with the Flint River to form the Apalachicola. In the nineteenth century steamboats could navigate the Chattahoochee for about five months out of the year from Columbus, Georgia, southward. At other times, extended droughts limited steamboat activity, while log jams, overhanging tree branches, and rocky shoals often obstructed the channel, rendering daylight navigation difficult and nighttime travel almost impossible. On the other hand, keelboats and flatboats drawing no more than twenty-two inches of water could usually navigate the river year round.⁷

To the east, the Choctawhatchee River rises in Barbour County just below the town of Clayton and flows in a southwesterly direction through the present-day counties of Henry, Dale, and Geneva. The Pea River, the Choctawhatchee's main tributary, originates in present-day Bullock County where it flows south and empties into the main channel in Geneva County. The Choctawhatchee then crosses the Florida line and continues for another fifty miles or so till it reaches Choctawhatchee Bay (see Figure 1.2). As to navigation, at least three steamboats and dozens of flatboats and keelboats operated routinely on the river. One contemporary observed that "previous to the year 1861, a large tract of country, embracing the counties of Dale, Geneva, Coffee, Barbour, and Henry . . . depended on the river as the only outlet by which their produce could reach the market."⁸

The Conecuh River and its main tributaries—the Sepulga, the Pigeon, and the Patsaliga—traversed the present-day counties of Pike, Butler, Covington, and Conecuh, effectively draining the westernmost portion of the Pine Barrens. Navigating the river was most promising below the

⁷ Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, vol. 1 (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company, 1978), 232–33.

⁸ James D. Graham, "Report, Pensacola, Florida, February 6, 1836," *American Railroad Journal and Advocate of Internal Improvements* 5 (1836): 453; Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, 1:255; Joseph Burney to J.H. Simpson, Mobile, Alabama, April 6, 1872, in *Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers to the Secretary of War for the Year 1872* by United States Army, Corps of Engineers (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 643.

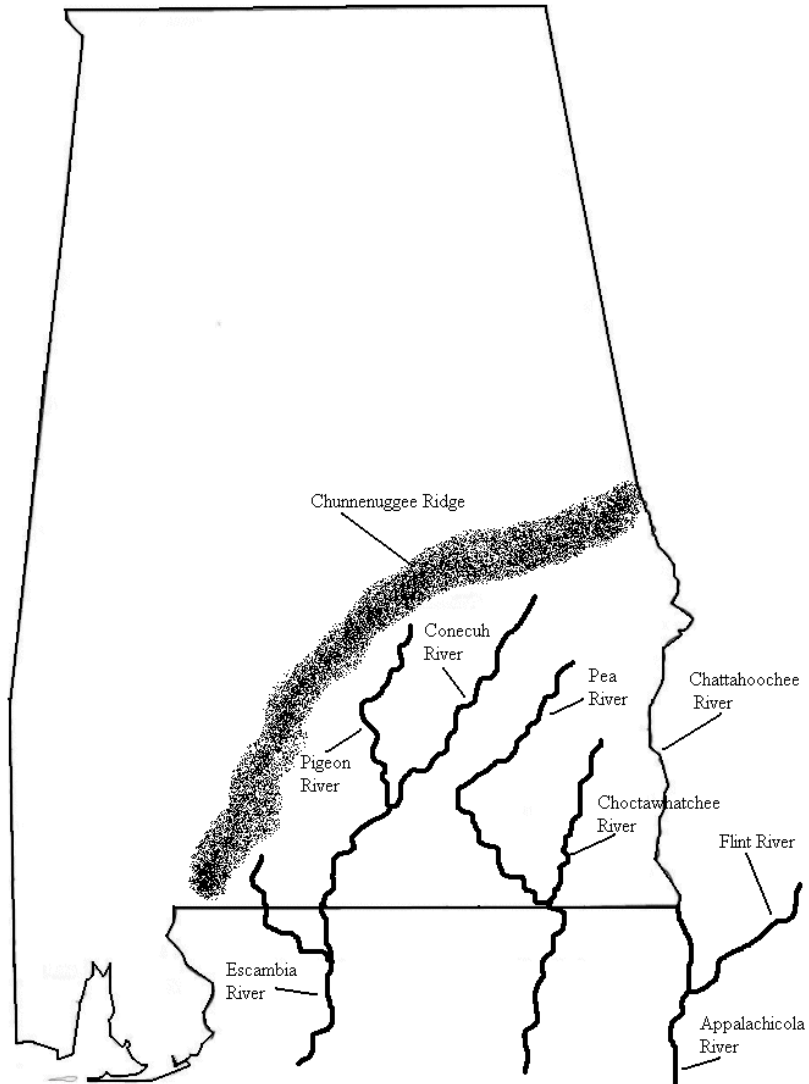


Figure 1.2. Major Rivers in South-Central and Southeastern Alabama.

falls of the Conecuh, an area of rocky shoals located just west of the once-thriving town of Montezuma. Shallow-draft vessels transported everything from cotton to lumber down the river to the port town of Pensacola. “Large quantities of pine lumber are procured from the forests,”

one writer observed, “and conveyed down the Conecuh River in small boats or rafts.”⁹ Once flatboat captains reached Pensacola Bay, they found it more profitable and practical to sell their boats for scrap lumber rather than attempt the impossible task of hauling the vessels back upstream. Efforts to establish steamboat travel failed as the river’s treacherous sandbars, submerged logs, and unpredictable currents made this kind of navigation impossible.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, rivers served as important travel, transportation, and trade routes for the region’s first inhabitants, the Creek Indians. Major Creek towns could be found primarily along the banks of the Chattahoochee, while smaller settlements were located in present-day Butler and Conecuh counties on the Conecuh. The vast interior was sparsely settled with little more than scattered villages and hunting camps dotting the landscape. Paul Starrett has noted that “in lower Alabama in the vast section west of the Chattahoochee River there were no permanent villages of enough significance to appear on maps although there were some individual settlements of prominent mixed bloods to the east of the extreme lower Alabama River.”¹⁰

Like Native Americans in other regions of the United States, the Creeks who lived within the Pine Barrens or along the periphery adapted to their environment by successfully utilizing the region’s natural resources. The Creeks routinely hunted white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and black bear, all of which feasted on wild persimmons, crabapples, strawberries, blackberries, and native grasses. Native Americans understood the link between healthy game animals and the beneficial role that fire played in maintaining a vibrant ecosystem. Burning the forest kept

⁹ Thomas Baldwin and Joseph Thomas, *A New and Complete Gazetteer of the United States: Giving a Full and Comprehensive Review of the Present Condition, Industry, and Resources of the American Confederacy* (Lippincott, Grambo, 1854), 270.

¹⁰ Paul Starrett, *Appraisal Report: Lands in Southern Georgia and Southeastern Alabama Ceded by the Creek Nation, Before the Indian Claims Commission, Docket Number 21, Valued as of August 9, 1814* (1957), 80.

undesirable vines, brush, and briars in check, prevented unnecessary debris build-up (a major cause of catastrophic fires), and encouraged the regeneration of nutritious wiregrass and other plants favored by large and small game.¹¹

In addition to hunting, the Creeks after European contact actively participated in the deerskin trade, raised cattle and other livestock, and perhaps most important, farmed. While most families planted small garden plots next to their homes, the communal crops that grew along the outskirts of towns were the primary sources of Indian agriculture. The Creeks grew squash, turnips, beans, potatoes, and a number of other crops, but their mainstay was corn. Anthropologist Robbie Ethridge has observed that “although the Creeks had a diversity of wild and domesticated foods by the turn of the nineteenth century, corn, supplemented with beans and squash, was still the staple food crop.”¹² Corn was nutritious, simple to cultivate, flourished in many different types of soil, and was versatile as a foodstuff. Adam Hodgson, a wealthy English businessman who traveled through Creek country in 1820, noted that “the Indians often set out on long journies through the forests, without any other provision than a preparation of the flour of Indian corn, gathered while green, with honey. This mixture,” he observed, “dried and reduced to powder, they carry in a small bag, taking a little of it with water, once or twice in 24 hours; and it is said, that if they have the ill luck to kill no deer . . . they will subsist on it for many weeks, without losing their strength.”¹³

The Creeks’ involvement with whites was most pronounced in the Euro-Indian deerskin trade that developed during the eighteenth century. Over time Native Americans became

¹¹ Robbie F. Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 38–46.

¹² *Ibid.*, 147.

¹³ Jeffrey C. Benton, *The Very Worst Road: Travellers’ Accounts of Crossing Alabama’s Old Creek Indian Territory, 1820-1847* (Eufaula, AL.: Historic Chattahoochee Commission of Alabama and Georgia, 1998), 11.

dependent upon the marketplace and gradually adopted Anglo economic and cultural practices. Andrew Frank has argued that by 1810, “many Creeks herded cattle, owned slaves, spoke and wrote English, grew cotton, wore European clothing, fenced their lands, and intermarried with white Americans.”¹⁴ Kathryn Braund has further demonstrated that Creek participation in the commercial marketplace ultimately altered traditional Indian socio-economic patterns and facilitated the eventual decline of the both the deerskin trade and the Creek way of life.¹⁵ The influx of white settlers and unscrupulous traders following the American Revolution exacerbated growing tensions between whites, Anglo-friendly Creeks, and Native American factions hostile to the new geopolitical and economic dynamic.

The U.S. Government’s purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 set the stage for new conflict between Native Americans and white settlers. Government officials hoped to establish a postal road connecting the Georgia frontier, the Mississippi Territory (which included the present-day state of Alabama), Mobile, and the newly acquired port of New Orleans. They hoped that the route would expedite trade and communication and facilitate military movements should the Spanish or British in West Florida threaten the American frontier. Two years later, a handful of Creek Indian leaders led by William McIntosh signed the First Treaty of Washington, allowing the government to construct the route through the heart of the Creek nation. The Federal Road, as the route became known, crossed the Chattahoochee River just north of present-day Columbus, Georgia, stretched westward to the headwaters of the

¹⁴ Andrew K. Frank, “Creek War,” *Encyclopedia of American Indian History* (Santa Barbara, CA.: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 246.

¹⁵ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

Alabama River, then followed the ridges east of that river in a southwestwardly direction to Mobile. The road officially opened in November 1811.¹⁶

The inflow of white traders, herdsman, and settlers that followed the road alarmed Creek Indians hostile to American encroachment to such a degree that by 1813 armed conflict in south Alabama appeared to be inevitable. While most of the subsequent fighting took place outside the central and southeastern Pine Barrens, the battles and skirmishes that occurred on the region's periphery had profound consequences for the area's eventual development. In July 1813, local militia attacked a band of militant Red Stick Creeks in present-day Escambia County in the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek. Four weeks later 700 Red Sticks attacked Fort Mims in neighboring Baldwin County, killing more than 200 white settlers, militiamen, allied Creeks, and slaves. The ensuing Creek War involved numerous battles and skirmishes throughout the Mississippi Territory, Georgia, and Tennessee, culminating in Gen. Andrew Jackson's defeat of a large contingent of Red Stick Creeks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Following the battle, Jackson's treaty negotiations forced all the Creeks to give up millions acres of land in the Mississippi Territory and in Georgia.¹⁷

The defeat of the Red Sticks at the hands of Andrew Jackson and the subsequent removal of thousands of Native Americans farther west spurred migration and settlement. The 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson ceded more than 23 million acres of Creek land in Alabama, Mississippi, and portions of Georgia to the United States government. Twenty years later the Third Treaty of Washington transferred all remaining Creek lands east of the Mississippi River into government

¹⁶ Henry D. Southerland and Jerry E. Brown, *The Federal Road Through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama, 1806-1836* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Mike Bunn, *Battle for the Southern Frontier: The Creek War and the War of 1812* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2008); Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (New York: Viking, 2001); Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006).

hands. Both treaties resulted in massive numbers of white settlers and their black slaves pouring into Alabama in hopes of acquiring cheap and abundant federal land. In fact, the exodus from eastern seaboard states was so large that contemporaries called it “Alabama fever,” a condition that infected large numbers of Americans and spread rapidly throughout the east with overwhelming effect. “Scarce any of those who were attacked by it ever recover,” wrote Georgian Samuel McDonald, “it sooner or later carries them off to the westward.”¹⁸ James Graham made similar observations from his Lincoln County, North Carolina home: “as soon as one neighbor visits another who has just returned from Alabama he immediately discovers the same symptoms which are exhibited by the one who has seen alluring Alabama.”¹⁹

Historians have speculated upon the push-and-pull causes that precipitated migration, but most suggest that a combination of factors including economic downturns, soil exhaustion, lower crop yields, and pressing debt obligations in the east, combined with the abundant and fertile lands available in the west, drove tens of thousands of Americans to leave their native eastern soils for greener pastures. One recently published history of Alabama finds that “those who flocked to Alabama were disillusioned with worn-out fields and poor economic conditions in the East and were attracted by cheap land from the Indian cession, high cotton prices, and dreams of wealth.”²⁰ Lacy Ford notes that in South Carolina, “a steady stream of upper Piedmont whites flowed into the Southwest between 1830 and 1850, while during those same years whites abandoned the lower Piedmont for the cotton frontier in unprecedented numbers.” Ford estimates that by 1850 more than 45,000 former South Carolinians lived in all of Alabama and

¹⁸ James David Miller, *South By Southwest: Planter Emigration and Identity in the Slave South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 2.

¹⁹ William Warren Rogers, et al., *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 54.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

another twenty-six thousand had relocated to Mississippi.²¹ In his study of poor whites in North Carolina, Charles Bolton similarly argues that “poor whites, yeoman farmers, and rich planters . . . all joined the westward trek to the Old Southwest.” Alabama fever drained 280,000 of that state’s residents west; fifty thousand settled throughout Alabama and Mississippi. “The attraction for poor whites,” Bolton notes, “as for other classes of southerners, was a seemingly inexhaustible supply of land that seemed suitable for growing cotton and making men wealthy.”²²

Not unlike other regions in Alabama, the Creek land cession of 1814 opened up the Pine Barrens for migration and settlement. In 1817, the Alabama territorial assembly created Conecuh County, the region’s first geopolitical division. Conecuh was a massive county that originally encompassed the entire region, including “all that tract of country lying east of the Federal Road and not included in any other county now established.”²³ It stretched from the Federal Road east to the Chattahoochee River, and from the Montgomery County line south to the border of Spanish West Florida (see Figure 1.3). The territorial census of 1818 recorded a total population of 1,395 people, including 1092 whites and 303 slaves.²⁴ As the population increased the legislature would carve up Conecuh County into smaller counties. In 1819, following Alabama’s entry into the union, it divided the Pine Barrens into Conecuh, Henry, and Butler counties. Covington County and Pike County were created in 1821; Dale in 1824; Barbour in 1832; and Coffee in 1841.

²¹ Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 38–39.

²² Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 67.

²³ *Acts Passed at the First Session of the First General Assembly of the Alabama Territory* (St. Stephens: Thomas East, 1818), 96.

²⁴ Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States: The Territory of Alabama, 1817-1819*, vol. 18 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 462.

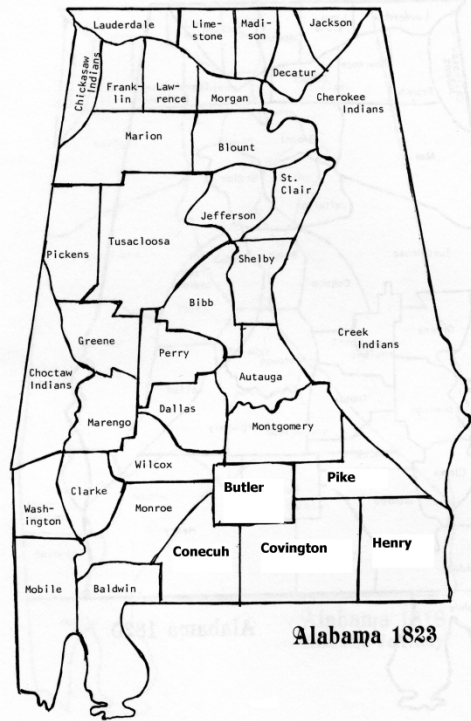
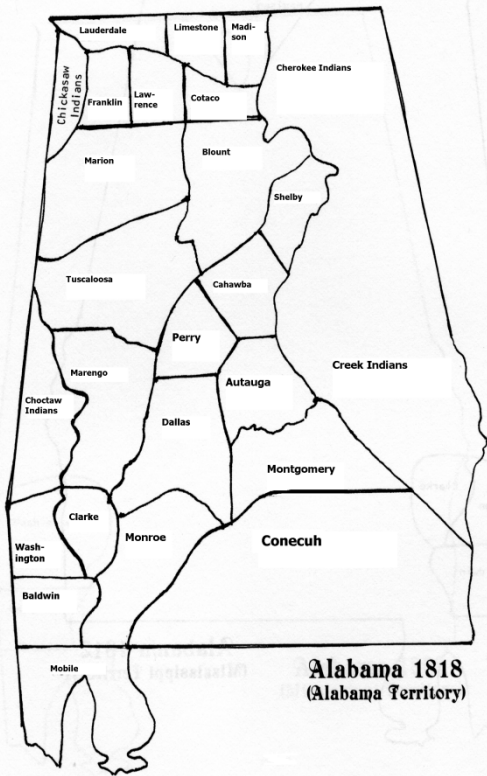


Figure 1.3. Additions and Changes to Pine Barren Counties Over Time. Source: Marilyn Davis Hahn, *Old Sparta and Elba Land Office Records and Military Warrants, 1822-1860* (Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1983), iii-ix.

TABLE 1.1. Pine Barren Population Changes, 1820–1860

County	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
Barbour			12,024	23,632	30,812
Butler	1,405	5,650	8,685	10,836	18,122
Pike		7,108	10,108	15,920	24,435
Henry	2,638	4,020	5,787	9,019	14,918
Coffee				5,940	9,623
Dale		2,031	7,397	6,382	12,197
Covington		1,522	2,435	3,645	6,469
Conecuh	5,713	7,444	8,197	9,322	11,311
<i>Totals</i>	9,756	27,775	54,633	84,696	127,887

Source: Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/> (accessed April 16, 2012).

Migration and settlement in the Pine Barrens never became as robust as in the Black Belt or the Tennessee Valley. Settlement in the region’s interior—particularly the area lying between the Choctawhatchee and Conecuh rivers—was especially problematic due the area’s unreliable waterways and sandy soils. This area “is but thinly settled,” wrote William Campbell in 1838, “its remoteness from navigable water courses, and the absence of artificial communications, (except the miserable county roads, which scarcely answer for neighbourhood purposes) have tended not only to prevent emigration to the country, but to induce many . . . to abandon their improvements and seek other lands, less generous in productions, but more accessible to market.”²⁵ Nevertheless, the population of the Pine Barrens on the whole rose steadily from 9,756 in 1820 to 27,775 in 1830—a 184 percent increase over ten years—with most of that

²⁵ Campbell, *Report on the Alabama, Florida and Georgia Railroad*, 13.

growth occurring along the region's periphery. Over the next thirty years the population grew threefold from 27,775 residents in 1830 to 127,887 in 1860 (see table 1.1).

Much of the growth that took place in the region was a result of natural increase, but the 1860 census reveals that 40 percent of the population still was born outside the state of Alabama. When counting only white adults over the age of twenty, that percentage rises to more than 50 percent. In Pike County's Gainer's Store community, for example, a sampling of 520 residents demonstrates that 214, or 41 percent, were not native Alabamians. A similar sampling of 367 whites in Henry County's Green Mill Beat shows that 44 percent migrated to the area sometime before 1860. In the town of Geneva, in Coffee County, 209 of the 520 whites sampled were born in other states. Eufaula was the one place in the region that qualified as an urban commercial center and it also contained a notably large percentage of non-native Alabamians. Fifty-seven percent of the 480 whites sampled, for example, were born outside of the state. A large portion of these were native Northerners or Europeans; individuals from Connecticut, New York, Ireland, England, and France were among the non-native population of Eufaula. On the whole, the overwhelming majority of migrants in the recently peopled Pine Barrens were native Georgians followed by South Carolinians, North Carolinians, and a variety of individuals from other states and countries.

TABLE 1.2. Non-Native Alabamians in Four Pine Barren Communities

	Gainer's Store, Pike County	Green Mill Beat, Henry County	Geneva, Coffee County	Eufaula, Barbour County
Representative Sample	520	367	520	480
Georgia	116	110	126	123
South Carolina	66	25	38	45
North Carolina	23	19	25	31
Other	9	10	20	74
Total Non-Natives	214	164	209	273

Source: United States Census, Pike County, Henry County, Coffee County, Barbour County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

Free whites who made the trek into southern Alabama came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. For the planter class and those who aspired to join their ranks, land and slaves were the keys to fortune. “Before they reached their adulthood,” historian James Oakes contends, “most slaveholders had been conditioned to accept migration as the prerequisite to success. It is no surprise, therefore, that the antebellum master class was one of the most mobile in history.”²⁶ Success never came easily and settlers who migrated to the Barrens who hoped to prosper had to adjust quickly to frontier conditions.

In 1837, for example, twenty-two-year-old planter John Horry Dent moved his wife and infant son from the Lowcountry district of Colleton, South Carolina, to Barbour County. Dent arrived during the waning days of a Creek Indian uprising carried out by a small band of Native Americans desperately trying to stave off white encroachment. About the same time that Dent settled his slaves in the area, largely by renting them out to other planters, dozens of citizens from Pike, Barbour, and Macon counties petitioned Alabama Governor Clement Comer Clay,

²⁶ James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Vintage, 1983), 76.

demanding that he remove all the remaining Creeks from the area.²⁷ With the possibility of violence still in the air Dent chose to forego temporarily building a house in the country and moved his family to Clayton. At one point he compared frontier Alabama with older, more settled parts of the state: “Old Alabama, then (contrasted with the Indian Nation just incorporated as a part of the State), presented an appearance of wealth, refinement and elegance in comparison with the new territory, yet to be cleared up, built up, and settled by civilized people, its present population being Adventurers, Speculators, and pioneer farmers who were moving in to settle fresh plantations to make cotton.”²⁸

Less than a year later, using slaves as collateral, Dent bought a plantation ten miles north of Clayton, along the banks of South Cowikee Creek. He promptly put his slaves to work clearing land, building temporary slave quarters, and erecting a makeshift home for his family. “At this pine land abode,” he later recollected, “we had hurriedly knocked up a double pen log cabin, rough as rough could be, but made it sufficiently comfortable to keep out rain and shelter us from the Sun.”²⁹ Within a few years “Good Hope,” as Dent called his plantation, boasted a framed plantation home, four hundred acres of cleared, arable land, five hundred acres of timber land, a profitable cotton gin, and numerous barns and outbuildings. In 1840, his slaves harvested sixty-seven wagon-loads of corn and seventy-three bales of cotton, with the average bale weighing more than four hundred pounds. For the next twenty years Dent bought and sold at least five plantations, continued to invest in slaves, harvested record amounts of cotton, and

²⁷ J.M. Feagin, et al., “Alabama Governors, Administrative Files 1819-1899, Miscellaneous Folders” January 10, 1837, Alabama Department of Archives and History; John T. Ellisor, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

²⁸ Gerald Ray Mathis, *John Horry Dent, South Carolina Aristocrat on the Alabama Frontier* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1979), 25–40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

became one of the wealthiest men in the region. By the outbreak of the Civil War he owned ninety-six slaves and enjoyed financial assets of nearly \$200,000.³⁰

While Dent and planters like him migrated and settled their families, yeoman and poorer farmers of lesser means took risks of their own by moving into the region. In 1822, sixteen-year-old James W. Clark migrated with his family from Georgia to Brundidage, Pike County. For nearly a decade he worked odd jobs and clerked in his older brother's general store in Montgomery. He eventually settled down, married Harriet Kelly of Linwood, Pike County, and bought two forty-acre plots of land just a few miles north of his father-in-law's farm. Located just three miles from the sloughs of the Conecuh River, Clark later recalled the dangers he and other settlers faced, especially when wild animals from the river's swampy bottomlands ventured too close. "Bear tracks in the swamps were as thick as chicken tracks in the yard," he recollected some years later. Bears, coyotes, bobcats, and the occasional wolf posed serious threats to chickens, pigs, cattle, and other domesticated livestock. Despite the dangers, Clark worked his small farm and slowly accumulated enough resources that by 1850 he owned two hundred acres of land and was worth about \$1,000. The evidence suggests that at some point during the 1850s he relocated to Coffee County, bought a small farm, and rented three slaves who worked his farm and produced six hundred pounds of cotton.³¹

James Clark's experience was not unlike thousands of slaveless yeoman and poor farmers who migrated west with aspirations for a better life. David M. Braswell was another who moved

³⁰ Ray Mathis and Mary Mathis, *Introduction and Index to the John Horry Dent Farm Journals and Account Books, 1840-1892* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1977), ix-xxviii; John Horry Dent, *Farm Journal*, Vol. 3, 1855-1857, p. 79, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University Special Collection and Archives, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm).

³¹ "Some Old People. Short Sketches That Will Be of Interest to the Public. Men and Women That We Know. Pioneers Who Came to Pike in the Early Days and Have Seen the Changes of Many Years," *Troy Messenger* (Troy, Alabama, June 27, 1889); Gregory A. Boyd, *Family Maps of Pike County, Alabama: With Homesteads, Roads, Waterways, Towns, Cemeteries, Railroads, and More*, 1st ed. (Norman, OK: Arphax, 2007), 122, 244.

his family from Crawford County, Georgia, to Pike County in the late 1840s. A few years later he relocated his family farther south to Coffee County. By 1860 Braswell, his wife Penelope, and their three teenaged boys worked a small twenty-acre farm just outside the small town of Elba. In a similar fashion, Reuben Kemp migrated with his wife and five children from Marion County, Georgia, to the Open Pond community in southeastern Henry County in the 1850s. His three hundred-acre farm, including sixty improved acres, produced nine hundred pounds of cotton in 1860. It is not clear whether or not Kemp rented slaves to pick his cotton, but the evidence suggests that he, his wife, and his sons worked the farm with little outside help. Like Kemp, James Parker left his native Georgia for Covington County sometime around 1842. A decade later his family's two-hundred-acre farm was worth about \$400. Parker owned no slaves but did employ eighteen-year-old James Drake as a farm laborer. As the 1850s drew to a close Parker added two hundred acres of land to his holdings, bought a female slave, and by the outbreak of the Civil War, enjoyed a net worth of nearly \$3,000.³²

Women who settled in the Old Southwest experienced events much differently than did the men. They left families and tightknit familial relationships behind to face uncertain futures without the immediate support of established kinship networks. Such networks had fostered a unique female culture among white women in the eastern seaboard states, a culture of time-honored interdependency. Through courtship, marriage, childbirth, child rearing, and the death of loved ones, women cherished and relied upon their relationships with other women. Joan Cashin argues that women "relished interdependent relations with their female relatives. These kinship bonds provided women with valuable practical, social, and emotional resources." In many if not most cases, migration severed these relationships either permanently or temporarily.

³² United States Census, Pike County, Henry County, Covington County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

“Women accepted the partial separations from relatives that happened when they married,” Cashin suggests, “but migration portended losses that were radical and permanent because it could remove women so far from their kinfolk that those relationships might deteriorate, and eventually collapse.”³³

Fear and anxiety, perhaps more than anything else, occupied the minds of women migrating to the Pine Barrens, especially at the beginning of the settlement. Trekking into areas often still inhabited by Native Americans was unnerving to women whose primary responsibility it was to protect, care, and comfort their children. News related to the massacre of white settlers at Fort Mims and other such incidents, whether factual or not, spread like wildfire among potential migrants living in the eastern seaboard states. Moreover, the birthing process for women of childbearing age was stressful enough even in the best of circumstances. Mortality rates for women and newborns in the early nineteenth-century were high by modern standards, and the thought of giving birth with little or no support from close female relatives or friends must have been even more frightening. Depending upon one’s socioeconomic circumstances, setting up house under frontier conditions with young children or babies in tow was challenging, even for women who relied upon slave labor for help. Finally, the untimely death of husbands added additional burdens to many women, especially those whose economic circumstances were uncertain.

Caroline Alley, for example, migrated from Randolph County, Georgia, with her husband Alford to Dale County in 1852. Their three children, John, Mary, and Martha, were all under the age of six; young Martha was barely two-years-old. Alford’s service in the Creek War earned him a government grant of forty acres of land just a few miles southeast of Newton. The Alleys

³³ Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 26.

were poor by the standards of the day and Caroline's circumstances must have worsened with the addition of two more children and the sudden death of her husband in the mid-1850s. The evidence suggests that Caroline's determination and her willingness to take risks eventually improved her family's economic prospects. Following her husband's death she sold her small farm and bought eighty acres of government land not far from her original homestead. Two years later Alley's eleven improved acres produced two hundred pounds of corn, twenty pounds of sweet potatoes, and \$56 worth of slaughtered livestock. On the whole, her family's net worth increased from a census-reported zero dollars in 1850 to a modest \$400 ten years later. This was no small feat for a single mother of five farming the southernmost reaches of the Pine Barrens.³⁴

Women of the slaveholding class faced many of the same challenges as their lower-class neighbors, but enjoyed a level of assistance that others such as Caroline Alley did not. Several years before to their migration to Alabama, Mary Elizabeth Morrison brought a human dowry of forty-five slaves to her marriage to John Horry Dent. At least half of the slaves Dent brought to Alabama belonged to his wife, and the evidence suggests that she controlled the labor of at least some of her slaves.³⁵ Twenty-four-year-old Rebecca Gunn's move from Georgia to Henry County in 1860 must have been somewhat easier considering that a portion of her husband's nineteen slaves were almost certainly at her disposal.³⁶ The high percentage of male slaves on the southwestern frontier demonstrates that clearing forests, breaking new land, and planting crops took precedence over nearly all other human endeavors. Indeed, during the early days of settlement, it was not unusual for masters to send house slaves and even young children to the

³⁴ "Alford Alley Land Patent," Military Warrant (Sparta, Alabama, July 10, 1852), Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States Office, www.glorerecords.blm.gov; "Caroline Alley Land Patent," State Volume Patent (Elba, Alabama, November 1, 1858), Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States Office, www.glorerecords.blm.gov.

³⁵ Miller, *South by Southwest*, 65.

³⁶ United States Census, Henry County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 2.

fields. Many plantation mistresses themselves found themselves butchering chickens and hogs, chopping wood, caring for sick slaves, washing clothing, tending gardens, and completing tasks previously carried out in whole or in part by slaves. Nevertheless, Cashin insists that “slave men and slave women did the hardest work on the frontier, and they spared plantation mistresses many of the strenuous, exhausting, and dangerous chores that other white women had to perform.”³⁷

As more and more families migrated and settled Alabama’s frontier regions, religion and the establishment of frontier churches helped alleviate some of the physical and spiritual isolation many people experienced. Settlers and itinerate ministers spoke often of the abundant lawlessness and wickedness that permeated the region early on. In 1826, Methodist missionary Josiah Evans frankly described his estimation of the communities in the southernmost Pine Barrens: “I know of but one class of persons that the present state of the lands seems to suit, and that class is no advantage or honor to any country.”³⁸ A year later, the minutes of the Alabama Baptist State Convention noted that “the wilderness is all before you, behind you, around you; the inhabitants of the waste places are in the midst of you and before your eyes, a living spectacle of ignorance, superstition, and crime.”³⁹

Baptists and Methodists ultimately made the greatest headway in the Pine Barrens. Characteristic of both denominations were the frequent camp meetings held in towns and communities throughout the region beginning in the 1820s. Meeting dates, places, and times spread primarily by word of mouth. Dozens of families gathered at the appointed time; most

³⁷ Cashin, *A Family Venture*, 67–70.

³⁸ Anson West, *A History of Methodism in Alabama* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Barbee & Smith, 1893), 271.

³⁹ Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 3.

came prepared to camp for days or possibly even weeks at a time. Singing, praying, and fiery sermons often led to dramatic religious conversions. On May 18, 1823, Methodist preacher John Triggs delivered a sermon in Henry County that was so moving one of the congregants abruptly stood up, interrupted the service, “and begged the congregation to pray for him. This produced considerable excitement among the people, and many came forward weeping and desiring our prayers.”

A few weeks later, another of Triggs’s sermons delivered in this same area persuaded a Mrs. B to join the “Society.” Her husband, infuriated by her decision, demanded that she move out of the home and threatened to beat her if she talked to anyone about their altercation. For several days he reportedly cursed and raged against the itinerate minister, the congregants, and the whole of Christendom. Apparently, a confrontation with his brother about the matter “reached his heart, so that he went home, begged his wife’s pardon, and sent for some of the Society to pray for him. They gathered and prayed for him nearly all night. He has since very much reformed, and his wife found peace to her soul.”⁴⁰ Josiah Evans recalled yet another episode involving a seventy-three-year-old blind man during an 1826 camp meeting in Henry County. On the third day of the meeting the man in question experienced a spiritual conversion so powerful that he “exhorted all around him to draw near the Lord. I have been in the dark fifteen years,” he implored, “I have not been able to see my way, nor have I seen the sun; but now, glory to God, I can see my way to heaven as well as any of you!”⁴¹

Yet while Methodist missionaries made inroads into the Pine Barrens, the Baptists were far and away the most successful. Like many of their Methodist counterparts, itinerant Baptist ministers traveled for weeks on end preaching at small churches and conducting camp meetings

⁴⁰ Anson West, *A History of Methodism in Alabama*, 272.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

throughout their circuits. For at least two decades, Alexander Travis crisscrossed south-central and southeastern Alabama, preaching revivals and planting churches. Each year, after the midsummer crop lay-by and again following the fall harvest, he toured his circuit. His traveling schedule became so demanding and his preaching so popular that he eventually hired an overseer to help manage his farming pursuits. “So great was his reputation as a preacher,” one historian has noted, “that one poor woman without a horse or mule reputedly once walked twenty miles to hear him preach.”⁴² Like Travis, David Wood was among the first Baptist ministers to operate in the southern part of the state. He migrated from Twiggs County, Georgia, to Conecuh County two years before Alabama’s statehood. Wood was perhaps the most unique itinerant preacher in Alabama, for he was totally blind. His physical handicap was by no means an impediment to his impressive skills as a minister. He was “an indefatigable preacher” whose influence and talents aided in the establishment of Baptist churches throughout the Pine Barrens.⁴³

Like their white counterparts, African Americans participated in religious revivals and joined religious denominations. Wayne Flynt notes that before 1840 it was not unusual for blacks and whites to attend services together, “perhaps with slaves in the back rows, but at least in the same building.”⁴⁴ Methodist and Baptist itinerant preachers reported annually the total number of black and white parishioners in their respective districts. In 1823, for example, John Triggs reported to the Methodist Annual Conference that the Chattahoochee Circuit for which he

⁴² Flynt, *Alabama Baptists*, 23.

⁴³ B. F. Riley and Alabama Baptist Historical Society, *History of the Baptists of Alabama: From the Time of Their First Occupation of Alabama in 1808, Until 1894: Being a Detailed Record of Denominational Events in the State During Eighty-Six Years, and Furnishing Biographical Sketches of Those Who Have Been Conspicuous in the Annals of the Denomination, Besides Much Other Incidental Matter Relative to the Secular History of Alabama* (Birmingham: Roberts and Son, 1895); Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, 1:317.

⁴⁴ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists*, 45.

was responsible included 182 whites and fifty-nine blacks. Ten years later the three Methodist circuits that served the Pine Barrens reported a total of 1,340 whites and 207 black members.⁴⁵

By the late 1830s the growth of slavery and the rise of northern abolitionism prompted serious concerns on the part of white southerners. While state governments enacted stricter laws regulating the social and economic aspects of slavery, southern churches became increasingly proslavery as well, aggressively attacked their abolitionist brethren, and shifted their approach to dealing with African American congregants. For example, attendees at the 1840 meeting of the Bethlehem Baptist Association, which included representatives from no fewer than six churches in Conecuh and Butler counties, unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the American Baptist Antislavery Convention held earlier that year in New York City.⁴⁶ “We think ourselves compelled to declare against men who misrepresent and slander us,” they responded, and “recommend our brethren at the South to speak out their sentiments fully and fearlessly.”⁴⁷ Within five years the Methodist and Baptist denominations split into northern and southern factions with slavery being the root cause.

Baptist and Methodist efforts to evangelize the slaves in the Pine Barrens also increased dramatically during the 1840s and 1850s. Wilson Fallin argues that by evangelizing slaves, white southerners hoped to deflect abolitionist criticism that slave owners cared little for their slaves’ spiritual condition. Denominational associations adopted resolutions urging churches to provide services for black congregants if they did not already do so. They also encouraged

⁴⁵ West, *History of Methodism*, 269–78.

⁴⁶ The American Baptist Antislavery Convention was organized at the McDougal Street Baptist Church in New York City in April, 1840. Convention attendees were proponents of immediate emancipation and adopted the stance that southern churches must reject slavery or risk what amounted to excommunication. As president of the convention, Elon Galusha’s address to the crowd was decidedly harsh and its subsequent publication became a rallying point for southern Baptists. For a good study of the general conservative trend of southern churches see: Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: the Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Knopf, 1997).

⁴⁷ *Minutes of the Twenty-Fourth Anniversary of the Bethlehem Baptist Association* (Bethlehem Baptist Association, 1840), Auburn University Special Collections and Archives.

individual slave owners to arrange for religious activities and promote the slaves' spiritual welfare. The Bethlehem Baptist Association instructed its churches that "where there is a sufficient colored population to justify it, make arrangements for a separate service for them at least one Lord's day in each month, and oftener, if practicable." Slave owners, too, were encouraged to "so arrange the order of their family devotions as to have their servants present, and especially where they cannot attend upon the more public means of grace."⁴⁸

These efforts produced mixed results. In Conecuh County's Bellville Baptist Church, African Americans accounted for half of the membership—104 white members to 103 "colored." About ten miles away, the black membership of Beulah Baptist Church outnumbered the whites 105 to 53. On the other hand, smaller churches such as Catawba Springs and Sepulga reported only a handful of black members.⁴⁹ The evidence suggests that, overall, churches located in more remote areas of the Pine Barrens counted few slaves among their membership, while those in closer proximity to the region's towns enjoyed larger populations of both black and white members.

Like the influx of religion, the establishment of communities and towns became an essential part of the Pine Barren's historical development. The towns that dotted the region ranged in size and scope from the cotton-rich enclaves in and around Eufaula and Troy to more traditional, frontierlike conditions that existed in the townships just north of the Florida line. As such, they resembled other predominantly white belt regions of the South. Historian John Inscoe refers to such areas, irrespective of their size or perceived unimportance by outsiders, as "concentrated communities," that is, communities that "generated much of the area's progress,

⁴⁸ Wilson Fallin, *Uplifting the People: Three Centuries of Black Baptists in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 15; *Minutes of the Thirty-Third Session of the Bethlehem Baptist Association* (Bethlehem Baptist Association, 1849), 8–10, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives.

⁴⁹ *Minutes of the Thirty-Third Session of the Bethlehem Baptist Association*, 10.

diversity, and entrepreneurial spirit.”⁵⁰ Eufaula (known before 1843 as Irwinton) in Barbour County, Troy in Pike County, and Greenville in Butler County were centers of economic and social activity for better than half of the Pine Barrens.

For nearly a century, Eufaula’s central location on the banks of the Chattahoochee River served as an important cotton market and trade magnet for farmers in bordering counties. During the antebellum period, cotton-laden wagons from Henry, Dale, Coffee, and Pike counties frequently clogged the roads leading to Eufaula. Mary Love Edwards, a Dale County resident whose family lived in the Clay Bank Creek community, remembered that “Eufaula and Greenville were the cotton markets for the Dale County farmers before and for some time after the [Civil War]. It usually took the cotton wagons five or six days to make the trip to market and return. They would carry cotton and return loaded with dry goods and groceries for the Westville merchants.”⁵¹ One-time postmaster and newspaperman Thomas Jackson observed that while “steamboats were plying the Chattahoochee, supplying the merchants with goods . . . the town was boasting of a lucrative wagon trade” from every county in Southeastern Alabama.⁵² By 1860 Eufaula was home to thirty-five merchants, ten carriage makers, eight druggists, a dozen physicians, and numerous cabinet makers, carpenters, teachers, and clerks.

Edward Young, one of the town’s wealthiest merchants, moved there from New York in the mid-1830s. He established a small mercantile business and amassed a personal fortune that,

⁵⁰ John C. Inscoc, *Mountain Masters: Slavery Sectional Crisis Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 25.

⁵¹ Mary Love Edwards Fleming, “Dale County and Its People During the Civil War: Reminiscences of Mary Love (Edwards) Fleming,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 19 (Spring 1957): 65.

⁵² Lewy Dorman, *History of Barbour County, Alabama* (Eufaula, AL: Barbour County Genealogy and Local History Society, 2006), 88; Eugene Allen Smith, *Report on the Cotton Production of the State of Alabama* (s.n., 1884), 142–43; Robert H. Flewellen, *Along Broad Street: A History of Eufaula, Alabama, 1823-1984* (Eufaula, AL: City of Eufaula, 1991), 30.

by the outbreak of the Civil War, amounted to more than \$50,000.⁵³ L.J. Leaird not only sold clothing, dry goods, tools, books, and groceries from his general store on Broad Street, but also provided “a convenient warehouse for the accommodation of his customers . . . where he is prepared to store cotton on terms to suit them [and] advance them money on cotton, stored or shipped, at such rates as cannot fail to give satisfaction.”⁵⁴ Alfred Bernstein’s mercantile was substantially smaller than Young’s and Leaird’s, but with two clerks, a store full of merchandise, and a net worth of \$6,500 his family lived comfortably.⁵⁵ These merchants and others like them were an integral part of the economic development that characterized both the community and the region in the decades leading up to Civil War.

Greenville was established in the early 1820s and Troy about a decade later. Both towns grew rapidly and served as essential markets for communities farther south. When the Conecuh River fell to levels too dangerous for river transport, farmers in Covington County hauled their crops to Greenville, Evergreen (in Conecuh County), or Pensacola. Even when creeks and rivers were full, driftwood, fallen trees, and other debris could clog the channels to such an extent that farmers still often chose to move their products overland rather than risk losing the fruits of weeks or even months of labor. Greenville further benefitted when federal officials relocated their land office from Cahaba to Greenville in 1854. More than forty thousand acres of federal land sold in Butler and Covington counties between 1854 and 1860. Butler County’s total population, for example, grew only 20 percent from 8,685 in 1840 to 10,836 in 1850. By 1860 that number had grown to 18,122, nearly double the rate of the previous decade. Thus, on the eve of the Civil War, Greenville had become a bustling community with more than 1400

⁵³ Thomas M. Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, vol. 4 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1921), 1826–1827.; United States Census, Barbour County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

⁵⁴ *Eufaula Democrat*, December 9, 1846.

⁵⁵ United States Census, Barbour County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

residents including twenty-one merchants, more than forty mechanics, at least six hotel owners, and numerous doctors, druggists, and lawyers.

Opportunities for economic growth expanded as the population increased. Benjamin West sold his small farm in Pike County in the early 1850s, moved his family to Greenville, and opened a livery stable that served the ever-growing populace. By 1860, he owned ten slaves; employed a hostler, a carriage driver, and a harness maker; worked a five-hundred-acre farm; and enjoyed a net worth of \$38,000. Not everyone fared as well as local markets remained constrained. In 1856, brothers Richard and John Branscomb moved from Macon County and opened a saddler's shop just on the outskirts of town. Writing to his father less than a year later, Richard complained, "I fear we will do bad business here this year. . . . Our opponent has got the ascendancy over us and takes very unfair means to put us down in the community."⁵⁶ By 1860 the brothers had relocated back to Macon County.⁵⁷

In the 1840s, Troy became an important destination due in part to its proximity to Montgomery, one of the largest commercial centers in the South. Troy merchants relied upon Montgomery markets to buy their cotton and supply them with affordable manufactured goods. Merchant and cotton buyer Joel D. Murphree was one of many businessmen who bought cotton from local farmers, shipped it and sold it in Montgomery, and sold merchandise on credit to families throughout the region. Murphree began his career some ten years earlier when, as a struggling new migrant to the area, he bought groceries from Montgomery, hauled them back to Troy, and sold them out of the back of his wagon.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Frank Anderson Chappell, ed., *Dear Sister: Civil War Letters to a Sister in Alabama* (Huntsville, AL: Branch Springs Publishing, 2002), 18–19.

⁵⁷ Wyley Donald Ward, *Early History of Covington County, Alabama, 1821-1871* (1976; repr., Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Co., 1991), 88. United States Census, Butler County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

⁵⁸ H.E. Sterkx, "Joel Dyer Murphree, Troy Merchant, 1843-1868," *Alabama Review* 11 (April 1958): 118. Even as late as 1880, cotton farmers from the southernmost counties continued to haul their cotton to Troy. Of the nine

As in Eufaula and Greenville, economic opportunities in Troy increased as the antebellum era progressed. In 1857, Archibald Lockard acquired a mercantile store from a Mr. Weiss. He immediately restocked the shelves and storage room, hired a younger kinsman to help run the store, and built a thriving new business.⁵⁹

A year after Lockard opened his establishment, one of the town's most respected and well known business owners died. Ann Love, a widow and mother of at least six children, had built the first hotel in Troy nearly twenty years before to Lockard's new venture, when in 1838 the county seat relocated from Monticello to Troy. Using money from her late husband's estate as well as funds from her existing tavern in Monticello, Love bought the old courthouse lot and the building at public auction. She tore down the old structure, hauled the lumber to Troy, and built a new hotel and tavern from the remnants. She died in 1858 a respected businesswoman, slave owner, and something of a local legend, no small feat for a widow in the nineteenth-century South.⁶⁰

Other towns in the five southernmost counties, while not nearly as prosperous as those closer to the Black Belt, offered local residents important goods and services, not to mention legal and social activities. From Evergreen, Sparta, and Andalusia to Elba, Newton, and Abbeville, the daily commercial activities that took place in these towns before the war were for many residents a gateway to the larger market economy. Fifty-year-old Elizabeth Eason, for

thousand bales of cotton produced in Coffee County, for example, only about five hundred were sold in Elba. The rest were hauled to Troy, "at present the most accessible market for this section of the state." United States. War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 1122.

⁵⁹ John Shephard, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Alabama*, vol. 32 (Montgomery, AL: Barrett & Wimbish, 1859), 569–574. United States Census, Pike County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Schedule 1.

⁶⁰ Margaret Pace Farmer, *One Hundred Fifty Years in Pike County, Alabama, 1821-1971* (Anniston, AL: Higginbotham, 1973), 328–30; Brent Holcomb, *Marriage and Death Notices from the Southern Christian Advocate*, vol. 1 (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1979), 524. United States Census, Pike County, Alabama, 1840, 1850, Schedules 1 and 2.

example, worked out of her home in Newton as a seamstress. Her personal estate of just \$100 was supplemented by her two sons, Green, a mechanic worth \$1,900, and William, a wagoner worth \$475. The Eason family's combined 1860 income of \$2,475 was five times the per capita income of the average Dale Countian. Another man, John W. Dowling, spent his boyhood and teenage years as a farmhand on his father's small farm. In 1858, Dowling, Frances M. Martin, and James H. Carroll formed a grocery partnership in Ozark. Although the Civil War interrupted the firm's business and it eventually dissolved, Dowling continued to invest his time and resources as a grocer. By 1870 he would own one of the most prosperous enterprises in town.⁶¹

Small town merchants elsewhere in the southernmost Pine Barrens operated limited but necessary establishments. Merchants such as Andalusia's Isa Smith, Abbeville's Moses Green, and Geneva's William Lee stocked nails, hand tools, plows, clocks, shoes, boots, guns, clothing and other goods especially coveted by farmers in their respective communities. The majority of stores such as these were small, but a handful of merchants were able to build large enterprises that rivaled those in the northernmost counties. In 1850, Henry W. Laird was a young, single, up-and-coming merchant renting a room at Elizabeth Chisolm's boardinghouse and tavern in Montgomery. He soon relocated to Geneva, speculated in land, and opened a general store that by 1860 was one of the largest and most profitable in the county.⁶² Alexander Gordon moved with his uncle from Georgia to Henry County around 1817. He worked in his uncle's store near the town of Franklin and eventually bought his own mercantile business in Abbeville. The evidence suggests that by the outbreak of the Civil War, Gordon was one of the wealthiest

⁶¹ W.L. Andrews, "Early History of Southeast Alabama," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 10 (1948): 102. United States Census, Dale County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

⁶² Thomas McAdory Owen and Marie Bankhead Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, vol. 4 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1921), 1002. United States Census, Covington County, Henry County, Coffee County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

merchant/planters in southeastern Alabama, with 20,000 acres of land, 64 slaves, and a personal net worth of more than \$130,000.⁶³

From the 1820s to the 1850s, the settlement and maturation of the Pine Barrens mirrored in many ways the development of other majority white areas of the Old Southwest. The region's residents were witnesses to or active participants in the Creek Indian War, Indian removal, migration and settlement, the spread of revival and religion, and the establishment of communities and towns. As the country became increasingly settled economic issues stood at the forefront of continuing regional development. For most Pine Barren residents farming dominated all other economic endeavors. From poor and middle-class farmers to the wealthiest slaveholding nabobs, nearly every family was touched in some way by the cotton economy and the peculiar institution upon which it was based.

⁶³ Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, vol. 3 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1921), 679; Willis Brewer, *Alabama, Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men: From 1540 to 1872* (Montgomery: Barrett & Brown, 1872), 279; Marvin Scott, *History of Henry County, Alabama* (Pensacola: Frank Parkhurst and Son, 1961), 257–58. United States Census, Henry County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

Chapter 2

“Of All the Hardy Sons of Toil”: Race and Class in the Pine Barrens

By 1860 William Dick’s 1,100-acre plantation was one of the more prosperous in Dale County. He and his wife Mary, along with their eight children, lived in the Saw Mill community just a few miles northeast of Newton. With thirteen slaves and a net worth of nearly \$22,000, his family enjoyed a higher standard of living than most Dale Countians. Dick’s two next-door neighbors, William Andrews and Joseph Foxworth, were close in proximity but far-removed economically. Andrews’s 460-acre farm and personal estate was worth a modest \$2,500. As an aging widower, he relied increasingly on his twenty-year-old son Elisha and three teenaged daughters to work the farm. Foxworth, on the other hand, owned no land and reported to the census taker just \$25.00 of personal wealth. He and wife Eleanor had five boys aged two through eleven.¹

Pine Barren residents such as the Dicks, their slaves, the Andrews, and the Foxworths represented small parts of a larger socioeconomic whole that included wealthy planter elites, yeoman farmers, poor whites, and enslaved African Americans. While every class was part of an organic whole, they also shared characteristics and commonalities that allow historians to classify them. Such categories, while admittedly imposed and in many ways artificial, help define nineteenth-century southerners and clarify the times in which they lived. Identifying and grouping wealthy white slaveholders and their slaves has been far easier than labeling southern whites at the center and bottom of the economic ladder. Frank Owsley’s “plain folk,” for

¹ United States Census, Dale County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

example, included a large and diverse class of “landowning farmers who belonged neither to the plantation economy nor to the destitute and frequently degraded poor-white class.”² Bill Cecil-Fronsman, J. William Harris, and Wayne Flynt all blurred the lines that separated poor whites from plain folk. Common whites—as Cecil-Fronsman preferred to call them—occupied a “middle strata [that] was so broad and diverse that any attempt to provide a rigid definition of it is doomed to failure.”³ Flynt likewise argues that “it is impossible to separate poor white from middle class yeoman,” while Harris has similarly noted that “the line between farmer and planter, laborer and tenant, even artisan and farmer were not always clear, since people on either side of the line were often more alike than different.”⁴

On the other hand, historians such as Lacy Ford, Samuel Hyde Jr., Steven Hahn, and Stephanie McCurry all provided more precise, class-based frameworks for categorizing the various classes in the antebellum South.⁵ Despite using a wide range of sources and formulas, and arriving at varied conclusions, these authors generally divide white southerners into lower, middle, and wealthy strata, although the term “middle class” as used for the southern yeomanry remains controversial. Most recently, Joseph Glatthaar’s heavily statistical study of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia includes an in-depth class structure analysis of the soldiers who fought in Robert E. Lee’s army. Using 1860 census data, Glatthaar combines

² Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South*, Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), vii.

³ Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 18.

⁴ Wayne Flynt, *Dixie’s Forgotten People: The South’s Poor Whites* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 12; J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta’s Hinterlands*, 1st ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 90; Samuel C. Hyde, “Plain Folk Reconsidered: Historiographical Ambiguity in Search of Definition,” *Journal of Southern History* 71 (November, 2005): 803–30.

⁵ Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*; Hyde Jr., “Plain Folk Reconsidered”; Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeomen Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

soldiers' (and their immediate family if they resided at home) real and personal property and creates three categories of economic wealth. The lower or poor class, constituted individuals or families with incomes of \$0–\$799. Middle-class incomes ranged from \$800–\$3,999. The upper class enjoyed incomes of \$4,000 and higher.⁶ Given its precise nature, this study applies Glatthaar's useful analytical framework to the Pine Barrens.

In the 1850s Frederick Law Olmsted wrote about the poor white families he encountered during his travels into the piney woods region just south of Raleigh, North Carolina. "A family of these people will commonly hire or 'squat' and build a little log cabin. . . . They will cultivate a little corn, and possibly a few roods of potatoes, cow peas, and coleworts. They own a few swine, that find their living in the forest."⁷ Olmsted's observations could have just as easily been made in certain corners of southeastern Alabama. Glatthaar estimated that nearly 51 percent of American households in 1860 were in the lower-class bracket.⁸ In the eight counties that made up the Pine Barrens, only 43 percent of households were lower-class, by his definition, eight percentage points lower than the national average. In the five southernmost counties, however, that figure increases to 54 percent, while in the three northernmost counties it stood at 42 percent. Compared with Barbour, Pike, and Butler counties, in other words, the southernmost counties had a higher number of poor households, but still only slightly more than the national average. These numbers suggest that on the whole the region was somewhat better off than the national average economically and, when considering only the southernmost counties, still only slightly worse than average.

⁶ 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), 140–53.

⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom. A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States. Based Upon Three Former Volumes of Journeys and Investigations* (London: Sampson Low, 1861), 188.

⁸ Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 140.

TABLE 2.1. Class Divisions in the Pine Barrens in 1860

County	Lower Class	Middle Class	Upper Class	Total
Barbour	1,336 (47%)	600 (21%)	892 (32%)	2,828
Butler	796 (40%)	583 (29%)	632 (31%)	2,011
Coffee	757 (55%)	418 (31%)	195 (14%)	1,370
Conecuh	517 (46%)	285 (26%)	308 (28%)	1,110
Covington	515 (53%)	329 (34%)	132 (13%)	976
Dale	837 (48%)	671 (38%)	250 (14%)	1,758
Henry	945 (53%)	470 (26%)	385 (21%)	1,800
Pike	1,091 (40%)	828 (30%)	810 (30%)	2,729

Source: Manuscript Census, Barbour County, Butler County, Coffee County, Conecuh County, Covington County, Dale County, Henry County, Pike County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule I.

Note: County divisions include the number of families in each class category along with the percentage of total families in that county.

The Texasville community in southern Barbour County, for example, was home to more than one hundred lower-class households, three times higher than the number of wealthy families living there and more than twice the number of middle-class households. Land ownership and cotton production, however limited, was the norm among Texasville’s poorer families, though this was certainly not the case in every Pine Barren community. A growing number of historians have eschewed the more traditional interpretation, originally posited by contemporaries such as Olmsted, that common whites embraced isolation and shunned the market economy, arguing instead that by the middle of the nineteenth-century common whites participated freely, if not fully or enthusiastically, in the market.⁹ In his study of Ashe County, North Carolina, Martin Crawford has aptly noted that while “self-sufficiency remained the prime objective of the

⁹ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*; Martin Crawford, *Ashe County’s Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*; Bradley Bond, “Herders, Farmers, and Markets on the Inner Frontier: The Mississippi Piney Woods, 1850-1860,” in *Plain Folk of the South Revisited*, ed. Samuel C. Hyde Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997).

community's farm households . . . few could afford to stand aloof from market production, for its benefits potentially outweighed the risks involved.”¹⁰ To be sure, few lower-class households in the Pine Barrens could afford to participate in the market economy in any momentous way, but their inclusion nevertheless signified a willingness on their part to take at least nominal risks in order to expand their economic prospects.

The 1860 census taker, for example, found forty-four-year-old Calvin Gilbert and his wife Lucy on a small Texasville farm about twenty miles southwest of Clayton. They had eight children. Milly was fifteen-years-old, Maranda fourteen, John twelve, Matilda ten, William nine, Daniel seven, Mary five, and Buford just a year old. Within a year Mary gave birth to their ninth child, Henry. None of the children attended school that year. According to the agricultural schedule, Calvin Gilbert owned 80 acres of land, including thirty-five improved acres. He had a horse, one milk cow, a pair of working oxen, and three pigs. His harvest for the year included some peas and beans, 120 bushels of corn, and 150 bushels of sweet potatoes. Elizabeth and her three older girls found the time to produce \$35 worth of homemade manufactured goods. Importantly, Calvin’s 800 pounds of cotton and 152 gallons of molasses provided enough cash income and trading collateral for the family to buy goods and items necessary to support a large family. The Gilbert’s net worth of \$750 placed their farm within the upper tier of lower-class farms.¹¹

Like Calvin Gilbert, Marinda Watson took full advantage of her small farm in Pike County’s Indian Creek community. Probate court records reveal that in September 1857 Watson owned ten hogs, three cows, and two calves. She and her twenty-four-year-old son Napoleon worked a small potato patch, a cotton patch with an estimated 2000 pounds of unpicked cotton,

¹⁰ Crawford, *Ashe County’s Civil War*, 12.

¹¹ United States Census, Barbour County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

and a field of corn estimated to produce seventy-five bushels of grain. Three bee stands would have provided enough honey and beeswax for family use with plenty left over to sell. Her home was unembellished but filled with items that suggest a humble yet comfortable living.

Appraisers found a kitchen table with five chairs, earthenware plates, knives and forks, a coffee mill, some pots and pans, two beds with mattresses, bed clothing, a spinning wheel and loom, cotton yarn, and fifty pounds of ginned cotton. The total value of the family's personal possessions, crops, and livestock was less than three hundred dollars. Watson's one hundred acres of land, valued at \$500, was her most prized possession. Three years after his mother's death, Napoleon, now married with two young children, enjoyed a net worth of more than \$4,000. It is not entirely clear but the evidence suggests that Napoleon's inheritance may well have allowed him to improve his economic circumstances. At the least his mother's land gave him valuable borrowing collateral.¹²

While families such as the Gilberts and the Watsons were well-represented among lower-class households, landless tenant farmers and common laborers were also part of the equation. Covington County was among the poorest counties in Alabama and home to a high percentage of landless poor. In 1860, the census taker reported on the agricultural schedule that 331 out of 515 (64 percent) lower-class heads of households reported no improved acreage, no unimproved acreage, and zero farm value. The majority of these households were more than likely tenants who raised livestock, grew modest amounts of corn and sweet potatoes, and harvested the occasional bale of cotton. On the population schedule most of the household heads were listed as farmers who reported a value of zero in the real estate category. Moreover, by adding up all of the lower-class households owning no land, regardless of occupation, the number of landless

¹² Pike County, Alabama, Orphan's Court and Probate Minutes, Inventory Book 1856-1865, Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, Columbus, Georgia (microfilm); United States Census, Pike County, Alabama, 1850 and 1860, Schedule 1.

increases slightly to 336. Put another way, two-thirds of the lower-class families in Covington were landless tenant farmers or common laborers. By way of comparison, lower-class landlessness for the entire region stood at about 45 percent.¹³

The landless, regardless of whether they were tenant farmers or common laborers, struggled mightily at times just to survive. The evidence suggests that illiteracy was high, especially in Covington County and certain segments of the southernmost Barrens. The landless poor who grew cotton did so primarily for home use. In some cases cotton and other crops were useful sources of collateral. Twenty-five-year-old James Goodson and his wife Missouri, for example, lived in Coffee County. Both were landless and illiterate. Goodson does not appear on the 1860 agricultural schedule but the population schedule suggests that he farmed a small portion of his father's fifteen improved acres of land. Five years earlier he borrowed \$30 from a planter in Dale County. His collateral was "the growing crop of corn and cotton now growing on the place of Edmon Goodson." It is unclear why he borrowed the money, but his crops provided the necessary security that allowed him to take a calculated risk. Just a few miles away, William Lucas worked as a landless sharecropper. He bought a horse on credit from Joseph Parrish, a local planter in Elba. "As I am employed by James Morris of this county as a croper," the deed stated, "and am to have one third of the corn peas and potatoes of said Morris crop to be made this year for my services as croper aforesaid that he hold my part . . . of said crop until the said

¹³ The figures for determining the tenancy rate were calculated using Frederick Bode and Donald Ginter's "short method" in *Farm Tenancy and the Census in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 26-33. All other calculations are entirely my own. United States Census, Covington County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

notes are paid.”¹⁴ Lucas and others like him hoped that their fortunes would improve and that they would climb the economic ladder to one day join the ranks of the middle-class yeomanry.

In 1860, Alabama-born proslavery apologist Daniel Hundley noted that “of all the hardy sons of toil, in all free lands the Yeoman are most deserving of our esteem. With hearts of oak and thews of steel, crouching to no man and fearing no danger, these are equally bold to handle a musket on the field of battle or to swing their reapers in times of peace among the waving stalks of yellow grain.”¹⁵ Despite the author’s obvious celebratory tone, Hundley challenged what he believed to be an unfair portrait of southern society in general, and common folk in particular. The middle class, defined in this study as families with a combined income of \$800–\$3,999, constituted the second largest class in the Pine Barrens. While it included teachers, tradesmen, merchants, ministers, and people of other nonagricultural pursuits, the overwhelming majority of middle-class households were yeoman farmers. Compared with the poor, these families were far more prosperous and far more likely to participate meaningfully in the market economy.

While some middle-class farmers were slave owners, about 85 percent were freeholders who worked their farms alongside family members or the occasional hired hand. Stephen Satterwhite’s 260-acre farm in Dale County included 45 acres of improved land and 215 acres of unimproved land. He owned a horse and mule, three milk cows, three stock cattle, fifteen hogs, and forty sheep. His sheep were his prized possession, netting him fifty pounds of wool and plenty of meat if the need arose. In addition, his two thousand pounds of ginned cotton would have been worth approximately \$240. At age seventy-two, Satterwhite may have been unable to

¹⁴ Coffee County, Alabama, Judge of Probate, Deed Records 1855-1858, Book C, Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, Columbus, Georgia (microfilm); United States Census, Coffee County, Dale County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

¹⁵ Daniel Robinson Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York: Henry B. Price, 1860), 192.

take on some of the more grueling chores on the farm, but his teenaged son James, and an older son Thomas who lived next door, would have pulled the bulk of the load.¹⁶

Stephen Satterwhite's investment in livestock was a common means by which many middle-class farmers hoped to improve their personal economic standing. Historian Grady McWhiney has observed that "in 1860 hogs and other Southern livestock were worth half a billion dollars—more than twice the value of that year's cotton crop; indeed, Southern animals probably were worth much more because there was every reason for owners to undercount the actual number of livestock they reported to tax collectors and census takers."¹⁷ Cattle, sheep, and especially hogs were the livestock of choice for southerners in the deep South, and Pine Barren families were no different (see Table 2.2). The northernmost counties led the way in livestock production. Barbour County farmers, for example, reported more than 75,000 thousand head, while Pike County and Butler County farmers totaled 72,623 and 51,425 respectively. On a per capita basis the southernmost counties were at least equal to their neighbors to the north, and several counties surpassed state and regional averages (see Table 2.3). In swine production, Covington County's 3.1 per capita average, Dale County's 2.8, and Coffee County's 2.5 were the highest in the Pine Barrens.¹⁸

¹⁶ United States Census, Dale County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

¹⁷ Grady McWhiney, "The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Alabama Agriculture," in *From Civil War to Civil Rights, Alabama, 1860-1960: An Anthology From the Alabama Review*, ed. Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), 112.

¹⁸ Joseph Camp Griffith Kennedy, *Agriculture 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 DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), 2–6.

TABLE 2.2. Pine Barren Livestock in 1860

County	Swine	Cattle	Sheep
Barbour	55,523	12,839	6,331
Butler	34,116	10,208	7,101
Coffee	23,859	9,294	3,685
Conecuh	21,996	10,135	5,612
Covington	20,527	5,872	4,369
Dale	34,011	6,721	7,872
Henry	33,938	7,367	4,310
Pike	55,156	11,785	5,682

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1864).

TABLE 2.3. Livestock Per Capita, 1860

County	Swine	Other	Population
Barbour	1.8	0.6	30,812
Butler	1.9	1.0	18,122
Coffee	2.5	1.3	9,623
Conecuh	1.9	1.4	11,311
Covington	3.1	1.6	6,469
Dale	2.8	1.2	12,197
Henry	2.3	0.9	14,918
Pike	2.3	0.7	24,435
Alabama	1.8	1.0	964,201

Sources: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1864); Manuscript Census, Pine Barren Counties, 1860, Schedule 1.

Swine, cattle, and sheep provided meat, milk, butter, lard, wool, and a host of other products for family consumption as well as trading purposes, not to mention their value as loan

collateral. William Wilkins, for example, raised forty hogs, ten sheep, twelve stock cattle, and eight milk cows on his 440-acre farm near Geneva in Coffee County. The livestock was worth \$500, and the milk cows generated fifty pounds of churned butter. In neighboring Covington County, King Howard and his brother Elbert produced a combined 1,600 pounds of cotton, and raised six milk cows, eighteen stock cattle, twenty-four sheep, and forty-four hogs. Just a few miles down the road, Eliza Jackson's ten milk cows, eight stock cattle, and forty hogs, together with twelve hundred pounds of cotton, was enough to place this single mother of eight children in the ranks of the middle class. It is worth noting that for large families like Eliza Jackson's—straddling the fence between the middle and lower classes—poverty was just one swine disease away from wiping out a major source of the family's income.¹⁹

For freeholders such as William Wilkins and the Howard brothers, livestock, land, and to a somewhat lesser degree cotton were the key to their economic well being. The vast majority of nonslaveholding yeoman grew at least some cotton, even if it was only a bale or two. According to Robert Russell, an Englishman who visited Alabama in the 1850s, "it is worthy of remark, however, that a good deal of cotton is cultivated throughout the pine barrens, and the larger portion of it seems to be raised by free labour."²⁰ For these families, cotton was an important resource for domestic manufacture and cotton farming supplemented family incomes by providing extra cash or credit at the local mercantile. Stephanie McCurry has demonstrated that middle-class yeoman farmers "marketed their cotton through local storekeepers and in that way secured the credit in goods without which they could not have survived the long year between

¹⁹ United States Census, Coffee County, Covington County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

²⁰ Robert Russell, *North America, Its Agriculture and Climate: Containing Observations on the Agriculture and Climate of Canada, the United States, and the Island of Cuba* (A. and C. Black, 1857), 285.

harvests.”²¹ Lacy Ford likewise has argued that South Carolina’s “upcountry yeomen made a set of crop-mix decisions each year, balancing their need for a sure and steady food supply with their desire for cotton profits, a cash income, and a higher standard of living.”²² In this regard Pine Barren yeoman were not unlike middle-class farmers of similar means in other cotton-growing, majority-white regions of the South. On average, more than 70 percent of the yeomanry harvested at least one bale of cotton. The averages were higher in the northernmost counties and in Henry County along the Chattahoochee River, and lower in the southernmost counties with Covington County averaging only about 50 percent.

TABLE 2.4. Pine Barren Crops in 1860

County	Corn	Cotton	Sweet Potatoes	Orchard Products
Barbour	909,973	44,518	273,851	\$6,055
Butler	13,489	13,489	124,391	\$875
Coffee	257,822	5,294	78,357	\$0
Conecuh	302,610	6,850	72,370	\$3,979
Covington	148,475	2,021	55,459	\$97
Dale	341,239	7,832	109,129	\$6,337
Henry	421,618	13,034	138,025	\$100
Pike	823,752	24,527	243,079	\$11,423

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1864).

For middle-class farmers one way of increasing cotton production and crop production in general was to invest in slaves. Slaveholding among the yeomanry was not unusual and was for many the most obvious and logical route to achieving greater socioeconomic status. Historian

²¹ McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 104.

²² Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 72.

Mark Wetherington argues that in piney woods Georgia “a yeoman’s status could rise head and shoulders above his neighbors when he combined slaveholding with cotton farming.”²³ By the 1850s the price of slaves, especially prime field hands, had risen to levels out of reach for most yeoman farmers. The solution for some was to invest in female slaves or young children. Stephanie McCurry again has demonstrated that “the lower market price of women slaves involved a lower initial capital investment that . . . promised a higher return in the long run. In women slaves yeoman farmers may have settled for less by way of immediate profit in field labor and marketable staple, while laying claim to a kind of labor they could never extract from male slaves: reproductive labor.”²⁴ In Dale County, for example, James D. McRae owned a nineteen-year-old female slave, her three-year-old son, and her twelve-month-old daughter. His forty acres of improved land produced 350 bushels of corn and a modest four bales of cotton. The household also included an eighteen-year-old white laborer named William Rouse. McRae’s sole slave cabin was most likely a single-room dwelling of log or plank-board construction with dirt or, if they were lucky, wood flooring. His total net worth was a little over \$3,000 but he almost certainly envisioned a day when his investment would pay off handsomely as his female slaves produced more offspring.²⁵

For decades some historians have demonstrated the tendency among slaveholders to move in and out of the ranks of the master class. James Oakes, for example, contends that “it was quite common for owners to hold slaves only erratically, depending upon their seasonal needs or their immediate economic circumstances. Indeed, movement into and out of the slaveholding class may have been the rule rather than the exception for the majority of

²³ Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk’s Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 21.

²⁴ McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 50.

²⁵ United States Census, Dale County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

masters.”²⁶ This implies that movement between the various slaveholding classes was also part of the equation; some yeoman climbed the slaveholding ladder while larger slaveholders may have lost a portion or all of their slaves. In 1850, Benjamin Stuart’s family—Lucinda, Benjamin Jr, Jim, Mary, and Lucinda’s aging mother Elizabeth Shropshire—lived in Macon County. The slave schedule lists four slaves under Stuart’s name, but some or all of them may have belonged to his mother-in-law. Five years later the family was living in Coffee County and the number of slaves had grown to seven. That same year eighty-seven-year-old Elizabeth Shropshire conveyed two slaves to her daughter Lucinda, an adult female slave named Amy and her five-year-old son Simon. The deed made it clear that Amy and Simon “together with the increase of said woman said property given to the sole and separate use of the said Lucinda Stuart and her said children not to be subject to the debts of her husband in any manner.” By 1860 the family lived in Dale County, Lucinda’s mother was dead, all of the children were out of the household, and only two slaves remained. Presumably, the thirty-year-old female and the ten-year-old male listed on the slave schedule were Amy and Simon. With a little over \$3,000 in net worth the Stuarts were solid middle-class slaveholders, but the family’s changing fortunes demonstrates just how complex and potentially volatile slaveowning could be.²⁷

In this study the upper-class, planter and nonplanter alike, is defined as individuals with combined personal and real estate values at \$4,000 or higher. In the Pine Barrens the vast majority of the well-to-do were slaveholding farmers or planters. There were exceptions of course, but even many upper-class doctors, ministers, lawyers, grocers, and merchants owned

²⁶ Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, 40.

²⁷ United States Census, Macon County, Alabama, 1840, Schedule 1, Coffee County, Alabama, 1850, Schedules 1 and 2, Dale County, Alabama, Schedules 1 and 2; Census of Alabama, 1855, Coffee County; Coffee County, Alabama, Judge of Probate, Deed Records 1855-1858, Book C, Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, Columbus, Georgia (microfilm).

slaves and planted cotton. For example, Osborn Johnson, a physician living in Pike County's Mount Ida community, owned an 880-acre plantation, fifteen slaves, and three slave cabins. He employed a full-time overseer, Joshua Calahan, and a schoolteacher, eighteen-year-old Isaac Parks. His farm produced fifty bales of cotton, three hundred pounds of rice, six hundred bushels of corn, seventy-five hogs, twenty sheep, ten stock cattle, and nine milk cows. Surrounded by middle and lower-class neighbors, Johnson was easily one of the wealthiest men in the community.²⁸

Slaveholders who owned between one and nine slaves in 1860 were wealthier than their yeoman counterparts and many enjoyed a standard of living rivaled only by the planters. On average, these slave owners comprised 70 percent of the total number of slaveholders in the Pine Barrens. At 88 percent Covington County had the highest number of middling slave owners while Conecuh County's 60 percent was the lowest (see Table 2.5). Samuel Hyde Jr. has defined working slaves as "male and female bondpeople between the ages of thirteen and fifty, their prime working years. . . . The limitations of youth and the physical impairment caused by old age probably required that the farmer himself perform more active labor if he owned youthful or aged slaves."²⁹ Many of these Pine Barren slaveholders, though by no means all, owned few if any "working slaves."

In Butler County's Davison community, A.J. Dunham owned four slaves: a twenty-year-old female, an eleven-year-old female, a three-year-old male, and a two-month-old baby girl. His farm supported sixty-four head of livestock including thirty hogs and twenty sheep. The two bales of cotton and 200 bushels of corn were almost certainly a result of Dunham's labor and that of his two teenaged sons. Just a few houses down the road Sarah McCaskill owned six slaves,

²⁸ United States Census, Pike County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

²⁹ Hyde Jr., "Plain Folk Reconsidered," 818.

only two of which would have been considered working slaves and both of them were well past their prime. Like Dunham, McCaskill's three teenaged boys would have provided much needed labor on the family's farm.³⁰

TABLE 2.5. Small to Middling Slaveholders in 1860

County	Slaveholders Owning 1–9 Slaves	Total Slaveholders	Percentage of Total Slaveholders
Barbour	693	1,143	61
Butler	518	748	69
Coffee	196	239	82
Conecuh	238	398	60
Covington	127	144	88
Dale	257	314	82
Henry	345	489	71
Pike	713	999	71

Source: Joseph C. G Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864) 223; Manuscript Census, Pine Barren Counties, 1860, Schedule 2.

Slaveholders who owned between ten and nineteen slaves made up only 17 percent of the total number of slaveholders in the Pine Barrens. Barbour County had the highest number of small planters with 215 while Covington County had the lowest, only eleven. One of those eleven, Covington's Hugh Blount, owned an 800-acre plantation, sixteen slaves, three slave quarters, and enjoyed a net worth of almost \$60,000. His slaves produced fifty-four bales of cotton, 3,000 bushels of corn, and more than one hundred head of livestock. Blount employed two overseers, Richard Webb and fourteen-year-old Daniel Knowles, the latter probably just an apprentice. In similar fashion, William Harvey of Pike County owned thirteen slaves.

³⁰ United States Census, Butler County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

Following his death in 1857, the estate record reveals that the slaves were divided into two families. Richard and Betty were in their forties and had three children: thirteen-year-old Levi, five-year-old Shondra, and four-year-old Jerry. The second family was composed of the mother, twenty-four-year-old Mondana (Montana?), and seven children, Elizabeth, Jordan, Gracy Ann, Malsey, Elbert, Penny, and Rinda, all under the age of ten. The deed indicates that Harvey's children, twelve-year-old Evelina and ten-year-old David, would eventually inherit the slaves.³¹

Evelina and David's guardian was O.F. Knox, a physician, large planter, and one of the wealthiest men in the community. As the owner of forty slaves, his 600-acre plantation produced eighty bales of cotton, 2,000 bushels of corn, and 120 hogs. Knox was one of just thirty men in Pike County who owned forty or more slaves. Indeed, Pine Barren planters who owned twenty or more slaves made up 14 percent of all slaveholders in the region. Historians William Cooper and Thomas Terrill note that "in 1860, planters with more than 20 slaves accounted for only 12 percent of all slave owners, but they owned 48 percent of all the slaves. In contrast, 71 percent of the masters with fewer than 10 slaves held only 32 percent of the slaves."³² In other words, half of the South's slaves belonged to a small percentage of the South's slaveholders. In Barbour County, 21 percent of the county's slaveholders owned 65 percent of the slaves, but in Pike, Butler, and Henry counties large planters controlled fewer than 50 percent of the slaves. In the southernmost counties of Dale and Coffee slaves were more widely distributed with large planters controlling only about 25 percent. In Covington County,

³¹ United States Census, Covington County, Pike County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4; Pike County, Alabama, Orphans Court and Probate Minutes, 1844-1929, Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, Columbus, Georgia (microfilm).

³² William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: a History.*, vol. 1 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 218.

seven slaveholders owned 269 slaves, or 33 percent of the total. Nancy Feagin, the largest and most prosperous slave owner in Covington County, owned seventy-nine slaves.³³

Many large planters hired overseers to organize day-to-day operations on their plantations and to manage their numerous slaves. Planters expected overseers to be skilled agriculturists, professional motivators, firm but fair disciplinarians, and expert organizers. So few lived up to the planters' expectations that turnover rates were high; replacing overseers annually was commonplace. Barbour County planter John Horry Dent grew impatient with overseers whom he felt were more interested in high wages and lavish living than in carefully attending to cotton production and slaves. "Overseers this fall," he wrote in 1855, "are looking up for higher wages for next year. They are asking from 300 to 500, horse found, cook furnished, and provisioned in full. In short they are expecting easy times, and good pay." In Dent's estimation, the more experienced men were highly unreliable: "I have generally found out that these experienced overseers rely more on hard driving than good management, they are close and pushing in the field, and negligent in the quarter and stock departments. Wasteful and extravagant with provision. Careless and regardless of stock, and cruel to negroes." Dent's solution was to hire inexperienced overseers who required much less pay, were more energetic concerning their duties, and were more likely to follow instructions. In fact, Dent's 1855 "unexperienced" overseer lasted just a year while his 1856 experienced man lasted only four months.³⁴

Contemporaries (and a fair number of later historians) excoriated planters for their relentless pursuit of land, cotton, and slaves at the expense of diversification and self-sufficiency.

³³ United States Census, Barbour County, Pike County, Butler County, Henry County, Dale County, Coffee County, Covington County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 2.

³⁴ John Horry Dent, *Plantation Journal*, Vol. 3, 1855–1857, 145, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm).

In 1849, the editor of *The Eufaula Democrat*, for example, encouraged planters to cut back their cotton production and invest more time and money in raising livestock, cultivating food crops, and harvesting timber. “But our planters, instead of following these plain dictates of common sense,” he lamented, “strain every nerve to add to the number of bales of cotton. Not only so, they invest every dollar of surplus capital they can scrape up, in purchasing negroes from Maryland, Virginia, and N. Carolina.”³⁵ Furthermore, some Pine Barren planters—not unlike planters elsewhere in the South— exhausted the soil and abandoned the land in search of more fertile property further west. The *Democrat* added: “One of the most baneful consequences of *unsettledness* is seen in the *abuse* of the soil. All that can be made must be made immediately, without regard to an almost waste of the energies of the land. The most exhausting modes of culture are resorted to—the fixed intention of the planter being to emigrate as soon as the soil loses its fruitfulness.”³⁶

While some planters moved farther west, others held on to their plantations and attempted to improve the condition of the soil and increase the production of cotton. They turned to agricultural journals for ideas on slave and plantation management, established local agricultural societies, and dabbled in diversification, soil enrichment, and modern farming techniques.³⁷ In 1844, for example, the Apalachicola Chamber of Commerce awarded Alexander McDonald “an elegant silver tea-set . . . as a premium for the best lot of 20 bales of cotton sold last season in the market.”³⁸ McDonald credited the cotton’s quality to his knowledge of agricultural journals and

³⁵ *Eufaula Democrat*, January 23, 1849.

³⁶ *Ibid*, August 19, 1846.

³⁷ David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch have accurately and descriptively labeled southern agricultural journals as “master-class management journals.” While these publications included articles on general farming techniques and agricultural practices, their primary purpose was to support the institution of slavery as well as the slave owners who constituted the bulk of their correspondents and subscribers. David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23.

³⁸ A.B. Allen, ed., *American Agriculturist*, vol. 3 (New York: Saxton and Miles, 1844), 221.

the implementation of new techniques. In 1858, an Abbeville planter wrote to *The American Cotton Planter*, “I made upwards of ninety gallons of wine from the cultivated grape and wild muskadine [last year]. This year I have made upwards of seven hundred gallons of wine from the muskadine alone.”³⁹ Planters who utilized manure as fertilizer generally found the practice beneficial. At an 1846 meeting of the Barbour County Agricultural Society, Thomas Flournoy and Henry Folson reported that the planters who used manure as fertilizer achieved higher crop yields. “On those places the benefit of manuring was fully exemplified, particularly on Col. McDonald’s plantation, which was in its natural state extremely sandy and poor, and apparently not susceptible of a high state of fertility.”⁴⁰ John Horry Dent put dozens of slaves to work manuring his fields in preparation for planting cotton and corn. Slaves raked pine straw, hauled it to the livestock pens, scattered the fresh straw in the pens, loaded the old, manured straw into the wagon, hauled it to a designated field, broadcast it, and returned to the woods to begin the process anew. Dent noted in his journal: “It is my wishes to turn my attention to stock on this plantation, in order that I can make a large supply of manure for resussitating my lands, as well as to have a supply of fresh meats for market, as well as for my table.”⁴¹

In the Pine Barrens, slaveholders of all economic classifications constituted a small percentage of the total free population of each county. In Barbour County only 8 percent of the population owned slaves. In Pike and Butler counties the numbers were 6 percent and 7 percent

³⁹ N.B. Cloud, ed., *The American Cotton Planter*, vol. 4 (Underwood & Cloud, 1860), 101.

⁴⁰ *Eufaula Democrat*, September 20, 1846.

⁴¹ John Horry Dent, *Plantation Journal*, Vol. 3, 1855–1857, 49, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm).

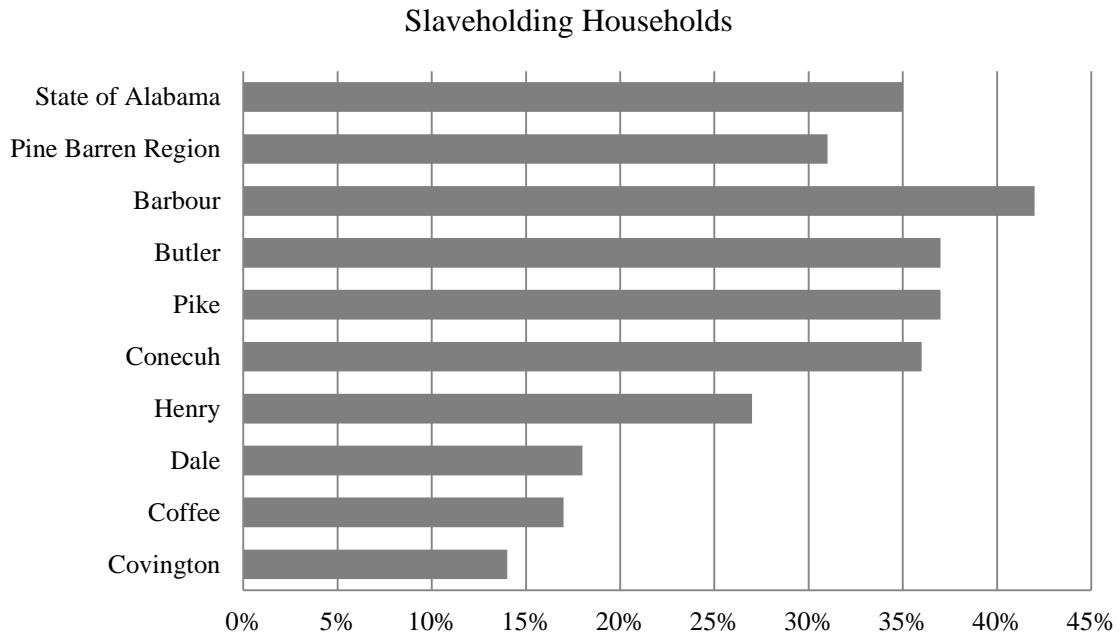


Figure 2.1. Percentage comparison of slaveholding households by state, region, and county. Source: Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/> (accessed May 2, 2012).

respectively. In the southernmost counties, Conecuh averaged 6 percent, Henry 5 percent, and Coffee, Covington, and Dale were all at 3 percent. The perspective changes when the numbers are seen through the prism of households. Assuming that most slaveholders were also heads of their households, slaveholding households accounted for 42 percent of all households in Barbour County. Pike and Butler were at 37 percent, Henry at 27 percent, Dale 18 percent, Coffee 17 percent, and Covington at 14 percent (see Figure 2.1). If consideration is given to the number of households not recorded as slaveholding households in the census, but that were directly connected to slaveholding households through bonds of kinship, the figures rise another ten to twenty percentage points. Put another way, at least 50 percent of the populations of Barbour,

Butler, Pike, Henry, and Conecuh counties were connected in one way or another with slaveholding. In Coffee, Dale, and Covington the number averaged around 30 percent.⁴²

In addition, slave owners, especially large planters, provided essential goods and services to their neighbors, adding to their centrality. According to Lacy Ford, “in an economy where so much cotton was grown and yet the cost of a gin was higher than most farmers could afford, the ginning of the cotton was one of the most important services planters offered to their communities.”⁴³ Planters ginned and marketed their neighbor’s cotton, rented out slaves, loaned money, and sold corn, meat, and other surplus. Dale County planter T.A. Lawrence, for example, loaned \$100 to a landless peddler named Nathan Stoddard. For collateral Stoddard pledged a nine-year-old horse, two yearling steers, one yoke of oxen, one feather bed, and a wagon. If he failed to repay the loan he risked losing a major source of personal wealth.⁴⁴ John Dent’s plantation journals are littered with examples of business transactions such as these. In 1840, Dent ginned one bale of cotton for Philip Johnson, six bales for G.B. Wheeler, five bales for William Brown, and one bale for Murdock McDuffie. Through the years he ginned cotton for many of his neighbors and made dozens of loans to people from all sorts of economic backgrounds. In 1854, he loaned \$500.00 to Buckner Williams; sold 945 bushels of corn to William Varner; and hired out a slave mechanic named Alfred to John McNeil “to fix his gin geer.”⁴⁵

⁴² Joseph C. G Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1864).

⁴³ Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 66.

⁴⁴ Coffee County, Alabama, Judge of Probate, Deed Records 1855-1858, Book C, Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, Columbus, Georgia (microfilm); United States Census, Dale County, Alabama, Coffee County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Schedule 1.

⁴⁵ John Horry Dent, *Plantation Journal*, Vol. 1, 1840-1842, 11-12, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm); John Horry Dent, *Plantation Journal*, Vol. 3, 1855-1857, 7-12, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm).

In such manner the cotton and slave economy that permeated the region touched just about every family in some way. Even among the lower-class and yeomanry, smallholders felt they had a stake in guaranteeing the permanence of slavery. Historians have demonstrated that most southern whites from every socioeconomic class believed that black slavery benefitted them personally and benefitted southern society as a whole. As William Freehling has argued:

The poorest citizen relished his white skin, which allegedly made him the equal of all white males and superior to all blacks. Proudly equal plebeians could not bear holier-than-thou Yankees, with their posture of moral superiority to all who helped enslave blacks. Nor could rednecks tolerate any abolitionist effort to raise black slaves to the level of white citizens. Egalitarianism, the great reason why some colorblind Yankees opposed slavery, was also the great reason why racist whites massed to keep blacks ground under.⁴⁶

The slaves who inhabited the Pine Barrens meanwhile lived their lives as best they could given such attitudes and practices. In the decade before the Civil War the slave population in Alabama increased from 342,844 in 1850 to 435,080 in 1860, a 26.9 percent increase. During that same period the number of slaves in the Pine Barrens rose from 26,643 to 45,115, a 69 percent increase (see Table 2.6). Put another way, the Barrens as a whole saw a seven-fold regional increase in the number of enslaved blacks, while statewide the numbers reflect only a three-fold increase. Numerically, more than 15,000 of the 18,472 slaves added during the decade were located in Barbour, Butler, Pike, and Henry counties. Coffee County saw a 154 percent increase in the number of slaves, followed by Dale County at 138 percent, and Pike County at 131 percent. In 1860, the three northernmost counties of Barbour, Pike, and Butler accounted for 50 percent of the region's free white population and over 70 percent of the region's slaves. Barbour County planters alone enslaved 16,000 African Americans, accounting for more than 50 percent of that county's total population and 30 percent of the slave population in all of

⁴⁶ William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16.

Southeastern Alabama.⁴⁷ In short, the vast majority of slave population expansion took place in the northernmost counties and along the Chattahoochee River. Yet while slavery’s growth in the southernmost counties never matched the volume of growth of their neighbors to the north, several of those counties nevertheless doubled their slave populations. Slavery was a growing, vibrant institution throughout the Alabama Pine Barrens.

TABLE 2.6. Free and Slave Population in the Pine Barrens, 1850 and 1860

	1850			1860		
	Population Total ^a	Slave Population	% of Population ^b	Population Total	Slave Population	% of Population
Barbour	23,632	10,780	46	30,812	16,150	52
Butler	10,836	3,639	34	18,122	6,818	38
Coffee	5,940	557	9	9,623	1,417	15
Conecuh	9,322	4,394	47	11,311	4,882	43
Covington	3,645	480	13	6,469	821	13
Dale	6,382	757	12	12,197	1,809	15
Henry	9,019	2,242	25	14,918	4,433	30
Pike	15,920	3,794	24	24,435	8,785	36
<i>Total</i>	84,696	26,643	31	127,887	45,115	35

Source: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census, 1860* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1862).

^aThe population totals are aggregate totals that include “whites,” “free colored,” and “slaves” according to Kennedy’s *Preliminary Report*.

^bRepresents the percentage of the slave population relative to the total population in each county.

In most ways slavery in the Pine Barrens was not unlike slavery in the South as a whole. Approximately half of the region’s slaves lived on plantations of more than twenty slaves and

⁴⁷ J. D. B. De Bow, *The Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Embracing a Statistical View of Each of the States and Territories ...* (Washington, DC: Robert Armstrong, 1853); Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*.

many, if not most, worked as field hands in gangs in the cotton fields. On the other hand, a substantial number of slaves labored individually or in small groups alongside whites on smaller farms. Whether on small farms or large plantations, work was the all-encompassing reality in the life of a slave. With the exception of the youngest, the elderly, and the physically disabled, slave owners expected their slaves to work. Whites rated slaves according to their age, sex, and capacity to work. Male and female slaves between the ages of fifteen and fifty generally graded out as full or prime hands. Children and older slaves were listed as one-half or one-quarter hands. John Dent took annual or semiannual assessments of his slaves. On one occasion in 1855, for example, he evaluated his ninety-two slave workforce. He assessed sixteen men—including Maywood, Sam, Frank, Grandison, and Israel—as full hands. Women such as Hannah, Charlotte, Mary, Violet, Flora, and twelve others were also rated as full hands. Two of the five boys and three of the six girls were full hands while the rest were listed as three-quarter or one-half hands. Dent expected that every prime hand work seventeen to twenty-three acres of land for a total of 700 acres.⁴⁸

On most large plantations, hierarchies of slavery existed as a kind of planter-imposed class structure. In general, field hands occupied the lowest rungs of the hierarchical ladder while house servants and skilled laborers were closer to the top. The slavedriver ranked higher than all other slaves and possessed a level of authority and responsibility that most slaves did not. Slave owners chose drivers whom they considered loyal, disciplined, knowledgeable, and able to lead. According to one historian, “slave drivers were both [agricultural] generalists and specialists in the performance of their management duties, but more than anything else perhaps they had to be

⁴⁸ John Horry Dent, *Plantation Journal*, Vol. 3, 1855–1857, 185, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm).

‘people managers’ who knew how to set goals and to motivate the field laborers.”⁴⁹ Most drivers supervised their own gang of slaves who, depending upon the season and structure of the gang, cleared land, dug field trenches, repaired fences, plowed fields, planted seed, weeded crops, and harvested the yield.

In the mid-1850s, Dent’s growing dissatisfaction with overseers lead him to promote the increased utilization of slave drivers. “Our best policy,” he insisted, “is to take a trusty sensible negro and make a driver of him. His services are worth his labor, and by proper training, a mutual confidence and interest will be established, causing him to be invaluable.”⁵⁰ During the spring of 1856, Dent fired his overseer and placed several drivers in charge. He put Venture in charge of the slave quarters and the “hoe department;” Bob was in charge of the mule and lot department as well as the plow department; and Brown was in charge of the plantation house and premises. Venture shows up routinely in Dent’s diary and was apparently one of the most important drivers on the plantation. He often supervised mixed gangs that included boys and girls, girls and women, and women and men.⁵¹

Historians have often debated the contours of the master-slave relationship, but exploring relationships between blacks and whites in general offers some interesting possibilities. This was particularly the case when it came to sexual encounters between the races. Black men who engaged in interracial sex with white women risked almost certain death. Black women raped at the hands of their masters had no legal recourse. Sexual liaisons between black women and white men were by all indications more widespread than previously acknowledged. In fact, even

⁴⁹ Juliet E.K. Walker, “Drivers, Slave,” ed. Randall M. Miller and John David Smith, *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 197.

⁵⁰ John Horry Dent, *Plantation Journal*, Vol. 3, 1855–1857, 66, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm).

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 188.

a cursory examination of census slave schedules reveal that miscegenation, whether consensual or coerced, produced large numbers of mulattos. In 1860, William H. Houghton of Dale County owned a twenty-two-year-old black female, a four-year-old black female, and a twelve-month-old mulatto female. That same year, Pike County's Charles Ingram owned a twenty-three-year-old black female, a ten-year-old black female, and a young mulatto baby girl. The slave schedules for Pine Barren counties document dozens of similar instances involving slaveholders from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The evidence is only circumstantial of course, but one cannot help wondering about the conditions and circumstances surrounding each case. Again, whether consensual or not, the slaveholders themselves, their sons, other kin, overseers, or perhaps even neighbors may have been complicit in these cases.⁵²

In 1847, for example, a committee of members from the Eufaula Baptist Church voted to dismiss the church's pastor, Jonathan Davis, for carrying on an improper relationship with a slave congregant named Leacy who was also a member of the church. A separate committee of black church members similarly voted to exclude Leacy from church services. An investigation uncovered evidence that Davis had similarly been accused of sexual misconduct with several female slaves while ministering in Georgia in the late 1830s. For Davis, old habits were hard to break.⁵³

The sexual exploitation of slave women was all too real in the slave South, but to cast all of them as nothing more than victims would be to deny them any agency. In the mid-1850s, Belinda Mosser filed suit in the Chancery Court of Pike County against her husband Samuel.

⁵² For a more detailed look at the effects of sex, race, and gender see: Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1984); Catherine Clinton, *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

⁵³ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists*, 38–39.

She successfully argued that he had committed adultery with one of her house servants, a young mulatto slave named Holland. Samuel Mosser, a small slave owner, farmer, and merchant, appealed the ruling to the Alabama Supreme Court. Testimony in the case indicated that while Belinda was away on a trip to Florida, Samuel engaged in numerous sexual encounters with Holland. Faitha Wood, the Mossers' white housekeeper, testified that "[Samuel] appeared very fond of Holland's company." He frequented the kitchen when she cooked, routinely summoned her to his store (especially when there were no customers around), and reportedly spent more time alone with Holland than he did his own wife. "I have seen her go into his bed-room," Wood testified, "and the door was shut-to; and I heard a voice, which I took to be Mosser's, say, 'lie down'. . . . It was about 8 o'clock at night when she went into the room, and she had not come out at 2 o'clock in the morning; after which I paid no further attention to them that night." Wood further testified that the couple spent the night together numerous times during Mrs. Mosser's absence.⁵⁴

Samuel Mosser countered, and witnesses corroborated, that painful sores covered his legs and required frequent bandaging. Holland, he insisted, was nothing more than a nurse. Even if sexual intercourse were proved the case should be dismissed "on the ground that adultery cannot be committed with a slave" (a charge summarily dismissed by both courts). To complicate matters even further, another witness implied that Mrs. Wood fabricated the whole story in retaliation against Holland. "There was no good feeling between Mrs. Wood and Holland" the witness recounted. Indeed, Holland appears to have had little regard for Mrs. Wood's authority; Wood's whiteness did not deter Holland from frequently mouthing off and then "flirting out of

⁵⁴ *Mosser v. Mosser*, 29 John Shephard (Supreme Court of Alabama 1857).

the room with a great air.”⁵⁵ The evidence suggests that Samuel Mosser committed adultery; Holland routinely defied white authority and engaged in interracial sex with her owner’s husband; Faitha Wood and Belinda Mosser challenged patriarchal power; and the Alabama Supreme Court crushed that challenge by upholding Samuel Mosser’s appeal. Importantly, Holland’s legal status as both person and property placed her at the center of a domestic dispute that, under normal circumstances, would have remained within the confines of the local judiciary.

Legal disputes involving free whites and slaves function as a microcosm for understanding race and gender issues in the Old South. Like most slave states, Alabama viewed slaves as both chattel property and persons. In 1859, for example, the Alabama Supreme Court reaffirmed decades of legal and judicial precedent:

In the administration of the criminal law, a slave is not regarded merely as property. On the contrary, the courts recognize his existence as a person, his capacity for crime, and his subjection to criminal responsibility. Where a crime has been committed, either by or against a slave, the law, upon high ground of public policy, takes him out of the hands of his master, whose claims of ownership, and the rules of civil rights dependent thereon, are for the time forgotten, and the slave becomes a person with well defined rights and liabilities, and is protected and punished as such.⁵⁶

Slaves who assaulted other slaves were subject to criminal law, but white involvement complicated the issue. In 1854 and 1855, two Barbour County farmers pooled their resources and leased Dinah and Bob from a local slaveholder. While not legally recognized as a married couple, the two slaves lived together “as man and wife” in the home of one of the farmers, a Mr. Vining.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Oxford v. The State*, 33 John W. Shephard (Supreme Court of Alabama 1859). For additional reading on the legal history of slavery see: Ariela Julie Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

There appears to have been a pattern of domestic abuse between Bob and Dinah. On one occasion an argument between the two turned violent. Bob beat Dinah so severely that Vining whipped him and sent him to live at the other partner's house. About a year later, Dinah went to work clearing a field about 300 yards from the main house. Seven-year-old Martha "Lou" Vining "was much attached to [Dinah] and frequently followed her out into the field." Sometime around mid-morning Bob, who had been splitting rails off in the distance, approached the two and demanded that Dinah hand over her axe. During the ensuing struggle Bob wrested the axe from Dinah's hands and struck Martha in the head. She fell to the ground, convulsed for a moment, and died. Dinah later testified that Bob intentionally killed the child and intended to kill her as well: "I came here to kill you and Lou," Bob allegedly said, "I have killed her and now I mean to kill you." Upon cross examination Dinah changed her story and admitted that Bob might have accidentally struck Martha during the struggle.⁵⁷

Court cases such as those involving Holland, Dinah, and Bob are interesting beyond their immediate legal importance. It is curious, for example, that the entire episode involving the death of Martha Vining apparently took place out of the purview and hearing range of her father and other whites. Strangely enough, an axe-wielding, knife-toting male slave known to have had a propensity for violence evidently warranted no apprehension on the part of the white farmer in charge of his whereabouts. Perhaps, on the other hand, these seeming curiosities were not entirely unusual. Historian Anthony Carey maintains that slavery in the Chattahoochee Valley "combined ultimate rigidity—the iron fact of servitude—with surprising flexibility, particularly in the areas of slave hiring and slaves' engagement with the market."⁵⁸ Indeed, slaves routinely

⁵⁷ *Bob (A Slave) v. The State*, 29 John Shephard (Supreme Court of Alabama 1856).

⁵⁸ Anthony Gene Carey, *Sold Down the River: Slavery in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley of Alabama and Georgia* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 71–72.

worked independently, especially on smaller farms where masters may have been engaged elsewhere. Even slaves on large plantations—especially carpenters, mechanics, and other craftsmen—enjoyed a modicum of free movement. John Dent routinely sent slaves to work on neighboring plantations, farms, and even businesses in Eufaula. Joseph Park allowed a number of his slaves to travel several miles to Jeremiah Henderson’s general store to buy goods. On one occasion Park requested of Henderson: “sir, please let Andy have goods to the amount of five dollars & his wife Missouri seven dollars worth and I will see that you get your pay.”⁵⁹

Such “freedoms” and veiled normalcy belied the fact that slavery in the Pine Barrens, as elsewhere, was complete and total. One need only look at the violence meted out against African Americans to determine the depth of white racism and the constant state of fear that all slaves endured. The region’s slaves understood all too well the culture of violence inherent in the system. William Varner enslaved eighty-five African Americans on his 3,500-acre plantation in Barbour County. One evening in February 1855, his overseer, Daniel Stanley, and another white man named John Lewis hunted down an escaped slave—one of Varner’s most valuable as it turned out. With bloodhounds on his trail the slave eventually collapsed from exhaustion. Stanley and Lewis converged on the man and when they were finished the slave lie motionless on the ground, severely bruised, beaten, and bloodied, with multiple stab wounds throughout his body. Within minutes of the brutal beating he was dead.⁶⁰ Six months later in Pike County, twenty-four-year-old Francis Powledge, his younger brother Moses, and William Shepherd attacked and murdered a slave that belonged to Samuel Trotter. The three men reportedly whipped the slave to death. The editor of the *Weekly Montgomery Mail* later reported,

⁵⁹ Joseph Park to Jeremiah Henderson, Park Family Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University (microfilm).

⁶⁰ John Horry Dent, *Plantation Journal*, Vol. 3, 1855–1857, 85, John Horry Dent Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama (microfilm).

The perpetrators of this diabolical deed have made their escape, but it is to be hoped that they will be overtaken and brought to justice. Just such instances of the cruel treatment of slaves, rare though they be, have done more to bring odium upon the institution than all the fabrications of fanaticism combined. This act of cold blooded murder even though the victim was a slave should be dealt with in a manner which will deter others from like cruelties.⁶¹

The details of both cases are incomplete but the evidence suggests that the murders were racially motivated. Criminal assaults were not unusual in the Pine Barrens but the nature and intensity of white-on-black crime was extraordinary even by nineteenth-century standards. The *Montgomery Mail's* reference to “the cruel treatment of slaves” and “even though the victim was a slave” speaks volumes as to the mindset and expectations of whites in the region.

Editors of the *Mail* also acknowledged the propaganda war then raging between northern abolitionists and proslavery apologists. As the decade of the 1850s wore on, the social, cultural, economic, and political foundations upon which the republic flourished began to crack under the weight of southern slavery. The growth of the cotton culture in the Pine Barrens combined with a substantial increase in the number of slaves provided enough tinder to ignite the flames of secession in a region not generally associated with proslavery radicalism.

⁶¹ *Weekly Montgomery Mail*, August 14, 1855.

Chapter 3

“Let the Union Stand:” Pine Barren Politics, 1819–1845

The Cooper Institute in New York City was filled to capacity that night. “At a quarter past seven the house was full,” the *New York Herald* reported the next day that “at half past it was crowded to repletion; at a quarter to eight the side windows were thrown open to the public, and at eight o’clock . . . the people were packed together as grains in a keg of gunpowder.” The main speaker was tall and slender, a well-known politician in his home state but largely unfamiliar to most Americans in other sections of the country. While considered to be political moderate within his party, his views on slavery in the territories drew sharp criticism from sectional radicals. During the speech, his fervent appeals to patriotism and historical tradition thrilled the audience, eliciting thunderous applause from everyone within earshot of his voice. “The Union,” he exclaimed, “must be preserved! Glorious objects lie before us; our destiny as a nation is not yet fulfilled. Let us accomplish the grand and beneficent objects of our destiny.”

It was not Abraham Lincoln that stirred the crowd that chilly September night in 1860, but rather Alabama’s Henry W. Hilliard, a proslavery politician whose strong support of the Union prompted him to canvass the North in support of Constitutional Union Party candidate John Bell.¹ In Alabama, Hilliard was a well-respected teacher, minister, and three-time U.S. congressman. During his time in Congress he represented the Montgomery district, an area that included most of the Pine Barren counties. He canvassed the region extensively and understood

¹ Henry W. Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 293, 302.

the people and their politics. He was as radical in his approval of slavery, and the right of southerners to take their slaves into any territory in the Union, as the most fervent fire-eater.² Yet even Lincoln's election did not convince him that secession was the only viable option to protect slavery and "southern rights." In many ways the region, or at least a large portion of it, reflected Hilliard's moderate approach to politics.

Not unlike other regions in the South, antebellum politics in the Pine Barrens revolved around personalities and parties linked both indirectly and directly to local, state, and national issues and events. In some counties, voting patterns and party loyalties remained relatively stable. In others party identity shifted over time. As the Democratic and Whig parties took shape in the 1840s, the most consistently Democratic portion of the region from the first were Dale, Henry, and Coffee counties, tucked into the region's corner along the Georgia and Florida lines. Party loyalty was especially strong in the southeastern counties, where Jacksonian Democracy persisted, buttressed by fiercely loyal Democratic leaders who strengthened the entire party structure. With the exception of one presidential election, only a handful of trusted local Whigs were able to win there. Barbour County, just to the north, was Whiggish for much of the antebellum period, becoming solidly Democratic only in the late 1850s. And while the remainder of the region also tended to support the Whigs, the Democracy made small but important political inroads even there as sectional tensions heightened. This chapter explores the political history of the Pine Barrens from 1819 to 1845, the personalities and parties involved, and the ways in which sectionalism and national events affected regional politics and party identity.

² Unless otherwise noted, the word "southerner" or "southerners" in this chapter specifically refers to white southerners.

Alabama's first constitutional convention took place in 1819 in preparation for the state's entry into the Union. Forty-four delegates met in Huntsville that summer to iron out the provisions that guided the state for nearly fifty years. The majority of the delegates were from northern Alabama, with Madison, Limestone, Shelby, Franklin, Lawrence, and Blount counties sending a combined nineteen representatives. The region with the second largest delegation included the counties along the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers. Montgomery, Clarke, Dallas, Monroe, and Washington counties sent twelve men to the convention. "Of this number," Malcolm McMillan suggests, "there were at least eighteen lawyers, four physicians, two ministers, one surveyor, one merchant, and four planters or farmers. Since no information is available on the profession or occupation of the other fourteen, it may be surmised that they were the 'lesser' men and that most of them were farmers or laboring men, rather than professional men."³ Sixty-two-year-old Samuel Cook from Conecuh County was the Pine Barrens' lone representative at the constitutional convention. He was a Revolutionary War veteran, a former member of the Mississippi territorial legislature, and chief justice of the Conecuh County court. An unpretentious man of modest means, he owned only one slave. His economic status was well below the planters who made up a majority of the convention's delegates.⁴

Alabama's constitution was one of the more liberal of its time. Along with Kentucky, the state was one of only two in the South to approve universal white male suffrage. The constitution minimized qualifications for holding state legislative office and excluded property holding, religious, and tax-paying requirements. While planters pushed for a representation

³ Malcolm Cook McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama, 1798-1901: A Study in Politics, the Negro, and Sectionalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 31–32.

⁴ *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, October 22, 1825; Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States: The Territory of Alabama, 1817-1819*, vol. 18 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 395, 408, 409; Marie Bankhead Owen and Emmett Kilpatrick, eds., "Alabama Census Returns 1820 and An Abstract of Federal Census of Alabama 1830," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 6 (Fall 1944): 358.

model that favored slaveowners in the state legislature, delegates from majority-white counties spearheaded efforts to guarantee broader apportionment. Slavery was protected but provisions were added that guaranteed, on paper at least, that slaves would be treated humanely and receive some legal protections. Delegates from majority-white counties were responsible for amending the original draft of the Constitution into a more democratic document. Malcolm McMillan demonstrates how these “‘plain men’ who abolished the militia qualification for suffrage, defeated the efforts of the planters to count three-fifths of the slaves as a basis of representation in the state legislature, reduced the minimum age for senator and representative, curtailed the power of the governor, reduced residence requirements for voting and for election to the senate,” and guaranteed that county clerks and other local officials were elected by the people rather than appointed by the legislature.⁵

Alabama’s entry into the union as a slave state added two additional senators and one congressman to the coalition of southern congressional delegations already in Washington. The Alabama delegation was seated during the second session of the sixteenth congress, just in time for arguments over the Missouri controversy. Congressional approval of Missouri’s entry into the Union as a slave state appeared to be certain until New York Congressman James Tallmadge introduced an amendment advocating gradual emancipation of the new state’s slave population. Tallmadge’s move unleashed a firestorm of controversy as legislators, drawn largely along sectional lines between free states and slave states, engaged in heated debate. Georgia senator Freeman Walker ominously predicted that should Missouri be denied unconditional statehood, “I behold the father armed against the son, and the son against the father. I perceive a brother’s sword crimsoned with a brother’s blood.” Congress eventually reached a compromise whereby

⁵ *Constitution of the State of Alabama* (Washington DC: Gales and Seaton, 1819); McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama*, 44–45.

Missouri was admitted as a slave state, Maine entered the union as free state, and a boundary line was drawn westward designating the territory north of the line (with the exception of Missouri) as free and south of the line as slave.⁶

Historian Robert Pierce Forbes notes that the Missouri controversy “exposed the hold that slavery had acquired over the process of national decision making, and revealed the powerful if unfocused antipathy toward the institution that existed in the northern states.”⁷ The controversy also shaped the political realignment and the reorganization of political parties that had been going on since the death of the national Federalist Party. For Pine Barren residents and Alabamians in general, the presidential election of 1824 was the first truly contentious presidential race in which they voted.⁸ Kentucky’s Henry Clay, Georgia’s William H. Crawford, Massachusetts’s John Quincy Adams, and Tennessee’s Andrew Jackson all competed for the presidency as Republicans. Albert Burton Moore argued that in Alabama, “Crawford had the support of the Georgia planter faction; Adams was strong among the Carolina and Virginia planters, though they did not relish his New England background; and Clay had influential followers among the small protection element. But the great mass of plain people . . . were devotedly attached to Andrew Jackson.”⁹ His exploits against the Creek Indians at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814 and his overwhelming victory against the British at New Orleans ten months later was more than enough to secure a loyal following in Alabama on election day. Alabamians delivered Jackson nearly 70 percent of the 13,619 statewide votes. Pine Barren

⁶ *Abridgment of the Debates of Congress, From 1789 to 1856*, vol. 7 (New York: D. Appleton, 1858), 400; Glover Moore, *The Missouri Controversy, 1819-1821* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953); Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁷ Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath*, 5.

⁸ James Monroe won the 1820 election without any formidable opposition.

⁹ Albert B. Moore, *History of Alabama* (Nashville, Tenn.: Benson, 1934), 122.

voters likewise supported Jackson by wide margins. Conecuh County, for example, returned 200 votes for Jackson, 83 for Adams, 14 for Crawford, and only two for Clay. More than 70 percent of the voters in Covington, Henry, and Pike counties cast their votes for Jackson. For the five Pine Barren counties in existence at the time, 66 percent of the voters supported Jackson. Only Butler County gave a slight edge to John Quincy Adams, with 96 votes going to Jackson, 42 for Crawford, and 102 recorded for Adams.¹⁰ Unfortunately for Jackson's supporters, none of the candidates won a clear majority of electoral votes nationally, even though Jackson was the popular favorite. The election was decided in the House of Representatives, where Henry Clay, a long time enemy of Jackson's, used his influence to convince legislators from Kentucky, Missouri, Louisiana, and Maryland to support John Quincy Adams.

From 1824 to 1828, the Adams Administration became increasingly unpopular in Alabama. Adams supported the Cherokees in their court battle against Georgia's ultimately successful attempts to survey and sell Indian lands to white settlers. This policy gave cause for concern to those settlers living in close proximity to Creek Indians in Alabama.¹¹ Adams also favored increased tariffs aimed at protecting American manufactured products from cheaper European competition. Southerners not only feared that higher tariffs would force them to buy costly northern goods, but resented duties that appeared to benefit one section of the country to the detriment of the other. Beyond that was the fear that the loose construction of the

¹⁰ Clanton W. Williams, "Notes and Documents: Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama," *Alabama Review* 1 (October 1948): 284–85.

¹¹ Adams biographer Robert Remini argues that the president's policies toward the Indians were by no means benevolent. Yet, Adams believed firmly that the Treaty of Indian Springs, negotiated with the Creeks in Georgia, and adopted one day before to his taking office, and the subsequent negotiations with the Cherokees were downright fraudulent. Adams's "efforts to protect the Indians under the legal authority of the federal government," Remini suggests, "gained him nothing but the hatred of all those southerners who lusted after Indian territory." Robert Vincent Remini, *John Quincy Adams* (New York: Times Books, 2002), 91–102.

Constitution that allowed tariffs might also be used to restrict or abolish slavery.¹² In January, 1827, the Alabama General Assembly passed a resolution condemning such tariffs and proclaimed “that the imposition of taxes and duties by the Congress of the United States for the purpose of protecting and encouraging domestic manufactures is an unconstitutional exercise of power, and is highly oppressive and partial in its operation.”¹³ With the passage of the Tariff of 1828 Adams signed into law the highest tariff in the history of the young republic.

Given Adams’s unpopularity in the state, it is not surprising that Jackson won 90 percent or 16,737 of the 18,614 votes cast in Alabama during the 1828 presidential contest.¹⁴ In the Pine Barrens, Butler, Covington, and Henry counties likewise returned large majorities for Jackson. Out of 270 voters in Henry County, for example, only four supported Adams. Election returns for Pike, Conecuh, and Dale counties were apparently never submitted to the General Assembly for verification, but given the overwhelming victory for Jackson in the rest of the state there is little reason to believe that these counties would have delivered significant votes for Adams.¹⁵

While national events were exciting and important, most Pine Barren residents were more directly affected by policies implemented by the state legislature. William Freehling has noted

¹² William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹³ *Acts Passed at the Eighth Annual Session of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held in the Town of Tuscaloosa, on the Third Monday in November, 1826* (Tuscaloosa: Grantland and Robinson, 1827), 121, Alabama Department of Archives and History.

¹⁴ Daniel Walker Howe argues that between the election of 1824 and 1828, supporters of John Q. Adams began calling themselves National Republicans while the supporters of Jackson were known as Democratic Republicans, later just Democrats. “The terms came into use very slowly,” Howe contends. “Accustomed as we are to a two-party system, we seize upon labels that contemporaries hesitated to employ. By the time the new party names gained acceptance, the election was over.” Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: the Transformation of America, 1845-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 275.

¹⁵ Donald B. Cole, *Vindicating Andrew Jackson: The 1828 Election and the Rise of the Two-Party System* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Lynn H. Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Williams, “Notes and Documents, 1948,” 286–87. Williams notes that there are no available returns for Pike, Conecuh, and Dale counties nor are there returns for the counties of Blount, Marengo, and Lowndes. Newspapers from Montgomery and Mobile counties likewise indicate no returns for these counties.

that instate political rivalries “led to endless localistic skirmishes over state promotion of market enterprise and of moral behavior, concerns productive of huge voter turnouts in nonpresidential years, matters having nothing to do with slavery or loyalty or anything national at all.”¹⁶ In Alabama, the General Assembly wielded an enormous amount of power over the daily lives of the citizenry. It chose all of the state’s governmental officials (except for the governor), appointed state and county judges, selected the board of directors for the state bank, and installed the board of trustees for the state’s flagship university, the University of Alabama. It also created counties, regulated state and local tax policies, chartered schools and corporations, approved militia organizations, legitimized common marriages, sanctioned divorces, approved name changes, and controlled numerous other state and local activities. Yet state legislators remained keenly aware of their constituents’ wishes and were highly responsive to the popular will. Those who failed to live up to expectations risked losing their seats in the next election. Members of the House of Representatives faced the voters annually, while state senators were up for reelection every three years. “Voters used their power with great freedom,” J. Mills Thornton notes, “and rates of reelection to the Alabama legislature, from the very beginning, appear to have been quiet low.”¹⁷

Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, representatives from Pine Barren counties came mostly from the ranks of the slaveholders. Conecuh County’s Samuel W. Oliver, for instance, owned eighty-six slaves and worked a substantial plantation just west of Sparta. He became one of the most powerful members of the House of Representatives, rising to the level of Speaker during the 1826 and 1827 sessions. James Ward from Henry County owned seventeen slaves, while

¹⁶ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*, 298.

¹⁷ *Constitution of the State of Alabama*, December 6, 1819, Article 2, Sections 3 and 12.; J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power In a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 59–60, 75.

Butler County's Nathan Cook held seven. Pike County's Jacinth Jackson, Charles A. Dennis, and Philip Fitzpatrick enslaved ten, five, and five people respectively. While each of these men commanded a measure of respect in their home communities, none of them, with the exception of Oliver, could have been considered elites within the legislature. In an effort to improve his meager reading and writing skills, the functionally illiterate Jacinth Jackson, for example, enrolled in the same grammar school as his children. According to Thornton, "even though Jackson was a man of some substance in Pike County, when he entered the legislature he encountered men of far greater economic and intellectual stature than he."¹⁸

Nevertheless, each man, regardless of his socioeconomic status, represented the voters back home in the best possible manner, if he wanted to retain his seat in the legislature. Each year legislators received dozens of petitions and appeals from constituents related to everything from divorce and taxes to the construction of local roads and county courthouses, to the emancipation of slaves, county annexations, and even name changes. Legislators had to be responsive to such requests. In 1825, for example, Nathan Cook presented a petition "of sundry inhabitants of Montgomery County" requesting that their lands be annexed to Butler County. A year later militia officers from Pike County called upon their representative, Charles Dennis, to petition the legislature for the creation of an additional militia regiment. Similarly, Conecuh County resident Anthony Presler petitioned the legislature to legitimize his daughter, Matilda Shuffel, and change her name to Matilda Presler.¹⁹

¹⁸ Manuscript Census, Conecuh County, Henry County, Butler County, Pike County, 1830, Schedule of Population; Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, vol. 3 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921), 392, 479; Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, vol. 4 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921), 1299, 1725; Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 73.

¹⁹ *Journal of the House of Representatives, of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held at the Town of Cahawba, on the Third Monday in November, 1825, Being the Seventh Annual Session of the General Assembly of Said State.* (Cahaba: William B. Allen, 1826), 29; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held At the Town of Tuskaloosa, on the Third Monday in November, 1826, Being the Eighth Annual Session of the*

During the first two decades of statehood, the General Assembly also enacted numerous statutes regulating both the institution of slavery and the conduct of free African Americans. The law banned free blacks and mulattos from selling whiskey or any type of “spirituous liquors.” First-time offenders paid a \$10 fine with subsequent offenses assessed at a fine plus up to twenty-five lashes on the bare back. Nearly every member of both houses of the legislature supported the bill, including Conecuh County’s Sam Oliver and Henry County’s Ben Harvey, the only two representatives from the Pine Barrens at that time. Another statute guaranteed that slave owners would receive up to half of the value of any slave tried and convicted for committing a capital crime. The state financed the program by taxing slaves, to be paid at a rate of one cent for every slave under the age of ten and two cents on slaves between the ages of ten and sixty. The bill barely passed the House with three of the four Pine Barren representatives joining with other south Alabama legislators in voting against the measure.²⁰

On the national front, meanwhile, Andrew Jackson’s presidency became identified largely with the tariff and nullification controversy, his fight with the Bank of the United States, and his Indian removal policies. The president remained immensely popular in the South, particularly in states such as Alabama. William Freehling points out that “Old Hickory was the

General Assembly of Said State. (Tuskaloosa: Grantland and Robinson, 1827), 14; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held at the Town of Cahawba, on the Third Monday in November 1823. Being the Fifth Annual Session of the General Assembly of Said State*. (Cahawba: William B. Allen, 1824), 7.

²⁰ *Acts Passed at the Fourth Annual Session of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held at the Town of Cahawba, on the Third Monday of November, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty Two* (Cahawba: William B. Allen, 1823), 61; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held at the Town of Cahawba, on the Third Monday in November 1822, Being the Fourth Session of the General Assembly of Said State* (Cahawba: William B. Allen, 1823), 70; *Acts Passed at the Sixth Annual Session of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama; Begun and Held in the Town of Cahawba on the Third Monday in November, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty Four* (Cahawba: William B. Allen, 1825), 41–42; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held at the Town of Cahawba, on the Third Monday in November, 1824, Being the Sixth Annual Session of the General Assembly of Said State* (Cahawba: William B. Allen, 1825), 93.

Southwest's man, the perfection of the region's mentality and persona."²¹ To the liking of many Alabamians, he rejected numerous internal improvement projects, vetoed the rechartering of the national bank, and cleared a path for the eventual opening of thousands of acres of Native American lands to white settlement.²² Early twentieth century historian Theodore Jack noted that "probably no state was more loyal . . . to the president, or more earnest in its support in general than was Alabama."²³

Alabama had joined with South Carolina and most of the other southern states in condemning the Tariff of 1828.²⁴ Signed into law by President John Quincy Adams, the tariff was designed to protect the growing industrial sector in the northern states. Textile manufacturers, for instance, found it difficult to compete with cheap European goods and hoped the new taxes would revive their struggling industry. Southern cotton producers argued that the "tariff of abominations," as they called it, not only raised the price of cheap fabric, the material they bought to clothe their slaves, but triggered inflation on many other manufactured items. According to Daniel Howe, "the protective tariff raised the price of textiles and thus diminished the demand for southern cotton at the same time as it increased the cost of maintaining slaves. The cotton planters were morally wrong about slavery, but they were economically right to complain that the tariff did not serve their interest."²⁵

²¹ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*, 295.

²² Jackson's propensity for rejecting some projects while embracing others did not seem to bother most of his supporters. Daniel Walker Howe has noted that "the Jackson-Van Buren practice of generous ad hoc appropriations coupled with professions of Old Republican strict construction pleased the friends of particular projects while reassuring slaveholders and staple exporters that the federal government was not being strengthened in principle or undertaking long-term, expensive commitments." See Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 365.

²³ Theodore H. Jack, "Alabama and the Federal Government," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 3 (December 1916): 302.

²⁴ The majority of the representatives from Tennessee and Kentucky voted in favor of the bill.

²⁵ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 273.

Some southern politicians insisted that the law's protectionist designs violated the constitution. The power to tax was specifically restricted to raising revenue and never intended to be used as a support mechanism for struggling textile manufacturers. The Alabama General Assembly protested the tariff, arguing that while raising revenue and regulating commerce were legitimate powers exercised by the central government:

It is not of these powers that we complain, but it is the assertion of another, and a very different one. It is the assertion of the power to impose a duty on any article of foreign commerce, not because we want revenue, or the regulations of commerce, as such require improvement; but because we want to exclude the foreign in favor of the domestic fabric. This power is not granted in the Constitution, and must be sustained, if at all, by the pliable doctrine of implication, and as it is not necessary to the power to raise revenue or regulate commerce, it cannot be sustained as an incidental or implied power. On the contrary it is a substantial, distinct power, resting on assumption, and fraught with frightful danger. . . . The unlimited nature of this power and the dangerous purposes to which it may be applied, renders it odious and unfit to mingle in human affairs.²⁶

In an 1832 speech before the General Assembly, Governor John Gayle warned that “this partial and unjust legislation in the National Government is hastening a crisis in our affairs which involves in its consequences the dissolution of the Union.”²⁷ The legislature similarly denounced the tariff as “unequal, unjust, oppressive and against the spirit, true intent and meaning of the constitution; that if persevered in, its inevitable tendency will be to alienate the affections of the people of the Southern States from the general government.”²⁸

²⁶ *A Remonstrance of the General Assembly of Alabama, on the Subject of Protecting Duties*, February 4, 1828, U.S. Congressional Serial Set, vol. 171, session 3, doc. 113 (Washington DC: Gales and Seaton, 1828), accessed October 19, 2013, http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/Digital/?p_product=SERIAL&p_theme=sset2&p_nbid=X5AA49TFMTM5NTMyMzc5OC44NzIwNToxOjE1OjEzMS4yMDQuMTc0LjEwMw&p_action=doc&p_queryname=1&p_docref=v2:0FD2A62D41CEB699@SERIAL-100C477C45EA4070@-1425002077E518E8@5.

²⁷ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held at the Town of Tuscaloosa, on the First Monday in November, 1832, Being a Called Session of the General Assembly of Said State* (Tuscaloosa: E. Walker, 1832), 16.

²⁸ *Acts Passed at the Extra and Annual Sessions of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held in the Town of Tuscaloosa, on the First Monday in November, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-Two* (Tuscaloosa: E. Walker, 1833), 140.

In July 1832, Jackson signed a compromise tariff into law that lowered rates and repealed some of the more onerous elements of the previous law. This bill reduced the duties on nearly everything manufactured outside the United States and cut the taxes on woolen cloth from 45 percent to just 5 percent, an obvious concession to plantation owners. The legislation passed the House of Representatives with healthy majorities from both northern and southern members. It then passed the Senate, with most of the yeas coming from the North and about half from the South. Alabama's delegation was split. Representatives Clement Comer Clay and Samuel Wright Mardis voted yes along with Senator Gabriel Moore, who cast a vote in favor of the law in spite of his support for South Carolina and partiality toward John C. Calhoun. Dixon Hall Lewis and Senator William Rufus King, both solid nullifiers, opposed.²⁹

Alabama's General Assembly joined other southern state legislatures in approving resolutions supporting the new lower tariff rates. The measure passed the House overwhelmingly with only nineteen dissenters, the majority of which came from South Alabama, including all six Pine Barren representatives. In an open letter to the public, some of the men who voted against the resolutions, including Julian Devereux from Covington County and Pike County's Jesse Reaves and Lawson Keener, believed "that South Carolina has cause to be dissatisfied with the oppression of her citizens, and although [she] may have mistaken her remedy, every attempt at this time to take the part of congress in its unauthorized oppressions, will only serve to strengthen the arm of the general government."³⁰ While careful not to support nullification, these men argued that the Tariff of 1832 still included far too many elements of

²⁹ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 400–401; Richard E. Ellis, *The Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States' Rights, and the Nullification Crisis* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 68.

³⁰ *Acts of the General Assembly, 1832*, 139–41; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held at the Town of Tuscaloosa, on the Third Monday in November, 1832, Being the Fourteenth Annual Session of the General Assembly of Said State* (Tuscaloosa: E. Walker, 1833), 217–19.

protectionism and failed to adequately address the South's grievances. J. Mills Thornton argues that during this time there emerged in the Black Belt a growing states' rights faction willing to defy the Jackson administration. Because the Pine Barren counties were economically connected with the Black Belt, especially with Montgomery, it makes sense that their representatives refused to support the 1832 tariff.³¹

Not satisfied with the new, lower tariff, South Carolina nullified both the Tariff of 1828 and 1832. At this point most southerners refused to support the Palmetto State's promotion of nullification as a remedy for protective tariffs. Indeed, the Ordinance of Nullification generated a backlash of opposition from every corner of the South, including Alabama. "As sure as [nullification] shall succeed," Governor Gayle warned, "its triumphs will be stained with fraternal blood, and the proudest of its trophies will be the destruction of constitutional liberty."³² The General Assembly condemned the concept as "unsound in theory and dangerous in practice, that as a remedy it is unconstitutional and essentially revolutionary, leading in its consequences to anarchy and civil discord, and finally to the dissolution of the Union."³³

Not all of Alabama's political leaders joined the chorus condemning nullification. A small but vocal number of extreme states' rights advocates warned of the danger that encroaching federal power posed to individual liberty. U.S. Representative Dixon Hall Lewis, who had opposed the compromise tariff of 1832, openly and forcefully supported both nullification and secession. U.S. Senator Gabriel Moore, a fierce onetime supporter of Andrew

³¹ Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 27.

³² *Journal of the House, Called Session, 1832*, 18. Ironically, Gayle's support for Andrew Jackson and opposition to nullification changed dramatically when his administration clashed with Jackson and federal government over Alabama's jurisdictional claims to administer former Indian lands free from federal control. See Samuel L. Webb and Margaret E. Armbruster, eds., *Alabama Governors: A Political History of the State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 31-34.

³³ *Acts of the General Assembly, 1832*, 144.

Jackson likewise embraced John C. Calhoun and moved closer to the radical states' rights position. In 1834, the General Assembly passed a joint resolution demanding Moore's resignation, in part because he supported nullification. "Senator Moore has evinced a strong partiality," the resolution stated, "if not positively committed himself in favor of the heretical doctrine of nullification, which the people of this state hold to be . . . fatal to the harmony and perpetuity of our inestimable Union." Moore refused to resign.³⁴

With the exception of an outspoken minority, most Alabama politicians nonetheless supported the 1832 compromise tariff and condemned nullification. Within months, Henry Clay, hoping to placate the belligerent South Carolinians, submitted yet another compromise tariff that temporarily calmed the storm. The Tariff of 1833 gradually reduced all tariff rates across the board so that no rate exceeded 20 percent. "Objectively," Daniel Howe notes, "the nullifiers had lost. The other southern states had not rallied to their side. Both the legislative and executive branches of the federal government had demonstrated their resolve to suppress nullification."³⁵

Meanwhile, a new and growing challenge to sectional harmony simmered just beneath the surface. In the early 1830s New England abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Theodore Dwight Weld initiated a radicalized version of antislavery that, unlike its more moderate predecessor, demanded an immediate and uncompensated end to the institution. Through letters, pamphlets, and newspapers such as Garrison's *Liberator*, abolitionists argued forcefully that the old ploys for soft-peddling slavery and pushing gradual emancipation schemes simply were not enough. They began distributing propaganda through the mail, first in the North

³⁴ *Acts Passed at the Annual Session of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held in the City of Tuscaloosa, on the Third Monday in November, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-Four* (Tuscaloosa: David Ferguson, 1835), 152; William Warren Rogers et al., *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 139; Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 18–19.

³⁵ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 409.

and then in the slave states. Spearheaded by the American Anti-Slavery Society, supporters flooded the southern states with an estimated 175,000 letters and pamphlets.³⁶ Butler County representative John W. Womack angrily insisted in 1835 that “the Anti-Slavery Societies in the Northern and Middle States are doing all they can to destroy our domestic harmony, by sending among us, pamphlets, tracts, and newspapers—for the purpose of exciting dissatisfaction and insurrection among our slaves.”³⁷

Proslavery advocates moved quickly at both the state and federal levels to suppress the distribution of antislavery publications. The Jackson administration instructed postmasters in the South to withhold any mail connected with abolitionist organizations and “direct that those inflammatory papers be delivered to none but who will demand them as subscribers.”³⁸ The U.S. House of Representatives adopted a “gag rule,” forbidding members of Congress from reading antislavery petitions on the floor of the house. On the state level, Alabama’s General Assembly passed a resolution calling upon northern governors to take action against those organizations responsible for the publication of antislavery materials: “If rash, wicked and bigoted fanatics are suffered, under the shield and protection of the laws of the States in which they live, to poison the minds of our slaves, to render them more dissatisfied with their condition, and excite them to acts of violence and blood-shed against their masters, the harmony of the Union will be greatly disturbed.”³⁹ Governor John Gayle went so far as to demand the extradition of New York

³⁶ Stanley Harold, *Border War: Fighting Over Slavery Before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 38.

³⁷ John W. Womack to Lewis Womack, “Marcus Joseph Wright Papers,” August 30, 1835, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

³⁸ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 429. Howe argues that the “refusal of the Post Office to deliver abolitionist mail to the South may well represent the largest peacetime violation of civil liberty in U.S. history” (p. 429).

³⁹ *Acts Passed at the Thirteenth Annual Session of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held in the Town of Tuscaloosa, on the Third Monday in November, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-One* (Tuscaloosa: E. Walker, 1832), 116–17.

abolitionist Ransom G. Williams, a black minister and publishing agent indicted in absentia by a grand jury in Tuscaloosa, for aiding in the publication and distribution of the *The Emancipator*, an antislavery newspaper published by Elihu Embree in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Ironically, while the majority of northerners opposed abolitionism, southern attacks against free speech and freedom of the press raised the ire of the northern public and strengthened the resolve of those committed to slavery's demise.⁴⁰ "It is my solemn opinion," John Womack wrote in the aftermath of the immediate controversy, "that this question (to wit slavery) will ultimately bring about a dissolution of the Union of the States."⁴¹

Butler County's Womack, a lawyer, state representative, and editor of the *Greenville Whig*, was one of several politicians who helped organize what soon became Alabama's Whig Party. A contemporary of Womack described him as an energetic, tall, muscular young man who stood "straight as an Indian, and with a person and manner at once dignified and commanding—a voice deep, sonorous, and well modulated."⁴² Like other nascent Whigs, he opposed Andrew Jackson as an overly powerful and increasingly intrusive threat to individual liberty and states' rights. Jackson was not above using his office, for example, to directly persuade individual state legislators to use their influence to pressure U.S. senators to fall in line

⁴⁰ William Lloyd Garrison, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: A House Dividing Against Itself, 1836-1840*, ed. Louis Ruchames (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 11–12; Michael Kent Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege": Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 11–12; Jeannine Marie DeLombard, *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 51–53; Tara Mitchell Mielnik, "The Emancipator," Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture, accessed on March 20, 2014, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=432> .

⁴¹ John W. Womack to Lewis Womack, "Marcus Joseph Wright Papers," August 30, 1835, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

⁴² William Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama: For Thirty Years* (Atlanta: Plantation Publishing Company, 1872), 57–59.

with the administration's legislative wishes.⁴³ "I do most solemnly object and protest against this practice of the president of the United States," Womack wrote in a letter published by several of the state's Whig newspapers, "of addressing any communication whatever to the members of a state legislature for the purpose of influencing their actions and opinion. It is without precedent, and fraught with fearful and dangerous consequences."⁴⁴ By the late 1830s, the Whigs "identified *themselves* as the true bearers of the states-rights, strict-construction torch that in their minds Jackson had so ignominiously let fall."⁴⁵

For nearly a century after the Civil War, historians viewed Alabama's Whig Party as the "broadcloth" party of privilege, while simultaneously portraying the Democracy as the common man's political haven. Historian Clement Eaton, for example, once pointed to an aphorism that "wherever you found rich soil, there you would find a cotton bale, and sitting on the bale a Negro, and nearby would be a Whig in a silk hat. . . . The Democrats, on the other hand, were strong in the pine barrens and areas of high illiteracy of the white population, of low land values, and of small proportion of slaves."⁴⁶ More recent scholars have debunked much of the

⁴³ On March 28, 1834, in response to Andrew Jackson's veto of the recharter of the Bank of the United States as well as his directive to remove deposits from the bank, the United States Senate passed resolutions of censure against the president. Jackson penned a protest statement that the Senate refused to place in that body's official journal. The president then launched an all-out public relations campaign to drum up support from the people. He also corresponded and petitioned state legislators directly in an attempt to affect future senate elections in his favor. Many Whigs naturally saw this as an unconstitutional abuse of executive power.

⁴⁴ *Nile's Weekly Register*, November 18, 1835.

⁴⁵ William J. Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 176. Michael Holt contends that Whigs were not just bound together by their opposition to Jackson. Rather, by opposing what they saw as a tyrannical chief executive, the party stood on the principal of individual rights and republican governance. According to Holt, "Whigs saw themselves acting from the necessity, as Clay had put it, 'to rescue the Government and public liberty, from the impending dangers, which Jackson has created.' . . . Rank-and-file Whigs repeatedly echoed their leaders' fears about the threat that executive tyranny posed to republican self-government." See Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 28-32.

⁴⁶ Clement Eaton, *History of the Old South*, Second (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 284; Thomas B. Alexander et al, "Who Were the Alabama Whigs?," *Alabama Review* 16 (January 1963): 5-6. Other such class-based histories include: Theodore H. Jack, *Sectionalism and Party Politics in Alabama* (Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1919); Albert B. Moore, *History of Alabama and Her People* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1927); Charles G. Sellers, Jr., "Who Were the Southern Whigs?" *American Historical Review* (January, 1954), 335-46.

traditional approach. Over the past half-century, these authors and others have argued that the Whig Party in Alabama, and in the South generally, garnered support from a broad base of citizens from all socioeconomic backgrounds and classes.⁴⁷ While it is true that Alabama Whiggery drew large numbers of supporters from Black Belt counties, the same can be said for the Democracy. Similarly, majority-white counties, such as Conecuh and Covington in the Pine Barrens, were not always Democratic strongholds. As J. Mills Thornton has noted, “a closer examination of the parties will reveal them not as elitist institutions, but as subtle agents of the social faith. Reaching deep into the citizenry, the parties were perhaps the most comprehensive and assiduous reflectors of Alabamians’ desires.”⁴⁸

In the Pine Barrens, what historians refer to as the second two-party system initiated a twenty-year struggle between Democrats and Whigs. Although neither party claimed preeminence over the entire region, there were a number of sections that each party could rely upon for support in any given election (see Table 3.1). In Henry, Dale, and Coffee counties, the Democratic Party sustained a distinct advantage in local, state, and national politics from the late 1830s to the Civil War. Jacksonian Democracy had taken root there and remained a powerful element throughout the antebellum period. Anthony Carey argues that the “Democracy’s greater hostility to banks and corporations proved lastingly attractive in regions where both were few, and themes of states’ rights and limited government matched the mood of countless yeoman who desired mostly to be left alone.”⁴⁹ Such was the case in southeastern Alabama where opposition

⁴⁷ Paul Murray, *The Whig Party in Georgia, 1825-1853* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948); Grady McWhiney, “Were the Whigs a Class Party in Alabama?,” *Journal of Southern History* 23 (November 1957): 510–22; Alexander, et al, “Who Were the Alabama Whigs?”; Thomas B. Alexander and Peggy J. Duckworth, “Alabama Black Belt Whigs During Secession: A New Viewpoint,” *Alabama Review* 17 (July 1964); Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴⁸ Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 117.

⁴⁹ Anthony Gene Carey, *Parties, Slavery, and the Union in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 113.

to state-funded internal improvements, especially railroads, remained high for two decades prior to the war.⁵⁰ In addition, local party leaders such as Coffee County's Gappa T. Yelverton, Angus McAllister from Henry County, and Dale County's James C. Ward zealously promoted the Democratic Party while endorsing its candidates at every level. Although rare, Whigs were occasionally victorious in state and national elections. In 1841, for instance, Dale countians sent Archibald Justice to the state house, one of only a few local Whigs ever elected from that county. Conecuh County's William A. Ashley defeated Coffee County Democrat Josiah Jones for the state senate in 1855. Yet Ashley's victory is best explained by the fact that at the time Coffee was in a heavily Whiggish district that included both Covington and Conecuh counties. The same circumstance applied two years later when Whig candidate Daniel H. Horne won the district. On the national stage, Zachary Taylor carried Coffee and Henry counties by slim margins in the presidential election of 1844, but both counties were back in the Democratic camp four years later. With rare exception, then, Democrats were heavy favorites in the southeastern corner of the state.

During that same time the Whigs maintained a formidable presence to the west in Butler, Conecuh, and Covington counties. Like their neighbors to the east, Conecuh and Covington were comparatively poor counties with few slaves. Yet their destiny aligned more with the personalities and policies of the Whigs. Butler County's Thomas Hill Watts, Conecuh's William Ashley, Covington's Alfred Holley, and Henry Hilliard from Montgomery County were profoundly influential. The Whigs also performed well in state and national elections in Pike County before 1852, and in Barbour up until 1856. As a region, then, the Pine Barrens was more Whiggish than Democratic. Counties such as Pike and Barbour that trended towards the

⁵⁰ Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 51–52, 326.

Democracy in the 1850s did so slowly and even then retained sizeable numbers of Whig voters until late in the decade.

TABLE 3.1. Presidential Elections and Party Politics, 1836–1856

County	1836	1840	1844	1848	1852	1856
Barbour	W	W	W	W	**	D
Butler	W	W	W	W	W	A
Coffee	*	*	D	W	D	D
Conecuh	W	W	W	W	D	D
Covington	W	W	W	W	D	D
Dale	D	D	D	D	D	D
Henry	D	D	D	W ¹	D	D
Pike	W	W	W	W	D	D

W = Whig Majority Vote

D = Democratic Majority Vote

A = American Majority Vote

NR = No returns available.

* = County did not exist.

** = Barbour countians cast a majority vote for third party states' rights candidates George Troup of Georgia and Mississippi's John A. Quitman.

¹ Whig Party candidate Zachary Taylor, a slaveholder, won Henry County by a margin of eight votes.

Sources: Clanton W. Williams, "Notes and Documents: Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama," *Alabama Review* 1 (October 1948); Clanton W. Williams, "Notes and Documents: Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama," *Alabama Review* 2 (January 1949); David Young, *Whig Almanac* (1849); "Presidential Election in Alabama," *Weekly Alabama Journal*, February 5, 1856.

In the presidential elections of 1836 and 1840, the Whig Party made substantial inroads into Alabama politics. In 1836 the party delivered nearly half of Alabama's forty-nine counties to Whig Party favorite Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee. Four years later the party secured victories in twenty-three counties. Statewide the Democrats carried both elections, but the ranks of the opposition grew nonetheless. In both elections the Whigs relentlessly attacked Democratic candidate Martin Van Buren. A native New Yorker, they insisted, could not be trusted to protect

slavery; rumors flourished that Van Buren maintained numerous friendships with prominent northern abolitionists.

The economic downturn that hit the country in 1837 also provided a wealth of political fodder for the Whigs, just in time for the 1840 election.⁵¹ The Whigs were organized and motivated in 1840 behind the candidacy of William Henry Harrison, an Indian fighter and war hero in the Andrew Jackson mold. Political meetings took place throughout the state, but the party's main convention in Tuscaloosa "was a large assemblage, with all the emblazonry of coon skins, log cabins, and hard cider, which excited considerable enthusiasm."⁵² Popular Whig politician Henry Hilliard observed that "delegations came from the remote counties, some of them bringing with them log-cabins on wheels drawn by fine horses, and displaying the symbols of pioneer structures; the gourd, the string of red pepper, a barrel of cider, the latch-string of the door conspicuously hung on the outside, and the raccoon."⁵³ Harrison's nationwide victory in the presidential election still did not translate into a win in Alabama, but the growing popularity of the Whig Party in the state gave Democrats reason enough to worry.

In the Pine Barrens, the presidential elections of 1836 and 1840, together with the gubernatorial election of 1837, created much political fanfare throughout the region. In the 1836 presidential race, Whig Party candidate White carried Barbour, Butler, Conecuh, Covington, and Pike while Van Buren was victorious in Dale and Henry. The votes in Barbour, Henry, and Pike were close, with Pike countians giving the nod to White by fewer than ten votes. In 1840, Whig candidates Harrison and John Tyler won overwhelming victories in Barbour, Butler, Conecuh,

⁵¹ William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History*, vol. 1 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 161–65.

⁵² Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 111.

⁵³ Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures*, 19.

and Covington, and carried Pike by 51 percent of the vote. Van Buren again won by respectable margins in Dale and Henry counties, the heart of Jacksonian Democracy in the region.⁵⁴

The governor's race of 1837, meanwhile, pitted Democratic candidate Arthur P. Bagby, a recent Democratic convert, against Pine Barren favorite Samuel W. Oliver, the Whig candidate originally from Conecuh County who had relocated to Dallas County in 1837. Oliver was well known as one of the largest slaveholders in south Alabama. He served eleven terms in the Alabama House of Representatives, was elected speaker of the house at least twice, and served one term as a state senator. Although he ultimately lost the election to Bagby, he won every Pine Barren county except Henry. Even in Dale County, local and regional devotion to Oliver appears to have trumped party loyalty, at least in this instance.⁵⁵

By 1840 the generation of Pine Barren politicians led by men such as Samuel Oliver began to give way to a new stable of leaders. These energetic young politicians profoundly influenced their home communities as well as the region as a whole. Many of these men would later provide both political and military leadership during the Civil War. Walter Crenshaw of Butler County, for example, served six nonsequential terms as a member of the state House of Representatives and multiple terms as a state senator. The son of prominent circuit court judge Anderson Crenshaw, Walter was only twenty-one-years-old when he became one of the youngest members of the General Assembly. He was a lawyer, planter, a local militia captain, a prominent member of the Whig Party, and was to become one of the largest slaveholders in Butler County.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Williams, "Notes and Documents, 1948," 290–93. Oliver also benefitted from the economic downturn that began in 1837.

⁵⁵ *The Whig Almanac, and Politicians Register, For 1838* (New York: George Dearborn, 1838), 31.

⁵⁶ Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, 3:423–24; Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 179; Manuscript Census, Butler County, Alabama, 1850, Schedules 1 and 2.

Another young Butler countian, Thomas Hill Watts, represented the county in the 1840s. Watts, too, was a lawyer, planter, and large slaveholder who by the outbreak of the Civil War owned over 200 slaves. He campaigned enthusiastically for Harrison during the 1840 presidential election and served as one of the electors for the presidential campaign of Zachary Taylor in 1848. He rose quickly through the Whig ranks, becoming one of the party's most popular leaders statewide, a position that eventually led to the governorship.⁵⁷

Eufaula's John Gill Shorter was yet another of the region's rising young politicians. Shorter was born in 1818 near Jasper County, Georgia. In the mid-1830s he and his family relocated to Eufaula, known at the time as Irwinton. John Gill and his father Reuben were loyal Jacksonian Democrats who never wavered in their support for the Democracy. John graduated from the University of Alabama, practiced law in Eufaula, and served as a Democratic state legislator, senator, and circuit court judge—no small feat for a young Democrat living in a strongly Whiggish county.

On the national stage no Pine Barren county produced a U.S. senator or member of the House of Representatives until 1855 when Eli Shorter was elected to the House. Before that, Montgomery County's Henry Washington Hilliard was the closest thing to a native son that the region had in Washington. Hilliard, a Whig, represented the Montgomery congressional district, a district that for much of the antebellum period included every Pine Barren county except for Butler and Covington.⁵⁸ Although he was born in Cumberland County, North Carolina, in 1808, he spent his boyhood, teenage, and college years in Columbia, South Carolina. He entered South

⁵⁷ Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, 4:1732; John Buckner Little, *The History of Butler County, Alabama, 1815 to 1885: With Sketches of Some of Her Most Distinguished Citizens and Glances at Her Rich and Varied Resources* (Cincinnati: Elm Street Printing, 1885), 47–53.

⁵⁸ In addition to Montgomery, the district included Macon, Russell, Pike, Barbour, Coffee, Henry, Dale, and Covington counties. Hilliard was first elected to Congress in 1845.

Carolina College at age fifteen and graduated three years later. Within the next five years Hilliard studied law in Columbia and in Athens, Georgia; engaged in Methodist mission work and preaching in and around Columbus, Georgia; edited the *Columbus Enquirer* after the paper's original editor moved to Texas; and began a brief stint as an English professor at the University of Alabama. Hilliard's biographer, David Durham, notes that his "growing reputation as a lawyer, scholar, preacher, editor, and orator was remarkable for a young man who had just reached the age of twenty-three."⁵⁹

But it was a eulogy delivered before the Alabama General Assembly in honor of the deceased Charles Carroll of Carrollton that launched his political career. Hilliard's speech, delivered on December 7, 1832, was a masterpiece of oratory. His words also provided a window into his political beliefs and principles. "He was a Whig of the State Rights school," a contemporary of Hilliard's observed, "ardently devoted to the interests of the South, yet in his patriotism embracing the whole country."⁶⁰ Hilliard revered founding fathers such as Carroll, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was a strong and forceful advocate for the Union, and was, according to J. Mills Thornton, "a careful conservative who was Alabama's closest analogue to Daniel Webster."⁶¹ His speech in part reflected these values, values shared by the majority of Pine Barren voters. "If the cause of freedom goes down here," he proclaimed, "it is in the dust throughout the world—it is driven back forever: lost are the hopes of mankind; vain the sufferings and toils of patriots; vain the blood of martyrs. Let these things inspire us; let us tell the patriots who, amid the dark systems of other lands, bend their

⁵⁹ David I. Durham, *A Southern Moderate in Radical Times: Henry Washington Hilliard, 1808-1892* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 21.

⁶⁰ Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 96.

⁶¹ Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 181.

gaze upon us, that we will be faithful.”⁶² Nineteenth-century public speeches were replete with such poetical phraseology and soaring rhetorical analysis, important elements that played to Hilliard’s strengths and advanced his political career. According to William Garrett, a contemporary of Hilliard’s, “few men could charm an audience by the gracefulness of manner, ease and beauty of delivery, and rich imagery of conception, more than Mr. Hilliard.”⁶³

From the beginning Hilliard’s influence upon the Pine Barrens, the Whig Party, and Alabama politics in general, was impressive. He represented Montgomery County in the General Assembly in 1838 and 1839; served as one of twelve Alabama delegates to the national Whig convention; was chosen as an Alabama elector on the Harrison-Tyler presidential ticket of 1840; and campaigned energetically for Harrison’s election that same year. Not only was he instrumental in helping the Whigs gain seats in Alabama’s General Assembly, he also played an important role in his party’s capture of two of the state’s five seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1842, Hilliard mounted an unsuccessful challenge to Montgomery’s powerful Democratic incumbent congressman, Dixon Hall Lewis. Hilliard’s loss wiped out any chance for the Whigs to secure majority status for their party in Alabama’s congressional delegation that year.⁶⁴ For the time being at least, his political ambitions were stifled by a Democratic Party bent on protecting Lewis’s seat and determined to arrest the growth of Whiggery throughout the state.

⁶² Henry W. Hilliard, “Charles Carroll, of Carrollton. An Oration Delivered in the Representatives’ Hall, Before the Legislature of Alabama and the Citizens of Tuscaloosa, December 7th, 1832,” *Speeches and Addresses* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1855), 396.

⁶³ Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 96.

⁶⁴ At the time, Lewis represented Alabama’s Fourth Congressional District, a fifteen-county district that included several Pine Barren counties but was weighted heavily in favor of the Black Belt counties of Autauga, Coosa, Montgomery, Lowndes, Tallapoosa, Chambers, Macon, and Russell. See Durham, *Southern Moderate in Radical Times*, 64-65.

In an effort to stem the rising Whig tide, Democrats in the General Assembly further employed two legislative weapons, the General Ticket System and White Basis voting, against their opponents. The General Ticket System allowed the whole of the electorate to select all of the states' representatives without regard to legislative district, thus utilizing Democratic majorities in North Alabama to unseat a handful of Whigs in the South. Proponents claimed that the General Ticket System would guarantee a more accurate representation of Alabama's Democratic voting majority as well as ensure a unified, one-party congressional delegation in Washington. "The General Ticket System," Governor Bagby contended in 1840, "gives to a majority of the whole people of the State, at all times, whatever may be their political opinions, the entire, undivided weight of the whole representation in congress."⁶⁵ In fact, Democrats introduced the bill specifically to protect Dixon Hall Lewis's seat from an almost certain Whig takeover by Hilliard.

The debate in the General Assembly over the General Ticket System was long, animated, and at times theatrical. In the House, Whigs used every parliamentary procedure at their disposal—including motions to postpone votes, adjourn the chamber, and table the bill—to debate, lobby opposition, and defeat the legislation. In a final act of desperation, they launched a futile attempt to prevent a quorum by walking out of the session on the day that the bill was adopted. Whig members later protested that "we remained until our appeals were unheeded; the voice of our constituents strangled; freedom of speech denied. . . . And we left when that hall . . . had been seized by an organized party, and converted into a slaughter house of every principle of protection and security in legislation, which government affords to the weak; the inestimable

⁶⁵ *Journal of the House of Representatives, at the Annual Session of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama; Begun and Held in the City of Tuscaloosa, on the First Monday in November, 1840* (Tuscaloosa: Hale and Phelan, 1841), 20.

right to dissent.”⁶⁶ The bill passed with fifty votes in the affirmative and twenty-three against; more than half of the absentee members returned to the floor to cast their votes against the bill. In the final days leading up to bill’s passage, “the scene of noise and disorder in the House at times, and especially when the Whig members retired, and after they came back in squads” was chaotic. “Some of them even mounted the desks in defiance of the Speaker’s call to order.”⁶⁷

While there is no detailed voting record of individual members in the General Assembly, the evidence suggests that Pine Barren representatives by and large disapproved of the General Ticket System. Whigs understood that the legislation was nothing less than a bold-faced attempt on the part of the Democrats to destroy their political power base in South Alabama. William Garrett notes, for example, that support for the bill took place almost entirely along party lines. If so, seven of the ten Pine Barren legislators opposed the legislation, with representatives from Barbour, Conecuh, and Covington counties solidly against the bill, Henry County in favor, and Pike County split.⁶⁸ In addition, several weeks after the bill’s passage, thirty-seven legislators issued an official minority protest to the proceedings. Five of the region’s ten representatives—including Barbour’s John W. Mann and William T. Shanks, Butler’s Walter H. Crenshaw, Conecuh’s William A. Bell, and Covington’s Laird B. Flemming—signed the document. The signers accused the speaker of the house and the majority party of disregarding established House rules, violating parliamentary procedure, suppressing debate, and generally trampling

⁶⁶ Ibid., 292.

⁶⁷ Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 142.

⁶⁸ In this case, party identity was determined through the following legislative action. During the 1840 session, along a strict party-line vote, Democrats in the House chose William Rufus King over Whig candidate John Gayle to represent Alabama in the U. S. Senate. Barbour’s J. W. Mann and William T. Shanks, Butler’s W. H. Crenshaw and Edward Bowen, Conecuh’s W. A. Bell, Covington’s Laird B. Flemming, and Pike’s L. R. Simmons supported John Gayle, while Henry County’s Alexander Blackshear and James Pynes, and Pike’s Samuel Dixon voted for King. Based upon this vote and other such party-line votes, it is entirely reasonable to suggest that all seven Whigs and three Democrats supported their party’s stance regarding the General Ticket System. Also, there is no indication that Dale County’s J. G. Blair attended the 1840 session. See, *House Journal, 1840*, 69–70.

upon the rights of the minority. “Several gentlemen had prepared themselves . . . who had not spoken upon the question, when one of the majority rose and called the previous question; which was carried affirmatively by the majority; the minority silenced; the debate suppressed; the law passed over every barrier, which the constitution had interposed, to the reckless spirit of an infuriated party.”⁶⁹

The General Ticket System succeeded in stacking the deck in favor of the Democrats in the 27th Congress but its unpopularity, even in strongly Democratic north Alabama, led to its quick demise in 1842. That same year Democrats in the General Assembly gerrymandered the state’s congressional districts—now increased from five to seven by the 1840 census—and changed the state’s apportionment ratio to a whites-only basis.⁷⁰ In this way congressional representation would be based upon the white population only, thus diminishing the power of the Whig Party in the Black Belt counties of South Alabama. The measure passed the House on a largely partisan basis by a vote of forty-six to thirty-eight, with seven Democratic defectors joining the minority. Support in the Pine Barrens was mixed, with representatives from Covington, Dale, and Coffee counties favoring the bill, while Barbour, Butler, Conecuh, and Pike were opposed. Curiously, four of the region’s ten representatives, including Henry’s James Pynes and William Gamble, did not cast a vote at all. The bill’s opponents, meanwhile, accused the majority of violating the Constitution’s three-fifths provision. They claimed that the provision weakened the slave states’ voting power, encouraged northern abolitionists, and gave “to the northern part of the State an undue advantage over the south in electing members of

⁶⁹ Ibid., 295.

⁷⁰ Proposed by Governor Benjamin Fitzpatrick and introduced in the House by Lawrence County’s David Hubbard, the white basis resolution declared: “the Select Committee to whom was referred so much of the Governor’s message as relates to laying off the State into Congressional districts, be instructed to report a bill for that purpose, having regard to the white population only, as the basis of such Congressional representation.” See: *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held in the City of Tuscaloosa, on the First Monday in December 1842* (Tuscaloosa: Phelan, 1843), 375.

Congress.”⁷¹ Historian Carlton Jackson has argued that “the White Basis bill helped eliminate much Whig power at a time when the party contained as much as 45 per cent of the voting population.”⁷²

Alabama Whiggery experienced yet another setback in the presidential election of 1844. In the national contest the comparatively unknown Democrat, James K. Polk, defeated well-known and generally popular Whig candidate Henry Clay. While Polk won comfortably in the Electoral College, the popular vote was much closer, with Clay coming to within 40,000 votes (out of 2.7 million votes cast) of a majority. Margins for victory were close on both sides. Clay carried Tennessee by the razor-thin margin of just 113 votes while Polk won New York and Michigan by 5,106 and 3,442 votes respectively. Clay’s waffling on Texas annexation cost him votes in both the North and the South. “Personally I could have no objection to the annexation of Texas,” he wrote, “but I certainly would be unwilling to see the existing Union dissolved . . . for the sake of acquiring Texas.”⁷³ To some southerners at least, Clay’s apparent willingness to sacrifice slavery’s expansion on the altar of Unionism was unacceptable. Polk’s position on Manifest Destiny, on the other hand, played well in the deep South and in Western states where westward expansion engendered hopes of free land and increased opportunity.⁷⁴ Writing to a group of antiannexationists in April, 1844, Polk made his intentions clear: “I have no hesitation

⁷¹ Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 248.

⁷² Carlton Jackson, “The White Basis System and the Decline of Alabama Whiggery,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 25 (Spring-Summer, 1963): 249.

⁷³ Calvin Colton and Henry Clay, *The Life, Correspondence, and Speeches of Henry Clay*, vol. 4 (A. S. Barnes and Company, 1857), 490–491.

⁷⁴ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*, 437–39.

in declaring that I am in favor of the immediate re-annexation of Texas to the territory and government of the United States.”⁷⁵

Alabama Whigs had been overly confident about their candidate’s chances, so much so that supporters “did not think it possible that a leader who shone so conspicuously before the people . . . was to be defeated by a man so far his inferior.”⁷⁶ Yet, Polk’s unequivocal stance in favor of Texas prompted 60 percent of the state’s electorate (36,846 out of 62,431 votes) to support the Democratic candidate. The evidence suggests that, like other areas of the state, Clay’s candidacy underwhelmed Pine Barren voters, a region where Whiggery usually enjoyed stronger support. While Clay carried the usual Whig strongholds of Barbour, Butler, Conecuh, Covington, and Pike, he did so by narrower margins than previous Whig candidates, especially when compared with Harrison’s 1840 polling results (see Table 3.2). Clay carried Covington County by a paltry nine votes, for example, while Harrison’s victory four years earlier garnered more than 74 percent of the vote in that county.⁷⁷ Polk in contrast made gains in every Pine Barren county and scored particularly well in traditional Democratic strongholds such as Henry and Dale.

⁷⁵ “Letter of Mr. Polk of Tennessee to Committee of Cincinnati,” *Mobile Advertiser*, May 11, 1844. Polk’s reference to reannexation stems from his argument that between 1803 and 1819 Texas belonged to the United States as part of the original Louisiana Purchase.

⁷⁶ Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures*, 119–20.

⁷⁷ Clanton W. Williams, “Notes and Documents: Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama,” *The Alabama Review* 2 (January 1949): 64–65; “Alabama: Official Returns of Election Counties,” *Mobile Advertiser*, December 5, 1844.

TABLE 3.2. Pine Barren Vote in Presidential Elections of 1840 and 1844

County	1840 (Harrison)	1840 (Van Buren)	1844 (Clay)	1844 (Polk)
Barbour	1,028	642	1,113	860
Butler	710	274	666	405
Conecuh	533	209	441	277
Covington	188	65	148	139
Dale	367	672	209	616
Henry	325	391	367	546
Pike	653	627	862	768

Source: Clanton W. Williams, "Notes and Documents: Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama," *Alabama Review* 1 (October 1948); "Alabama: Official Returns of Election Counties," *Mobile Advertiser*, December 5, 1844.

One man who did admire Henry Clay and worked especially hard for his campaign was Henry Hilliard. Indeed, if there was a ray of hope for despondent Whigs in the months following Clay's defeat, it was Hilliard's successful 1845 bid for Congress. At this juncture, the Montgomery District included the counties of Pike, Barbour, Coffee, Henry, Dale, Covington, Montgomery, Macon, and Russell. Hilliard and his Democratic opponent, John Cochran of Eufaula, canvassed the district with great enthusiasm and even met on one occasion in Glennville, Barbour County, for a three-hour debate. Hilliard worked especially hard, "never losing an opportunity to visit doubtful parts of the district." His political principles, charismatic personality, and energetic canvassing paid off. In Covington County, for instance, where Clay had won by less than a dozen votes, he took the time, "drove through it once more, and was rewarded for my attention by a majority of a hundred and ten votes at the Congressional election."⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures*, 123–25.

While on the stump, Cochran attempted to ride Polk's coattails by stressing his support for Texas annexation, but Hilliard countered that he and a number of other southern Whigs also supported annexation, while prominent Democrats such as Martin Van Buren opposed the measure. He also "appealed to the people to restore the Whigs to power that they might arrest the tendency of the Democratic Party to encourage sectional strife, which must bring ruin upon the country."⁷⁹ Hilliard won the election to become the lone Whig in Alabama's delegation to the twenty-ninth congress. For the time being at least, the Whigs remained the party of choice for the majority of voters in the Pine Barrens.

Hilliard's influence on Pine Barren voters as well as his effect on the staying power of the Whig Party in the region cannot be overemphasized. His staunch support for states' rights combined with an outspoken defense of the Union appealed to a majority of the citizenry. By traveling throughout the region meeting face-to-face with the people he wished to represent, he connected with poor and middle-class whites in a way that others could not or perhaps would not. At a time when the Democratic Party utilized every means within their power to destroy Whiggery in South Alabama, Hilliard was one of the party's most outspoken and influential advocates. His ability to connect with the people of the Pine Barrens helped to keep the spirit of the Whig Party alive.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 124.

Chapter 4

“Disruption of the Ties Which Bind us Together”: The Politics of Secession, 1845–1861

On January 11, 1861, Judge Gappa T. Yelverton of Coffee County stood before the secession convention on the floor of the House Chamber in Montgomery and submitted a resolution to his fellow delegates “that the secrecy be removed from the proceedings of this day.” Just moments before, the convention had voted, by a count of sixty-one to thirty-nine, to take Alabama out of the Union. They quickly adopted Yelverton’s motion and opened the chamber doors to the public. “The wild shouts and rounds of rapturous applause [of the crowd] broke in upon the ear of the convention, and startled the grave solemnity that presided over its deliberations.” A group of women from Montgomery presented a “secession flag” to the convention large enough “to reach nearly across the ample chamber.” Outside, cheering crowds swelled, prominent delegates offered speech after speech, citizens fired their weapons in the air in celebration, and the city’s cannons fired periodically throughout the remainder of the day and into the night. For delegates such as fire-eater William Lowndes Yancey, the celebration of secession was a decades-long dream come true.¹

Sixteen years earlier, on March 4, 1845, just days before the new Congress was to be seated in Washington, the U.S. House and Senate approved resolutions admitting Texas to the Union as a slave state. Three months before that, the Alabama General Assembly passed, by large majorities, its own set of resolutions supporting annexation, instructing Alabama’s U.S.

¹ William Russell Smith, *The History and Debates of the Convention of the People of Alabama: Begun and Held in the City of Montgomery, on the Seventh Day of January, 1861: In Which Is Preserved the Speeches of the Secret Sessions, and Many Valuable State Papers* (Montgomery: White and Pfister, 1861), 119.

Senators to do everything within their power to push the Texas issue forward. Every Pine Barren legislator voted with the majority.² Other slave states passed similar measures in support of swift and decisive federal action. “The Texas issue,” historian William Cooper contends, “proved again that in the South nothing could withstand the force of a political issue closely connected with slavery.”³ A year later the United States went to war with Mexico over Texas; slavery’s expansion remained at the forefront of sectional politics.

Although Henry Hilliard initially opposed the Mexican War, as did most Whigs, he supported the effort once war was declared and broke ranks with powerful elements in his own party who sought to defund the war. “If the question were now presented to me between peace and war,” he rejoined in a speech on the House floor, “I should undoubtedly be in favor of peace. But no such election is presented to us. The spectacle before us is a war in progress, our own country on one side, a foreign country on the other.”⁴ Hilliard defended the Polk administration’s prosecution of the war and supported America’s bid to acquire California in any treaty negotiations with Mexico.

Yet Hilliard and most other southern politicians from both parties strongly condemned what came to be known as the Wilmot Proviso. In August 1846, Pennsylvania Democrat David Wilmot dropped a political bombshell by proposing an amendment that would ban slavery from any territory gained from Mexico as a result of the war. Borrowing language from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the provision declared “that, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico by the United States . . . neither slavery

² *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held in the City of Tuscaloosa, on the First Monday in December 1844* (Tuscaloosa: John McCormick, 1845), 73.

³ William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History*, vol. 1 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 282.

⁴ Henry W. Hilliard, *Speeches and Addresses* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1855), 88.

nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.”⁵

The Proviso seemed an affront to all white southerners who wished to take their slaves into United States territories. Whether it was crossing the Appalachians from the eastern seaboard into Kentucky and Tennessee in the late eighteenth century, or migrating from Georgia and the Carolinas into Alabama and Mississippi, territorial expansion had always been one of the keys to economic opportunity. Political power too appeared to be in jeopardy. New territories closed to slavery would necessarily be divided up into free states, thus empowering the antislavery states at the expense of the South. Few believed that slavery would flourish in California, but the importance of excluding the institution was not lost on southern politicians.⁶ Michael Holt argues that the “significance of the Proviso was symbolic. They regarded it as a humiliating insult by the northern majority, a denial of the equal rights of white southerners, even when they had no intention of exercising those rights, and an attempt to subjugate southerners to northern dictation.”⁷

Response to the Proviso was almost entirely sectional, with northerners in support and southerners vehemently opposed. Henry Hilliard’s speech before the House sounded at times more like that of a fire-eating radical than a moderate Whig:

If this be done, this government will become unequal, and its days will be numbered. The spirit still lingers in the South which produced our Revolution—a spirit which will contend for political rights to the very last. The people of those states love this Union; they glory in the past, and hope for the future. They will cling to the pillars of the Constitution as long as they can; they will listen to the parting words of Washington, still vibrating in their ears, as long as endurance is possible; but, when they find that they were to be down-trodden, they will be constrained, though it be with deep grief, to give

⁵ *The Congressional Globe: 29th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, DC: Blair and Rives, 1846), 77.

⁶ Cooper and Terrill, *The American South: A History*, 1:285.

⁷ Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 252.

up an alliance which is to be marked only by wrongs and oppressions, and gather about their homes and their property.⁸

Resolutions from the Alabama General Assembly likewise condemned the Proviso, denied the right of the federal government to prevent slavery in the territories, denounced northern politicians who injected their antislavery views into federal policymaking, and pledged to support presidential candidates who condemned the “spirit of fanaticism.”⁹ Like many other southerners, Pine Barren inhabitants set aside party divisions to oppose a common foe in northern “provisoism.” One letter-writer suggested that Wilmot had unleashed “a demon spirit which hears no argument and under the pretext . . . of doing god’s service, is prepared to perpetuate any outrage, however great upon the constitution of our country, and the rights of the South.”¹⁰ William Lowndes Yancey and other proslavery radicals also attempted to use the Wilmot controversy to create a permanent slave-state voting bloc. Yancey even attempted to persuade Hilliard, who had earned a reputation for routinely defying his party’s positions on important issues, to join the effort. Nevertheless, neither Hilliard nor the Pine Barrens (nor most southerners for that matter) were ready to abandon the existing two-party system to create something that many acknowledged would destroy the existing Union.¹¹

The Wilmot Proviso and the presidential contest of 1848 gave both political parties an opportunity to redefine themselves—or at least readjust their positions on slavery—so as to satisfy their sectional constituencies, keep the parties intact, and attack their opponents.

Democrats nominated Michigan Senator and well-known political moderate Lewis Cass as their

⁸ Hilliard, *Speeches and Addresses*, 112.

⁹ *Acts Passed At the First Biennial Session of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Begun and Held in the City of Montgomery on the First Monday in December, 1847* (Montgomery AL: McCormick and Walshe, 1848), 500–501.

¹⁰ *Eufaula Democrat*, July 14, 1847.

¹¹ Eric H. Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 97–98; Holt, *Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 464–65.

candidate. Cass opposed the Proviso and became an advocate for popular sovereignty, a position adopted by party leaders from both sections.¹² The Whigs chose Mexican War hero Zachary Taylor, a large slaveholder from Louisiana who owned multiple plantations and more than 100 slaves. Taylor was not a politician and never took a stand publicly for or against the Proviso. Southerners nonetheless were certain that his status as a planter placed him on their side of the issue. In the North, antislavery elements refused to support Taylor, choosing instead to endorse the fledgling Free Soil Party. Most northern Whigs were eager to get behind a Jackson-like war hero.¹³

Taylor won the election nationally, but lost the state of Alabama to Cass by fewer than 900 votes. In the Pine Barrens the Whigs recaptured the votes they lost as a result of Clay's disastrous 1844 campaign and made noticeable headway in the heavily Democratic counties of Dale, Henry, and Coffee. Taylor carried Barbour, Butler, Conecuh, and Covington by at least two-to-one margins, scraped together wins in Henry and Coffee counties, and secured a comfortable victory in Pike County. Only Dale County remained the Pine Barrens Democratic Gibraltar.

In 1849, radical Democrats led by Yancey and a small group of equally radical states' rights Whigs known as the Eufaula Regency saw an opportunity to unseat Henry Hilliard who, despite his strong condemnation of the Wilmot Proviso, remained far too moderate for their liking. Stirred up by the Proviso, the debate over slavery in the territories, and the newly organized Free Soil Party in the North, the Regency, an informal faction of lawyer-planters from Barbour County, contended that secession was a viable option to protect slavery. Among the group's leaders were John and Eli Shorter, two brothers who were partners in a law firm in

¹² Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*, 476.

¹³ Cooper and Terrill, *The American South: A History*, 1:290.

Eufaula. In 1850, Eli was a young, twenty-six-year-old lawyer and planter who owned forty-four slaves and an estate worth more than \$35,000. He was an unapologetic radical who argued for the right “of a sovereign State to secede from the Union whenever she determines that the Federal Constitution has been violated by Congress, and that the Government has no Constitutional power to coerce such seceding State.”¹⁴ His older brother, John Gill Shorter, owned only eleven slaves at the time of the 1850 census, but his estate was worth around \$40,000. During his career he was a state senator, member of the house, long-time judge, and eventually became governor.

Other influential members of the Regency included John Cochran, Edward C. Bullock, Jefferson Buford, and James Pugh. Cochran was a lawyer, judge, and southern rights’ agitator who had once been defeated by Hilliard in a run for Congress. “I pray God that the South may tear herself from the power of the monster which does not conceal its purpose,” he wrote in 1851. “I do not think the Union will be dissolved immediately, but I believe, and rejoice in the belief, that at this moment there is amongst us here a leaven of disunion, which by a more or less rapid, but perceptively certain, process will leaven the whole lump.”¹⁵ Bullock, Buford, and Pugh, meanwhile, were partners in one of Eufaula’s most influential law offices. Bullock was known as one of the finest lawyers in eastern Alabama. He served as a state senator, edited a local newspaper, and mentored up-and-coming law student and future Civil War general William C. Oates. Buford was perhaps the most dominant member of the Regency. He was a former

¹⁴ William Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama: For Thirty Years* (Atlanta: Plantation Publishing Company, 1872), 617.

¹⁵ Joseph Hodgson, *The Cradle of the Confederacy: Or, the Times of Troup, Quitman, and Yancey. A Sketch of Southwestern Political History From the Formation of the Federal Government to A.D. 1861* (Mobile: Register Publishing Office, 1876), 306.

Indian fighter and state legislator.¹⁶ His style of radicalism called for a gradual move toward secession rather than the immediate separation sought by Yancey. He believed, rightly, that the masses were not yet ready for secession. “No great, valuable and lasting achievement was ever consummated without long and much toil,” he wrote. “With us it requires a long, very long time for new ideas to enter and imbue the public mind, and they must sink . . . into our very bones and marrow and become part of our being before they develop the fruit of action.”¹⁷ In other words, southern independence hinged upon white people’s willingness to accept secession as mainstream and separation from the Union as absolutely necessary. As a result, many of the radicals understood the need to be patient, resourceful, persuasive, and most of all, persistent.

One of the first steps to achieving the revolution that Buford and others desired was to replace Hilliard with one of their own. Buford’s law partner and fellow states’ rights Whig, James L. Pugh, challenged Hilliard in a campaign that came to be known as the “War of the Roses,” a reference to fifteenth-century wars between English royal families. The Democracy decided not to run a candidate of their own, choosing instead to throw their full support behind Pugh. As a fellow Whig, Pugh had supported Hilliard’s rise to political prominence, but like other radicals he put his states’ rights philosophy well ahead of party loyalty. Hilliard, on the other hand, attempted to walk a tightrope between his love for the Union, his support for slavery, and his opposition to secession.¹⁸

¹⁶ Glenn W. LaFantasie, *Gettysburg Requiem: The Life and Lost Causes of Confederate Colonel William C. Oates* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 15; J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power In a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 251.

¹⁷ Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 253.

¹⁸ Mike Bunn, “Eufaula Regency,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, 2010, www.encyclopediaofalabama.org, accessed October 12, 2012; Elbert Watson, “James Pugh,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, 2010, www.encyclopediaofalabama.org, accessed November 6, 2012; Rogers et al., *Alabama: History of a Deep South State*, 158–59; Durham, *Southern Moderate in Radical Times*, 106–109.

The campaign was bitter. The radicals accused Hilliard of selling out the South by failing to support the extreme states' rights position. Yancey traveled all over the district stumping for Pugh. A scheduled debate between Hilliard, Yancey, and Pugh at Mt. Meigs was canceled when the participants argued over the order of the speakers and failed to compromise.¹⁹ Whiggish newspapers charged Pugh with being nothing more than a pawn in the hands of the Democracy to destroy the Whig alliance and empower the most radical elements in Alabama politics. In a fiery speech before a large crowd in Montgomery, Hilliard attacked the radicals, "these self-constituted leaders of the Democratic Party, who professed to be the truest friends of the South, say that at the last election they allowed me to return to Congress without opposition; I say to these gentlemen today, I intend to return to Congress, and I defy you to prevent it. The heart of the people in this great district beats in full sympathy with me, and they will stand by me while I uphold the standard of the Constitution and the Union."²⁰

When the dust settled, Hilliard won reelection by fewer than 800 votes (see Table 4.1). Coffee, Dale, and Henry counties voted solidly for Pugh, while Barbour and Pike went for Hilliard. That Hilliard won Barbour County by a margin of just eight votes is still surprising given that Pugh was the hometown favorite. Without the counties of Macon, Montgomery, and Russell, Hilliard would have lost the election. Yet with the exception of the extreme Democratic southeastern counties, the Pine Barrens—including Conecuh and Butler which supported moderate Whig candidate William J. Alston by comfortable margins that year—remained a Whiggish region. With some exceptions, most residents of Pine Barren counties were not willing to risk dividing the Union over the Wilmot Proviso, which they believed had no real

¹⁹ Even though Yancey was not on the ballot, the Democrats believed that his debating skills were superior to Pugh's and asked him to join the debate.

²⁰ Henry W. Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1892), 209.

chance of becoming law. Nor were they all that incensed over a seemingly irrelevant faction of abolitionist radicals whom people believed would never amount to much anyway. Hilliard won the election but the Regency had established an important beachhead of radicalism in Barbour and surrounding counties that eventually moved many Whigs into the camp of an increasingly radical Democracy.²¹

TABLE 4.1. 1859 Congressional Election, District 2

Counties	Hilliard (Whig)	Pugh (Whig)
Barbour	992	984
Coffee	302	441
Covington	231	202
Dale	400	647
Henry	407	637
Macon	1,393	672
Montgomery	1,068	867
Pike	1,014	870
Russell	963	658
<i>Total</i>	6,770	5,975

Source: David Young, *The Whig Almanac, 1849. Calculations for the Year 1849* (New York: Greeley and McElrath, 1849), 59.

Proslavery radicals became even more emboldened with the passage of the Compromise of 1850, a law they once again insisted would put the South at a political disadvantage and threaten slavery. Two years earlier, the United States acquired 500,000 square miles of territory from Mexico in the aftermath of the Mexican War. “This outcome translated the Wilmot Proviso from theoretical possibility into hard reality,” William Cooper has noted, a reality that further

²¹ Austin Venable, “Alabama’s ‘War of the Roses,’” *Alabama Review* 8 (October 1955): 243-59.

polarized extremists in both sections of the country.²² While the organization of the Mexican Cession and legislation regarding California's entry into the Union were important, it was the status of slavery in the region that led to heated exchanges in both chambers of the U.S. Congress. Even moderates such as Hilliard argued that to exclude slavery from the whole of the territories, as many antislavery legislators had called for, was just one short step away from eliminating the institution from the states where it already existed. "It must be acknowledged," Hilliard contended, "that there is a mere difference of degree between having a right questioned and assaulted and having it wrested away, but your demand now to appropriate the entire territory acquired from Mexico at the close of a national war in which the whole country participated . . . has aroused a spirit which you will find it no easy task to subdue."²³ Whigs meeting in Conecuh County argued that southern politicians should insist upon "a constitutional guarantee or an undoubted equivalent, that the subject of slavery will not be again interfered with south of that line by the Federal Government in any manner whatever."²⁴

Southerners, therefore, were surprised when President Zachary Taylor pushed for immediate statehood for California, Utah, and New Mexico, a move that would have resulted in each new state entering into the Union as a free state.²⁵ Like most southerners, Alabamians were outraged that their slaveholding president would betray their trust by taking such a stance.

Whigs especially found themselves in a politically untenable position and pleaded in vain with

²² William J. Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860*, First (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 290.

²³ Hilliard, *Speeches and Addresses*, 252.

²⁴ Albert B. Moore, *History of Alabama* (Nashville, TN: Benson, 1934), 243.

²⁵ William Freehling has argued that Taylor was attempting to avoid the entire sectional controversy by urging politicians in the territories of California and New Mexico to apply for statehood directly, thus bypassing the traditional entanglements and in-fighting that accompanied congressional territorial governance. "Taylor only desired to keep the nation free of slavery controversy. He succeeded in deepening the turmoil in his land and party." William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 491.

Taylor to rethink and redefine his position. Henry Hilliard, who was hoping to secure a foreign ambassadorship from the administration, openly broke ranks with the president. “I have bestowed upon this great question the most earnest reflection,” he explained in a speech on the floor of the House. “I have studied it thoroughly and with the most sincere respect for the motives of the President [and] I find it impossible to give my support to the policy which he recommends.”²⁶ Taylor never yielded his position and would surely have vetoed the Compromise of 1850 had he lived long enough to do so.

Meanwhile, in June 1850, an assembly of delegates from nine slaveholding states met in Nashville, Tennessee, to plot a unified course of action related to territorial expansion in the southwestern territories. The Alabama General Assembly appointed thirty-six delegates but only fourteen Democrats and seven Whigs attended. Historian Lewy Dorman once suggested that, while most of the delegates were Democrats, few were of the radical persuasion.²⁷ William Yancey, for instance, refused to attend the convention, as did most of the extreme states’ rights politicians. Conspicuously absent was Henry Hilliard who, along with other prominent Alabama Whigs, discouraged their friends from attending. To the Whigs, any convention at this juncture was premature, and even if it were necessary the legislature should have allowed the people to choose their own delegates. “As to the Nashville Convention,” Hilliard maintained, “my opinion as things now stand, is against it. I adhere to the position taken by me last summer—that no convention ought to be held in advance of some act of aggression on the part of the government.

²⁶ Hilliard, *Speeches and Addresses*, 237.

²⁷ Lewy Dorman, *Party Politics in Alabama from 1850 Through 1860* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1935), 44.

The most the legislation should have done was to . . . empower the government, in the event of an aggression, to call a convention of the people to consider the question in all its bearings.”²⁸

As it turned out, the convention unanimously adopted a series of resolutions that a majority of Whigs, including Hilliard, largely supported. Avery Craven has observed that, given all of the controversy, the document was noticeably subdued in tone. While the delegates insisted upon southern rights in the territories and demanded that the federal government meet its obligations to protect slave property, there was no mention of secession—an important point consistent with the Unionist affections of a majority of southerners. Both Democrats and Whigs rallied in Montgomery, condemned the “blind and bigoted fanaticism” of northern abolitionism, and supported the resolutions. Yancey and the radicals denounced the resolutions, held rallies throughout the state, and attempted to win people’s support for secession. A meeting of Yancyites in Abbeville, Henry County, for instance, passed their own resolutions “proclaiming that a secession by the Southern States from the [nation] is the rightful and efficient remedy,” and must necessitate a “withdrawal of their delegated authority and rights from the Union which has ceased to answer the ends for which it was established, and become an engine of robbery and oppression.”²⁹

In this atmosphere Henry Clay proposed and Congress eventually passed a series of compromise resolutions whereby California would be admitted as a free state, New Mexico and Utah would theoretically be open to slavery, the slave trade would be abolished in the District of Columbia, and recovering fugitive slaves would have the full support of the federal government. Texas agreed to give up its claims to New Mexico, relinquish a large chunk of territory north of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, 1850* (Indianapolis: A. H. Brown, 1850), 598.

the Missouri Compromise line, and hand over its massive debts to be paid by the United States. Despite cries from the fire-eaters that the bill undermined slavery, the majority of Alabamians (and southerners as a whole) supported the Compromise. Henry Hilliard voted in favor of the resolutions as did both of Alabama's senators and the majority of the House delegation. State senator James Johnson insisted that the law was "intended as a final adjustment of all the difficulties which had heretofore existed or could be . . . anticipated in connection with the subject of slavery."³⁰

In the aftermath, members from both houses of the Alabama General Assembly offered numerous resolutions, some more supportive of the Compromise than others. Pine Barren legislators were more or less divided in their support. Barbour County's John Gill Shorter and John W. Jackson, Butler's John McMullen, Dale's Edwin R. Boon, and Henry's Alexander J. McAllister all opposed resolutions that supported the Compromise. In their minds weakness was provocative. They were convinced that any compromise on the issue of slavery in the territories would invite further aggressions against the institution. Conversely, Coffee County's William Holley, Conecuh's William Ashley, Covington's George Snowden, and Pike County's Levi Freeman and Richard Benbow voted in the affirmative. They were willing "to take the measures as a final settlement of the Territorial questions, so far as slavery was concerned, in the hope that . . . slavery agitation would cease."³¹ Three of the region's four state senators also voted to uphold similar measures favoring the Compromise in the Senate. Yet, while Shorter and a handful of other disunionists statewide called for immediate secession, there is no evidence to suggest that other members who opposed the Compromise were similarly ready to adopt such

³⁰ *Journal of the Third Biennial Session of the Senate of Alabama, Session, 1851-1852, Held in the City of Montgomery* (Montgomery: Brittan and De Wolfe, 1852), 57.

³¹ Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 544.

drastic action. Indeed, given the choice between moderate Unionist James Abercrombie, chosen by the Whigs to replace the retiring Henry Hilliard, and radical Yanceyite John Cochran, Pine Barren residents chose the former. One historian argues that “the [congressional] elections of 1851 battered the secessionists” statewide and affirmed the widespread sentiment that Alabamians were once again not willing to abolish the ties that bound them to the Union.³²

In the wake of the Compromise of 1850 the national Whig Party struggled to regain its former prominence. Issues such as immigration and temperance divided Whigs. Many northern Whigs refused to support the Compromise and slowly drifted into the ranks of the Free Soil Party. In the South, James Abercrombie was one of only twenty Whigs elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (out of a total of seventy-eight seats) from all of the slave states. Democrats controlled the legislatures in every southern state except North Carolina and Tennessee. Party leaders hoped to reenergize the ranks by nominating Winfield Scott for the presidency in 1852, but southerners bristled at the thought of electing another Taylor-like war hero. On the other hand, Democrats united behind the Compromise of 1850 by nominating Franklin Pierce, a New Hampshire native who promised to uphold the law in its entirety and pledged his support for southern institutions unapologetically.³³

Pierce defeated Scott in a landslide. Alabamians supported Pierce by nearly two-to-one, but voter turnout, especially among disenchanted Whigs, was much lower than in previous presidential contests. Every Pine Barren county except Barbour voted for the Democratic ticket. Yet, the evidence suggests that if Whig voters had turned out in the same numbers as they had in 1848 the results might have been different. In Pike County, for example, only 379 voters cast a

³² Ibid., 182–85; *Journal of the Third Biennial Session of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Session 1851-1852, Held in the City of Montgomery* (Montgomery: Brittan and De Wolf, 1852), 318–19; Durham, *Southern Moderate in Radical Times*, 120–25; Rogers et al, *Alabama: History of a Deep South State*, 162.

³³ Cooper and Terrill, *The American South: A History*, 1:296–297.

ballot for Scott in 1852 as opposed to the 935 votes Taylor received in 1848, a 59 percent decline. Democrats, on the other hand, increased their turnout margins by 11 percent overall. The fire-eaters, meanwhile, ran their own slate of candidates, featuring George Troup of Georgia and Mississippi's John A. Quitman, but made little headway in the region outside the Eufaula Regency's Barbour County, where the ticket picked up a voting majority, and Henry County, where they ran a close second behind Pierce.³⁴

In 1854, the divisive issue of slavery raised its head once again, this time in a portion of the Louisiana Purchase known as the Nebraska Territory. Senator Stephen A. Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Act divided the territory, nullified the old Missouri Compromise prohibitions on slavery, and established popular sovereignty as a means by which slavery could be introduced into the region. The act created a firestorm in the North, shattered what was left of Whig Party unity, and provided a launching pad from which the newly-formed Republican Party would unleash a barrage of condemnatory declarations aimed at the "slave power" menace in the South. Gamaliel Bailey, radical abolitionist and editor of the *National Era*, encouraged all antislavery men in the North to "rally as one man for the reestablishment of liberty and the overthrow of the Slave Power."³⁵

Down South, orphaned southern Whigs with states' rights leanings migrated into the Democratic Party, while Unionist Whigs—the majority of the Party—and a sizeable number of disaffected Democrats drifted temporarily into the ranks of the American or Know-Nothing Party. Like their Whig predecessors, southern Know-Nothings swore that they were the true

³⁴ Clanton W. Williams, "Notes and Documents: Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama," *The Alabama Review* 2 (January 1949): 66–69; Cooper and Terrill, *The American South: A History*, 1:296–97; Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 264–65; Rogers, et al, *Alabama: History of a Deep South State*, 162–63.

³⁵ Holt, *Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 844.

guardians of slavery and defenders of the Union. Henry Hilliard proposed “to aid that party to the full extent of my ability. . . . Let us appeal once more to the masses of the North to be faithful to the Constitution; and if we fail to awaken their patriotism, we know how to die in defence of our institutions.”³⁶

In the wake of the Kansas-Nebraska Act thousands of settlers flooded into the territory. While most went in search of affordable farm land and greater opportunity, others went specifically to fight either for or against the extension of slavery into the region. Both proslavery and antislavery partisans moved into the region equipped with guns, ammunition, and an unwavering devotion to their respective causes. Eufaula’s Jefferson Buford notably organized a group of 400 emigrants, mostly men from Alabama and Georgia, with the grand scheme of establishing a permanent proslavery settlement in the territory. He and a small band of hand-picked recruiters traveled throughout the Pine Barrens, making stops in Greenville, Troy, Elba, Daleville, Newton, Abbeville, Franklin, and other communities. Buford’s fiery temperament, his appeals to white supremacy, and his warnings against racial amalgamation, must have been enticing. Abolitionism, he suggested,

cannot stop short of universal freedom, equality and fraternity; and when it emancipates, it must protect its beneficiaries by giving them right to her arms—to vote—to testify—to make laws—nay! by sending the federal army to defend them, and to fight their battles. It is therefore . . . a question of races, equally affecting every white skin in the land—it is a question of whether the inferior race, ceasing to be producers and tax payers, shall become drones and eat up the hive—whether the stenchy Ethiopian shall sleep with the white man—sit with him in church—jostle him in the street—thrust him from the assembly, the witness stand, the jury and the ballot box—marry his daughters, make and administer his laws—steal his pigs and put him in prison for complaining—a question in which every white skin [is] equally interested.³⁷

³⁶ “Synopsis of the Speech of Honorable H.W. Hilliard,” *Weekly Alabama Journal*, July 21, 1855.

³⁷ “To Kansas Emigrants,” *Weekly Alabama Journal*, January 12, 1856; “Kansas Emigration,” *Weekly Alabama Journal*, February 5, 1836.

In April 1856, “Buford’s Battalion,” about 350 strong at this point, received a grand send off in Montgomery, complete with political speeches, a sermon by popular minister Isaac Taylor Tichenor, and a cheering crowd of more than 5,000 supporters from all over the state. In a stroke of irony, an African American band entertained the crowd at the same time that banners proclaiming “The Supremacy of the White Race” and “Kansas, the Outpost” were displayed overhead. Addressing the crowd from atop a bale of cotton, Hilliard championed white supremacy and fervently defended southern rights, but only within the context of the Union.³⁸

The expedition went by train from Montgomery to Mobile, then by ship to New Orleans, steamed up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, and overland to the Kansas Territory. Proslavery Missourians welcomed “with open arms those gallant sons of Alabama and other Southern States, now on their way to their new homes in the Kansas Territory. . . . We hereby pledge ourselves to them . . . that we will aid and assist them in every proper way, and should emergencies require, we will march shoulder to shoulder with them to the last struggle for Southern rights.”³⁹ As it turned out, Buford’s ruffians arrived just in time for some of the bloodiest fighting in the Kansas civil war. They notably participated in the attack on the free-state settlement at Lawrence, although Buford reportedly tried to stop some of the more blatant destruction of private property.

The attack on Lawrence sparked John Brown’s murderous raid on a slave-state settlement along Pottawattamie Creek near Lecompton, Kansas, the heart of the proslavery movement in the territory. Brown, a militant abolitionist with visions of crushing slavery by force of arms, entered Kansas with his four sons intent on “striking terror in the hearts of the proslavery

³⁸ Walter L. Fleming, “The Buford Expedition to Kansas, 1899-1903,” *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society* 4 (Montgomery: Brown Printing, 1904): 178–79.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

people.”⁴⁰ On the night of May 24–25, Brown’s small force raided three homes, then captured and executed five men with broadswords; several were murdered right in front of their families. While none of Brown’s men were ever brought to justice for their crimes, the proslavery attack on Lawrence followed by the massacre at Pottawattamie Creek escalated the violence. Over the next eighteen months, more than 200 people died. Abolitionist forces drove most of the proslavery emigrants, including almost all of Buford’s men, out of the territory. Buford’s experiment in Kansas ultimately failed, but the bloodshed that took place between abolitionists and proslavery zealots in “Bleeding Kansas” heightened sectional animosity and provided a preview of deadlier events yet to come.⁴¹

While sectional violence exploded in Kansas, the gubernatorial and congressional elections of 1855 helped redefine the political landscape back home in the Pine Barrens. Governor John A. Winston was up for reelection. The Democratic Party faithful were so pleased with his leadership that they bypassed the formalities of a nominating convention. The American Party backed Democrat George D. Shortridge, a lawyer, planter, and circuit court judge from Shelby County. Like most statewide elections, local issues often trumped the national. In this instance the gubernatorial race became less about Unionism versus states’ rights and more about state aid to the railroads. During his first term as governor, Winston had opposed many state-sponsored loans to railroad companies, arguing that such measures benefitted certain sections of the state at the expense of others, entangled the state government with private enterprise, and threatened to send the state into financial dire straits if the loans went bad. Shortridge favored these loans, although as the contest progressed he often moderated his

⁴⁰ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 152.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

position, especially when campaigning in anti-aid areas of the state such as the southeastern Pine Barren counties. Winston exploited his opponent's waffling on the issue and cruised to a comfortable victory, winning by 12,000 votes statewide. His victory in the Pine Barrens was even more complete, taking every county except Pike by fairly sizeable margins, and racking up 65 percent of the total regional vote (see Table 4.2). Shortridge did squeeze out a victory in Pike County thanks to a sizeable and influential base of support in Troy.⁴²

The 1855 congressional election for the second district meanwhile featured Eli Shorter, a prominent member of the Eufaula Regency, and Pike County's Julius Caesar Alford, an old Indian fighter and former Whig congressman from Georgia whose antics on the floor of the House in Washington won him critical acclaim back home. Alford had no sooner taken the oath of office during his first term in Congress in 1839, when he took to the floor of the house to challenge a northern congressman who had moments before finished a speech denouncing Georgia's mistreatment of the Indians. "The gentleman from Massachusetts never saw an Indian," he fumed, "never was scalped, never heard the savage war-whoop. I can enlighten him." William Garrett, a contemporary of Alford's, recalled that the newly elected congressman gave an energetic "war-whoop in a fine imitation. . . . Then came a tempest of denunciation upon the Northern fanatics, who busied themselves in matters of which they were wholly ignorant; the imaginary sorrows of a brutal Indian outweighed in their tender consciences the misery of innocent women and children whom he had butchered."⁴³

Alford's problem in 1855 was threefold. First, he had lived in the region for only about five years, having moved from Georgia to Pike County sometime in 1850, and as such was

⁴² Dorman, *Party Politics in Alabama from 1850 Through 1860*, 106–16; Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 324–27.

⁴³ Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*, 618.

basically unknown outside of his county. He then had the bad luck to be running in a district gerrymandered by the General Assembly the year before. For years Democrats had been itching to gain control of District 2, and had removed three large Whiggish counties, Montgomery, Russell, and Macon, and replaced them with the smaller counties of Lowndes and Butler. The new district, with a weakened Whiggery, more or less guaranteed the seat for the Democracy. Finally, Alford's opponent was a well-known former Whig turned states' rights Democrat with strong ties to communities throughout the southeastern corner of the state. Yet while Shorter carried Barbour, Coffee, Dale, and Henry, winning 55 percent of the regional vote, Alford was successful in Butler, Covington (by just two votes), Lowndes, and Pike counties, garnering 45 percent of the vote.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, in the northern states, the Republican Party's surge in popularity after only two years of existence continued with the 1856 presidential nomination of war hero John C. Frémont. The party's presidential slogan, "Free Speech, Free Press, Free Soil, Free Men, Fremont and Victory," left no doubt as to which side of the sectional argument they fell.⁴⁵ The American Party chose former president Millard Fillmore as its nominee. Fillmore blamed the Republicans for sowing seeds of agitation and disunion, touted his own executive experience, and promised to "restore sectional harmony by favoring neither North nor South, insisting that 'I know only my country, my whole country, and nothing but my country.'"⁴⁶ The Democrats nominated longtime Democratic politician James Buchanan, a Pennsylvanian and former slave owner who, twenty years earlier, had signed manumission papers immediately upon the purchase

⁴⁴ *The Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1856* (New York: Greeley and McElrath, 1856), 63.

⁴⁵ For more information on the formation of the Republican Party see William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party: 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ Tyler G. Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 220–21.

of two slaves with the caveat that freedom would be postponed; a practice not unheard of among border northerners. The “gradual emancipator,” as historian William Freehling calls him, “was a northern man with southern principles, if one means a Border North man with Border South principles.”⁴⁷

Frémont carried ten of fifteen northern states and captured 45 percent of the vote in that section, compared with just 41 percent for Buchanan. Yet Buchanan won the presidency by sweeping the South, taking California, and winning every northern border state except for Ohio. “Old Buck” garnered 62 percent of the vote in Alabama, similar to the margin of victory gained by the Democratic contender in the governor’s race just one year earlier. In Alabama, while Buchanan carried every Pine Barren county except Butler, he did so in several cases by the slimmest of margins. Coffee, Dale, and Henry, for example, voted solidly and predictably Democratic, while Conecuh, Covington, and Pike, gave Buchanan the nod by just 117 total votes. Fillmore won Butler County by only fifteen votes (see Table 4.2), and for the first time in a presidential election Barbour County voted Democratic. The evidence thus suggests that by 1856 a definite shift had occurred in the region. While the Democratic Party had increased its power in the southeastern portion of the region, the demise of the Whigs, the transience of the Know-Nothings, and the growing threat posed by the Republican Party allowed the Democracy to make minor but politically significant inroads into traditional Whig strongholds.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 98–99.

⁴⁸ “Presidential Election in Alabama,” *Weekly Alabama Journal*, February 5, 1856; Rogers et al., *Alabama: History of a Deep South State*, 170–72; Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 358–61.

TABLE 4.2. Governor's Race and Presidential Election, 1855-1856

	1855 Governor's Election		1856 Presidential Election	
	Winston (D)	Shortridge (A)	Buchanan (D)	Fillmore (A)
Barbour	1,696	661	1,445	857
Butler	699	632	777	792
Coffee	760	283	703	301
Conecuh	401	390	425	408
Covington	361	140	304	288
Dale	1,232	147	945	419
Henry	1,013	347	966	471
Pike	1,199	1,257	1,262	1,178
<i>Total</i>	7,361	3,857	6,827	4,714

Source: "Presidential Election in Alabama," *Weekly Alabama Journal*, February 5, 1856

Between 1856 and 1860, a number of momentous events tied to slavery deepened the sectional divide. Just two days after Buchanan's inauguration the Supreme Court handed down the Dred Scott decision. Seven of the nine justices, including all six southern jurists, ruled that blacks were not citizens and had no right to bring suit in federal court. The court also nullified the Missouri Compromise and declared that Congress had no right to restrict slavery in any territory. Not only did Buchanan move swiftly to support the court's decision, the administration also defended Kansas' entry into the union as a slave state, despite the fraudulent circumstances surrounding the Lecompton Constitution. Alabama's General Assembly supported the court's decision and demanded that Congress admit Kansas as a slave state. Both issues undermined

national Democratic Party unity as Stephen Douglas challenged Buchanan, strengthened the Republicans, invigorated the fire-eaters, and ultimately weakened an already fragile Union.⁴⁹

Two years later, John Brown's 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, sent shockwaves through the South. In the months leading up to the attack, Brown recruited a small force of about fifteen men to assist him in his plans to seize the U.S. armory at the Ferry, foment a general uprising of slaves in the southern Appalachians, and distribute captured weapons to the slaves who joined their crusade. The attack on the arsenal was doomed to fail. James McPherson argues that when Brown finally made his move "he did so without previous notice to the slaves he expected to join him, without rations, without having scouted any escape routes, with no apparent idea of what to do after capturing the armory buildings. It was almost as if he knew that failure with its ensuing martyrdom would do more to achieve his ultimate goal than any 'success' could have done."⁵⁰ Within minutes of the attack, Brown's party was surrounded by angry townspeople who pinned them down with small arms fire while the militia was organized. Twelve hours later most of Brown's men were either dead or captured, while Brown himself was arrested and later tried and executed.

The Harpers Ferry raid and the continuing Kansas statehood debacle prompted Governor Andrew Barry Moore—a moderate Democrat elected overwhelmingly in 1859—to take a more proactive approach to stem the rising abolitionist tide and prepare for the worst should the "Black Republicans" gain control of the executive branch. He bolstered the state's militia system and supported a resolution "requiring the Governor of Alabama to call a state convention in the event a Republican should be elected President of the United States in 1860." If

⁴⁹ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 117–42; Cooper and Terrill, *The American South: A History*, 1:302–04; *Journal of the Sixth Biennial Session of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Session of 1857-1858, Held in the City of Montgomery* (Montgomery: N.B. Cloud, 1858), 77–79, 131–32.

⁵⁰ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 205–206.

necessary, this convention would be fully authorized to consider secession and “to advise and consult with her sister states whose interests are similarly affected to bring about concert of action.”⁵¹

The 1860 presidential election finally brought to a head decades of sectional tension. The Democratic Party split into northern and southern factions over the issue of slavery. While Democrats in the North nominated Douglas, their prodigal brethren to the South chose Vice President John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky as their standard-bearer. Former Whigs and Know-Nothings, together with a handful of disenchanted Democrats, coalesced around Constitutional Union party candidate John Bell of Tennessee. Lincoln, the Republican contender, carried just 40 percent of the popular vote but won the presidency by capturing every northern state except New Jersey.

Lincoln was not on the ballot in Alabama. Breckinridge carried the state with more than 54 percent of the vote, but John Bell and Stephen Douglas received 30 percent and 14 percent respectively. Six Pine Barren counties gave majorities to Breckinridge, while two went for Bell. Breckinridge grabbed 61 percent of the vote with Bell taking 35 percent. Douglas was a distant third, capturing only 500 out of 13,425 votes cast in the region. Yet, a closer examination of the data reveals that the race between Breckinridge and Bell was more evenly matched in Butler, Conecuh, Covington, and to a somewhat lesser degree Pike (see Table 4.3). The evidence

⁵¹ *Journal of the Seventh Biennial Session of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Session of 1859-1860, Held in the City of Montgomery* (Montgomery: Shorter and Reid, 1858), 281. It should be noted that Moore refused to support South Carolina’s call for a secession convention in 1860. “To call a convention, with this view, at this time, is in my opinion, premature,” he argued. “I fully concur with the legislature of South Carolina, in the principles set forth in [her] resolutions, but deem it inexpedient to call a convention of the slaveholding states ‘immediately,’ for the purposes contemplated in the resolutions.” The resolutions adopted by the Alabama General Assembly and supported by Moore were actually seen as a way to compromise and avert a secession fight with the fire-eaters.

suggests that these counties retained much of their Whiggish allegiance despite important recent inroads made by the Democracy.⁵²

TABLE 4.3. 1860 Presidential Election

County	Bell	Breckinridge	Douglas
Barbour	644	1,715	81
Butler	1,079	918	111
Coffee	394	878	2
Conecuh	338	348	205
Covington	416	404	12
Dale	277	1,280	5
Henry	317	1,109	0
Pike	1,227	1,581	84
<i>Totals</i>	4,692 (35%)	8,233 (61%)	500 (4%)

Source: Clanton W. Williams, “Notes and Documents: Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama,” *Alabama Review* 2 (January 1949), 72-73.

J. Mills Thornton contends that in Alabama the Breckinridge canvass in fact turned the election into a referendum on secession in the event that Abraham Lincoln won the presidency. “The Breckinridge speakers,” he notes, “repeatedly proclaimed that, though existing wrongs were not adequate to justify secession, the election of Lincoln would be sufficient cause.” Statewide, Breckinridge Democrats defeated their Douglas brethren by nearly three-to-one. While Douglas’s supporters were concentrated primarily in the north-central hill counties—an area known for its pockets of robust Unionist sentiment—and a handful of counties in the Tennessee Valley, Breckinridge polled heavily on the flanks to the east and west of that area and in the counties in the state’s southeastern corner.

⁵² Williams, “Notes and Documents, 1949,” 72–73.

In the Pine Barrens, Thornton's argument appears to be only partially correct. If the counties that delivered the largest number of votes to Douglas truly were resolutely antisecession, as he suggests, then many if not most Pine Barren residents were not opposed to the idea. Douglas, for instance, received little to no support in the region outside of Conecuh County, where the Little Giant polled about 20 percent of the vote.⁵³ On the other hand, political party loyalty remained generally intact. Breckinridge's overwhelming victories in Barbour, Henry, Dale, and Coffee suggests that these counties may have been willing to break up the union, but this section of the region, with the exception of Barbour, had voted solidly Democratic for more than a decade. There appears to have been an almost even split in Butler, Conecuh, Covington, and Pike counties between those who voted for Breckinridge and those who voted for Bell, a former Whig. Bell loyalists maintained that Lincoln's election alone did not necessarily justify secession. "Our wiser course would be to assert our rights within the Union," Henry Hilliard insisted, "and we should exhaust every remedy in our power for the maintenance of our rights before we abandon it."⁵⁴ Hilliard's defensive tone suggests that more and more Whigs were at least warming to the idea of secession. Once the election was decided men like Hilliard were forced to make a decision. Would they continue to defend the union or would it take more than an election to sway them?

In December, with Lincoln's election finalized, Governor Moore called a special election for delegates to attend a convention in Montgomery for the purpose of debating Alabama's secession from the Union. As it turned out, the only significant difference between the delegates was the disparity between those who supported immediate secession and those who publicly advocated cooperation with other slave states before leaving the Union. Cooperationists did not

⁵³ Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society*, 403–14.

⁵⁴ Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures*, 302.

generally oppose secession, but they did insist that the slave states leave the Union as a unified whole rather than break off piecemeal. Some demanded that any move toward secession must ultimately be voted on by the people. Others argued that unless the Lincoln administration took overt measures against slavery the southern states had no right to leave the Union.

Despite Hilliard's earlier advice, Lincoln's election appears to have been a turning point. Every Pine Barren county, except Conecuh where the votes were most evenly divided, elected men who supported immediate secession. In some cases it is difficult to trace the contests and the candidates involved, but most of the representatives were slaveholders who tended to be well-known lawyers, judges, or former members of the state legislature. Barbour countians sent John Cochran, Alpheus Baker, and John W.L. Daniel. Little is known about their opponents, if there were any. Butler County elected Samuel J. Bolling and John McPherson. In Coffee County, Gappa T. Yelverton soundly defeated cooperationist candidate Francis A. Byars by a vote of 714 to 359, while in neighboring Covington County, DeWitt C. Davis comfortably won out over Albert G. Mallett with 337 votes to 229. It is likely that James McKinnie and D. B. Creech won Dale County with little opposition. In Henry County, Thomas Smith and Hasting Owen won overwhelmingly against George W. Williams. Williams once served as the county's representative in the General Assembly but managed to get only seventy-five votes in the convention race. Andrew P. Love, Eli Starke, and Jeremiah A. Henderson represented Pike County; there is no evidence as to who their opponents were. All three were former Whigs who joined ranks with the states' rights Democrats in the late 1850s.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Clarence Phillips Denman, *The Secession Movement in Alabama* (Montgomery: Alabama State Department of Archives and History, 1933), 162–65. Since most of the counties appear to have retained much of their traditional political alliances—Love, Starke, and Henderson were all former Whigs, as was Samuel J. Bolling of Butler—the common thread shared by almost all of the delegates was immediate secession.

Conecuh County, on the other hand, gave a slight edge to cooperationist candidate John Green over secessionist Wilson Ashley by a vote of 399 to 372.⁵⁶ Green was a thirty-three-year-old planter who owned a 285-acre plantation and fourteen slaves in the Burnt Corn community, about ten miles northwest of Evergreen. He voted against the ordinance of secession, but vowed to “sustain the action of the Convention. . . . He had been elected as a cooperationist; and would now greatly prefer a consultation with the slaveholding States before he severed the bonds of the Union. But, he would not withhold his acquiescence from the will of a majority here, however much he might be convinced, in his own mind, of the propriety of cooperation.”⁵⁷ Like most cooperationists, Green had hoped that the slave states would move together in whatever course of action they chose to take. He also disapproved of the convention’s decision not to submit the document for ratification by the people, which appears to have been his primary motive for voting no.⁵⁸

At the convention, every Pine Barren delegate except Green unsurprisingly voted for secession. If William Russell Smith’s account of the convention is accurate, and there is no evidence to the contrary, the region’s delegates rarely made speeches or engaged in direct debate on the floor. Yelverton, one of the wealthiest and most influential citizens in Coffee County, spoke out once in favor of a resolution that would have committed Alabama to defend seceding states from any attempt on the part of the U.S. Government to coerce them back into the Union. When the cooperationists insisted that the resolution be referred to committee before being voted upon by the full convention, Yelverton defended them:

The assurances we have from honorable gentlemen of the minority, that the reference is sought only with the great patriotic view of understanding the resolution, and

⁵⁶ Robert Leslie Scribner, “A Short History of Brewton, Alabama,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 11 (1949): 15.

⁵⁷ Smith, *The History and Debates of the Convention of the People of Alabama*, 98.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 446.

understanding each other, and thus to enable them to vote with us, *for the resolution*, is an appeal all powerful to me. I hold, Mr. President, that it would be exceedingly disgraceful to our gallant State, to have a single vote cast against this resolution; and if I did not go for this reference with the assurances I have, I should feel myself to that extent responsible for that disgrace. Then, I appeal to gentlemen who are already prepared to vote for the resolution, and, as the delay will be but temporary and the result not doubtful, to vote for the reference, that our friends of the minority may have no cause of complaint, and that the resolution may be adopted unanimously.⁵⁹

Throughout the convention the cooperationists often used delaying maneuvers such as these to postpone or kill proposals they opposed. While secessionists such as Yelverton understood this tactic, they at least wanted to give the impression that the proceedings were fair. In this case he appears to have believed that the minority was sincere. “I think I hazard nothing in saying that a unanimous report in favor of the resolution would follow such a reference.”⁶⁰ In the end the cooperationists won this particular fight; the resolution never came up for a vote.

The convention also debated the question of sending troops to Florida to aid in the seizure of Federal installations in Pensacola. Cooperationists argued forcefully that such a measure was unwarranted and potentially reckless. “This unnecessary aggression on our part,” one delegate insisted, “will not strengthen our cause in public estimation.” Eufaula’s John Cochran was among the first to take the floor in defense of the resolution. “There is no necessity for delay,” he contended. “To doubt the existence of the necessity for this aid, as requested by Florida, would be an indignity to that State. If the aid is to be granted, let it be granted at once. One day's delay, and all may be lost. In emergencies, such as those which now surround us, all success depends upon the rapidity of our movements.” The resolution passed but the roll call for this vote was not recorded.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 51.

Much of the debate surrounding the ordinance of secession itself was twofold: first, over whether or not Alabama should cooperate with other slave states before seceding; and second, whether a measure for popular ratification should be adopted. In both cases Pine Barren representatives kept a low profile when it came to the debates. As a member of the minority, John Green's reasoning and opposition to secession has already been noted. Cooperationists such as Green made a gallant stand but their position was ultimately untenable. The same was true for ratification. One delegate argued "that the sovereignty of Alabama remains with the people thereof, and that the result of the convention called by the Governor . . . should be referred back to the people for their rejection or ratification."⁶² This, too, failed to win the day. With the exception of Green, none of the region's delegates supported either position.

By February 1861, the convention had taken Alabama out of the Union, voted to send troops to Pensacola, voted down a provision to reopen the African slave trade, and penned a new state constitution. For diehard secessionists such as William Lowndes Yancey, this dream come true was twenty years in the making. For many Pine Barren residents, both former Whigs and moderate Democrats, the journey from moderation to secession began with the Wilmot Proviso, escalated with the Compromise of 1850 and the subsequent death of the national Whig Party, and reached a plateau during the Kansas civil war and John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. Due to their deep devotion to the Democratic Party, which dated all the way back to Andrew Jackson, the counties of Henry, Dale, and Coffee appear to have moved more rapidly toward secession. The Eufaula Regency had an important effect on the entire southeastern corner of the state. Conecuh, Covington, Butler, and Pike counties, where Whiggery had been strongest, maintained a resilient spirit of moderation until the late 1850s. With Lincoln's election followed closely by secession the old Unionism began to fall by the wayside as every community prepared for war.

⁶² Ibid., 100.

Chapter 5

“From the Lights Before Us I Think War is Close at Hand:” The War Begins

Governor Andrew B. Moore did not wait for the state’s secession convention to convene before preparing for the possibility of war. With authorization from the 1860 General Assembly, the governor wasted no time sending north purchasing agents, including mail contractor and longtime personal friend James R. Powell, to purchase small arms, cannon, gun carriages, and other implements of war. By the first of the New Year, 1861, Powell’s efforts alone had netted more than \$46,000 in guns and ammunition for the state’s armory.¹ Many of the small arms were smoothbore muskets retrofitted with percussion hardware, rifled, and supplied with elevating sights.² Unfortunately, as the state’s volunteer ranks began to swell, the governor’s efforts to secure enough weapons to outfit the troops fell woefully short.

Volunteer companies raised in Alabama reflected the values and character of their communities. Company captains were almost always well-respected community leaders, while the rank-and-file tended to be family, friends, and neighbors who identified closely with one another. These men, and the communities they represented, enjoyed similar social, political, and economic ties, not to mention the bonds of kinship that often ran through the organization.

¹ W. Buck Years, *The Confederate Governors* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 18.

² *Journal of the Called Session of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing January 14, 1861* (Montgomery: Shorter and Reid, 1861), 186–87. Members of Alabama’s House Committee on Military Affairs tested the rifles and found them to be accurate at long distances. “None of the balls fell short,” the committee reported, “and, although their deviation could not be determined with precision, it was so slight as to satisfy the committee as to the unusual accuracy and efficiency of the guns at long range.”

On January 4, 1861, the governor ordered a force of state militia to seize the United States arsenal at Mount Vernon, an ordnance manufacturing center located on the Mobile River about thirty miles north of Mobile. The next day Alabama troops captured Forts Morgan and Gaines, two Federal fortifications guarding the entrance to Mobile Bay. In a letter to President James Buchanan, Moore attempted to justify his actions. “The purpose with which my order was given and has been executed,” he wrote, “was to avoid and not to provoke hostilities between the State and the Federal Government.”³ The governor then dispatched an additional six companies, about 500 men, to Pensacola to aid the Floridians in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to wrest Fort Pickens from Union control.

The General Assembly, called back into special session in January, further empowered the governor by issuing \$2,000,000 in bonds “for the military defence of the state of Alabama.” Nearly half was to be appropriated to pay volunteering soldiers. “We seek no conflict; we make no aggressive war,” the resolution declared, “but threats of coercion have been made from high quarters, and it is the duty of the Legislature to put the State on a footing for vigorous and successful defense.” The measure passed overwhelmingly seventy-five votes to twelve, with every Pine Barren legislator save Covington County’s Alfred Holly voting in support.⁴

Holly—whose strong support for the Union became increasingly problematic as the war progressed—and the other eleven opponents launched a formal protest. They claimed to oppose the bill largely because portions of it unfairly benefitted the wealthy at the expense of the poor. Money used for the purchase of bonds, for example, was exempt from taxation, “thus giving capitalists who desire to invest their funds in said bonds an advantage over other citizens who are

³ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 128 Vols.* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), ser. 1, vol. 1, pt. 1, 328. Hereafter cited as *O.R.*

⁴ *Acts of the Called Session of the General Assembly of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the Second Monday in January, 1861* (Montgomery: Shorter and Reid, 1861), 34, 43–46.

equally patriotic, but who cannot make such an investment.” Critics also contended that the bill’s tax incentives would deprive the state of much needed annual revenues that would have otherwise filled the coffers of the state treasury. We “can see no justice or equity in making such discrimination in favor of some and against others of our citizens,” they argued.⁵ For the moment, such assertions remained a minority opinion.

Alabama’s secession convention, held concurrently in Montgomery with the special session of the legislature, meanwhile authorized the governor to recruit and “accept the services of any number of volunteers who shall associate and offer themselves for [military] service.”⁶ This resolution dovetailed with a similar act passed during the 1860 session of the General Assembly that called for the reorganization of the antiquated state militia system and the formation of new volunteer companies. In the wake of John Brown’s Harpers Ferry raid, a chorus of calls for armed readiness and military resistance to the new administration in Washington echoed throughout the state, including in the Pine Barrens. “Every one here looks serious,” Barbour County attorney Hubert Dent observed, “but most every one I hope is determined. I shall rejoin the ‘rifles’ when I return or get up some other Company. I feel like the South now expects every man to do his duty.”⁷

Dent’s mention of the “rifles” was a reference to the Eufaula Rifles, an organization rooted in the militia structure that had operated to one degree or another in the community for years. Traditionally, the state’s militia companies were small, community-based military organizations, composed of white men ages eighteen to forty-five, who were expected to muster

⁵ Ibid., 37–38.

⁶ *Ordinances and Constitution of the State of Alabama, With the Constitution of the Provisional Government and of the Confederate States of America* (Montgomery: Montgomery Advertiser Book and Job Printing Office, 1861), 9.

⁷ Hubert Dent to Anna Dent, November 8, 1860, Stouten Hubert Dent Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

and drill at least twice each year. Each company's rank-and-file elected their own officers, who tended to be affluent, well-known, and well-respected community leaders. As historian Robert Kenzer has noted in his study of Orange County, North Carolina, southern militia companies not only fostered a sense of community and comradeship, they also functioned as training grounds for men who would one day serve as officers in Confederate armies.⁸

Approved in February 1860, the act to reorganize the state's militia sought to establish an all-volunteer force of 8,000 men. Company captains were required to assemble their men "at least twelve times a year, for public parade and instruction, and shall drill and exercise it in the school of the soldier and company."⁹ Under this law dozens of new volunteer companies sprang up all over the state. Pike County's Orion Blues, Butler's Southern Guards, the Coffee Rifles, and Barbour's Midway Southern Guards were just a few of the units organized in Pine Barren counties under the new law. In reality some of these "reorganized" militia companies existed only on paper or disbanded quickly before the war began, but many of them continued to recruit and drill, a few would join the effort to take Fort Pickens from the Yankees, and by the spring and summer of 1861 the members of most of the remaining companies eagerly had mustered into Confederate service.

Events such as Harpers Ferry, Lincoln's election, the governor's seizure of Federal installations, and the state's withdrawal from the Union all triggered a flurry of recruiting activity. The bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor on April 12, 1861, followed three days later by Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion, prompted a greater sense of urgency and a flood of energetic volunteering. Resolutions adopted at a mass

⁸ Robert C. Kenzer, *Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 71-72.

⁹ *Acts of the Seventh Biennial Session, of the General Assembly of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the Second Monday in November, 1859* (Montgomery: Shorter and Reid, 1860), 38.

public meeting in Dale County declared that “public feeling is high [and] the success of our arms at Fort Sumter gives new life to all. Dale may be well said to be unanimously sound; ready and willing for any service required.”¹⁰ No sooner had the ink dried on Lincoln’s call for volunteers, when Thomas Crenshaw of Butler County sat down and penned a letter to his nephew Edward, then attending the University of Virginia. “I am fearful that you will have to leave Virginia before the close of the session,” he wrote, “for from the lights before us I think war is close at hand between the North and the South.”¹¹

Even Henry Hilliard, heretofore strongly opposed to secession and anxiously in hopes that the Union would be preserved, condemned the Lincoln Administration’s decision and now wholeheartedly embraced the Confederate cause. “The situation which confronted the new administration at Washington,” he later recalled, “required the adoption of measures in accordance with the spirit of the American government; not a rash and imperious act of usurped authority, such as might have been expected from the absolute ruler of a despotic state.”¹² Hilliard soon traveled to Tennessee as an envoy to encourage that state’s legislature to secede, and then began recruiting Hilliard’s Legion, a large organization of Alabama soldiers, many of whom came from Pine Barren counties.

While an exact count of the number of men from Pine Barren counties who fought for the South is impossible to determine, the evidence gleaned from surviving muster rolls, payrolls, and other primary and secondary sources suggests that the region contributed a little over 8,000 soldiers to the Confederacy during the conflict. The majority appears to have joined during the

¹⁰ *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, May 1, 1861.

¹¹ Thomas Crenshaw to Edward Crenshaw, Crenshaw Family Papers, April 15, 1861, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama. Edward remained in school until the end of the semester but returned home in time to join Company K, 17th Alabama as a 3rd Lieutenant.

¹² Henry Washington Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 324.

first two years of the war (see Table 5.1). Stated differently, using the 1860 population census as a gauge, each county contributed anywhere from one-third to one-half of its white, male population ages fifteen to fifty. When the figures are compared to the number of white males aged twenty to forty, the percentages jump dramatically. Barbour and Pike counties included the largest white populations in the region and consequently turned out the largest number of soldiers, while Covington County with the smallest population, not surprisingly contributed the fewest.

TABLE 5.1. Number of Soldiers by County

County	Number Of Soldiers	White Male Population Ages 15–50 in 1860	White Male Population Ages 20–40 in 1860	Total White Population in 1860
Barbour	1,763	3,536 (50%)	2,118 (83%)	14,629 (12%)
Butler	1,127	2,644 (43%)	1,620 (70%)	11,260 (10%)
Coffee	765	1,827 (42%)	1,024 (75%)	8,200 (9%)
Conecuh	641	1,537 (42%)	940 (68%)	6,419 (10%)
Covington	376	1,210 (31%)	706 (53%)	5,631 (7%)
Dale	824	2,267 (36%)	1,317 (63%)	10,379 (8%)
Henry	816	2,447 (33%)	1,489 (55%)	10,464 (8%)
Pike	1,896	3,580 (53%)	2,170 (87%)	15,646 (12%)
<i>Total</i>	8,208	19,048 (43%)	11,384 (72%)	68,548 (12%)

Sources: Muster Rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, 1861-1940, Alabama Department of Archives and History; *Brief Historical Sketches of Military Organizations Raised in Alabama During the Civil War - Reproduced From Willis Brewer's Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men, From 1540 to 1872* (Alabama Civil War Centennial Commission, 1962); Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography in Four Volumes*, (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company, 1978); United States Census, Barbour County, Butler County, Coffee County, Conecuh County, Covington County, Dale County, Henry County, Pike County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

Numbers only tell part of the story. In his study of Ashe County, North Carolina, historian Martin Crawford notes that “volunteer companies . . . were direct extensions of the

community itself, literally communities away from home.”¹³ Mark Wetherington similarly argues that in Piney Woods Georgia, “because each company was raised in the same rural neighborhoods or county, it became an extension of the community's economic, social, and political character.”¹⁴ Such was the case for dozens of companies formed in Pine Barren counties in 1861 (see Table 5.2).

TABLE 5.2. Pine Barren Companies Created in 1861

Regiment	Date of Creation	Company	Army
1 st Alabama	March, 1861	B, E, F, G	AT*
4 th Alabama	May, 1861	E	ANV**
5 th Alabama	May, 1861	A,	ANV
6 th Alabama	May, 1861	A, B	ANV
7 th Alabama	June, 1861	E, F	AT
9 th Alabama	May, 1861	G	ANV
12 th Alabama	July, 1861	D	ANV
13 th Alabama	July, 1861	G	ANV
15 th Alabama	Summer, 1861	B, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L	ANV
16 th Alabama	August, 1861	D	AT
17 th Alabama	August, 1861	B, C, I, K	AT
18 th Alabama	September, 1861	A, B, F, H	AT
22 nd Alabama	November, 1861	I, K	AT
23 rd Alabama	November, 1861	D, H	AT
25 th Alabama	December, 1861	A, B, K,	AT
58th Alabama	November, 1861	E	AT
25th Georgia	December 1861	E	AT

* Army of Tennessee

** Army of Northern Virginia

Capt. James T. Brady’s Covington Hunters, for example, exemplified the type of units recruited from small, rural, farming communities. Brady was a thirty-six-year-old local physician from

¹³ Martin Crawford, *Ashe County’s Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 80.

¹⁴ Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk’s Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 93.

the Rose Hill community, located about ten miles northeast of Andalusia in Covington County. Before the war he was the town's postmaster, a church deacon, a family man, and a small slaveholder who owned just two slaves.¹⁵ The majority of his company's 105 recruits lived in Rose Hill, Red Level, or in nearby Andalusia, all towns that were within just a few miles of one another. Most of the men were young, single, farm laborers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who typically resided with parents, relatives, or other families.¹⁶

Like most companies formed during the first year of the war, kinship and neighborhood ties played key roles in recruitment efforts. Brady's company, soon to be known as Company B, 18th Alabama Infantry, included at least six pairs of brothers and multiple examples of kinship ties between the men. Twenty-one-year-old David Cockcroft and nineteen-year-old James were the last of five siblings still living at home when they joined up. Similarly, brothers Joseph and James Richards, also twenty-one and nineteen-years-old respectively, were the older of eight siblings living with their parents. Next door, twenty-three-year-old William, the eldest of the Richards brothers, left his young wife Sarah behind so that he could accompany Joseph and James.

Just down the road Daniel Dozier, minister of the community's Primitive Baptist Church—the same church in which James Brady served as deacon—watched two of his five sons, Green and Thomas, enlist alongside the Richards and Cockcroft boys. Nearly two years later Dozier's youngest son, James, who was only fifteen-years-old when the war began, enlisted to fight alongside his brothers and friends. By 1863, four of the five Dozier brothers, including the oldest, Elias of Company C, 37th Alabama Infantry, were fighting for the Confederacy.

¹⁵ Wyley Donald Ward, *Early History of Covington County, Alabama, 1821-1871* (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Co., 1991), 123–78; United States Census, Covington County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

¹⁶ Muster Rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, Company B, 18th Alabama, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

As Brady's company demonstrates, the tangled web of kinship ties was especially important in companies formed in the relatively isolated rural hamlets that dotted the Pine Barrens. William and Emily Moxley of Coffee County's Bullock community provide another case in point. During the summer of 1861 William Moxley worked diligently to raise one of the county's first infantry companies, the Bullock Guards. He was a well-respected local physician and small farmer who owned no slaves and whose modest income would hardly have placed him among the county's wealthy elite. In an overwhelming show of support nearly every man in the company voted for Moxley as captain of the company.

In addition to enlisting his neighbors and friends, Moxley relied upon an extensive kinship network to recruit family members in Alabama and in Georgia, where most of his immediate family lived. His younger brother Benjamin, who had already joined Company C of the 20th Georgia, requested and received a transfer to the Guards. Moxley convinced three of Emily's cousins, Caleb, William, and John Beck, to join his company along with William, John, and Floyd Babb, three brothers all related to the Moxleys by marriage. All six men were Coffee County residents. Emily even tried to persuade her two oldest brothers, Allen and Tom Beck, who lived just across the line in Pike County, to join the company. Both brothers eventually joined the Pike County Guards, but "Allen says he never will get over not going with you," Emily later reported to her husband. "He done all he could do to get Tom off with him to go in your Company, so Pa says. He rather be with you than any body els."¹⁷

The volunteers who left their families behind to join the war effort soon found themselves thrown into makeshift military training camps, mustered into Confederate service, and eventually sent to fight alongside thousands of other men on distant battlefields in places that most had

¹⁷ Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., *Oh, What a Loansome Time I Had: The Civil War Letters of Major William Morel Moxley, Eighteenth Alabama Infantry, and Emily Beck Moxley* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 4–5, 22, 89.

never heard of much less visited. Martin Crawford has noted that “for some volunteers enlistment offered an adventure, an escape from private disappointment or economic frustration. For many others, particularly those with young families, the abandonment of home was to prove a searing experience.”¹⁸

Soldiers from the Pine Barrens primarily trained in camps located in Montgomery, Auburn, Mobile, and Pensacola, with a few additional places in between. Depending upon time and place, soldiers encountered a wide variety of emotions and experiences, from excitement and eagerness, to boredom, disappointment, sickness, and frequently the death of close comrades. In early May 1861, the Dale County Greys reported to Camp Hardaway, a temporary encampment located near Glenville in Russell County. Pvt. William Preston recounted that “the citizens for miles around Glenville carried us chickens, eggs, butter, milk, fresh meat, fruit and such things in plenty and without cost. Kind, generous people. We visited in their homes, went to their churches and had a good time there.” The men quickly grew frustrated that their pay had been delayed, however, and that they might have to wait several months or more before mustering into Confederate service. Many of them joined other companies. By the fall those who were left went back home; the Greys reorganized a year later with some of the original members joining the new company.¹⁹

Members of the original Dale County Greys who transferred out were not alone in their frustrations. During the first year of the war it was not unusual for men to move from one company to another, especially if they believed that doing so would hasten their opportunity to “get off to the war.” Unfortunately, not every transfer worked out as intended. Twenty-five-

¹⁸ Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War*, 82.

¹⁹ Scott R. Smith, trans., “Memoirs of the War, 1861-1865, Company B, 33rd Alabama: As Written by a Former Member of This Company From Dale County, W.E. Preston,” *Pea River Trails* 36 (Spring 2011): 14.

year-old James Cumbia from Coffee County, for example, joined the Gulf Rangers sometime during the spring or early summer of 1861. After several months and no sign that the unit would be going off to fight any time soon, he transferred to the Louisville Blues, a company raised in Barbour County. Ironically, within weeks of transferring, Cumbia received word from Capt. Henry Laird that the Gulf Rangers would be leaving for the war. "I got a letter from Laird not long since statin that he would be glad to have me along with him," Cumbia wrote in a letter requesting that the governor intervene on his behalf for a transfer back to the Blues. "No doubt in my mind but what I could strengthen the company some by going with them. If I was to quit this company to join them and by any accident they were not to get off I would return to my same post." The governor denied his request.²⁰

That same month, July 1861, Alabama Adjutant General George Goldthwaite ordered Capt. William Moxley's Bullock Guards to report for training at a camp near Auburn. The most obvious route was for the company to travel to Greenville and then take the train. "You will have to get to Greenville the best way you can," Goldthwaite wrote. "I suppose the neighbors will furnish transportation. You will be supplied with tents, arms, and subsistence after you arrive at Auburn." Upon arrival the Guards became Company A, 18th Alabama Infantry, effectively joining with units from Butler, Coffee, Covington, Pike, and several other counties to form one regiment. The troops drilled, stood in line for inspections, and waited impatiently for their units to be called up for battle. At night the men gathered around the campfires, "some grunting, some playing cards, some fiddling, some dancing, others enjoying them selves as they

²⁰ James M. Cumbia to Governor Moore, July 1, 1861, Governor Andrew Barry Moore, 1857-1861, Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

saw fit.”²¹ The 18th Alabama spent three long months in Auburn before being sent to bolster the Confederate forces gathering at Mobile.

Sickness and disease soon became a growing concern for thousands of men thrown together in training camps for months at a time. Diaries and letters indicate that within weeks of first entering camp the men experienced all sorts of illnesses. In May 1862, Lt. William V. Fleming wrote to his wife that Mobile was a “hell on earth.” But getting a furlough was impossible “unless I was sick and I would rather stay here twelve months than to be sick one week.”²² Historian James McPherson has noted that soldiers were most susceptible to sickness during their first year in the military. Childhood diseases such as measles and mumps spread rapidly among men from rural communities, most of whom had never been exposed to such illnesses. He writes, “if soldiers recovered from these diseases and remained for some time at the training or base camp—where by poor sanitary practices and exposure to changeable weather they fouled their water supply, created fertile breeding grounds for bacteria, and became susceptible to deadly viruses—many of them contracted one of the three principle killer diseases of the war: diarrhea/dysentery, typhoid, or pneumonia.”²³

Writing from Fort Gaines, Pvt. Allen Beck of Company B, 25th Alabama Infantry, informed his sister, Emily Moxley, that “we have one of the sarriest Doctors for our battalion you ever saw. He cant tell the chill and feder [fever] from the head ache.” Beck explained that two of his closest friends had been sick for more than two weeks. Each morning the doctor came by, examined the two men, and presented a diagnosis different from the morning before. In

²¹ Cutrer, *Oh, What A Loansome Time I Had*, 20, 45.

²² W. V. Fleming to Margaret Fleming, W. V. Fleming Civil War Letters, May 12, 1862, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; *ibid.*, May 29, 1862.

²³ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 487.

Auburn, William Moxley tried to encourage his wife: “My Dear, we have parted before, but under differend circumstances. You expect me to return because you did not think of natural death, that is, from disease. Now you fear both.” By October, Emily had plenty to worry about as her own husband fell ill and reports of sickness and death in the training camps became more commonplace. Only after several weeks of suffering “more with my hed than I ever did in my life” did William Moxley slowly began to recover.²⁴

Eighteen-year-old Pvt. Benjamin Adams of Moxley’s company was another of the many unfortunate ones. He spent time in the hospital trying to recuperate from the measles and appeared to be improving “untill day before yesterday at dinner,” Moxley reported. “They gave him greens to eat that night. He was return worse yesterday morning. News reach me Ben was speachless, but I was not able to see [him] that day, but I did go to day. I found [him] still speachless. I think he is bound to die, and if he does I shall send him home.” Benjamin Adams did die three days later, one of many soldiers who succumbed to illness in the camp of instruction at Auburn that summer, having never fired a shot in battle.²⁵

In early fall, the 17th Alabama Infantry—a regiment that included three companies from Butler County and one from Pike—spent two months in the camp of instruction just east of Montgomery. The unit moved to Pensacola in November where they received additional training and assisted with the occasional bombardment of Union forces at Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island. Like Mobile, the port at Pensacola was vital to the economic interests of South Alabama. If the Federals successfully held the harbor and the military installations at Fort Pickens and Fort Barrancas, they would be in a position to launch raids into the lower counties and disrupt the

²⁴ Cutrer, *Oh, What A Loansome Time I Had*, 41, 26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

southern half of the state.²⁶ Each day the soldiers drilled, cleaned their camps, dug latrines, built fortifications, and prepared for an eventual attack against Fort Pickens. As the weather warmed the already unhealthy conditions worsened. According to Lt. Edward Crenshaw of Company K, it was unfortunate that the regiment was “ordered into camp in a low swampy place on a disagreeable bayou back from the Navy Yard and half a mile distant.” In less than three months Camp Governor Moore (as it was called) turned into a mosquito-infested death trap. Hundreds of men fell ill, nearly one in ten died from disease. While most of the regiment eventually relocated a few hundred yards to higher ground, the two companies that suffered the most, the Pike Rangers and the Butler True Blues, moved to Warrington, a small, recently deserted village just west of the navy yard. “We had a most delightful time during our stay at Warrenton,” Crenshaw wrote. “We occupied good comfortable houses and very soon there was a great improvement in the health of our two companies.”²⁷

Meanwhile, as more and more of the region’s young men volunteered, trained, and headed off to war, mothers, wives, sisters, and other female family and friends worked diligently to meet the most basic needs of the soldiers from their towns and communities. Many women formed or participated in ladies’ aid societies, also known as soldiers’ aid societies. Historian Harold Eugene Sterkx noted that “community pride was especially strong among small town and rural organizations, where members went all out to make sure that the local warriors were properly clad.”²⁸ Composed primarily of middle and upper-class women, these organizations produced flags, bandages, haversacks, socks, shirts, undergarments, and a wide variety of other

²⁶ Malcolm Cook McMillan, *The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governors and Alabama’s Wartime Home Front, 1861-1865* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 36.

²⁷ “Diary of Captain Edward Crenshaw,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 1 (Fall 1930): 265.

²⁸ Harold Eugene Sterkx, *Partners in Rebellion: Alabama Women in the Civil War* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1970), 95–96.

clothing and military supplies. On June 14, 1861, for example, a gathering of women met at the Methodist Church in Eufaula to “organize a soldier’s relief society to provide clothing for the needy soldiers who have left our own city.”²⁹ Some of the most prominent women in Eufaula joined, including Mary Jane Shorter, the governor’s wife, and Wileyna Shorter, the governor’s sister-in-law. The ladies formed both a fund-raising committee and a committee responsible for buying cloth, leather, and other materials necessary for sewing. Edward Young, one of the wealthiest merchants in town, offered to allow the group use of several rooms on the second floor of the building that housed his mercantile business in downtown Eufaula.

Within a week of the society’s formation, Capt. Alpheus Baker of the Eufaula Rifles (Company B, 1st Alabama Infantry) left his company at Pensacola, met with members of the committee, and discussed the shortage of adequate clothing among the poorer men in his outfit. Straightaway the society’s purchasing committee bought cloth from Young’s mercantile. The next day many members, including Mary Jane Shorter, the governor’s wife, began sewing items based upon Baker’s request. In her diary Elizabeth Rhodes noted that even though the sewing rooms were hot and dusty and the work conditions difficult, within five days they had produced enough clothing to make an initial shipment. “Mrs. Woods sends for me to go up to the rooms to assist in packing clothing we’ve finished to send by Capt. Clark to the soldier boys” in Baker’s company. There is no indication as to how many pants, shirts, and socks were sewn, but by the first week of July the aid society had sent at least three crates of clothing to the soldiers in Pensacola. In the meantime Rhodes helped organize yet another soldiers’ aid society in Eufaula,

²⁹ "Diary of Mrs. Elizabeth Rhodes, 1861, Book 3," Auburn University, Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

which included “a large number of ladies and number of men” and was structured “upon little different basis to the one organized sometime ago.”³⁰

By the late summer of 1861 aid societies with limited resources were already running out of both money and supplies, particularly those in the small Pine Barren communities. At the same time many feared that the onset of cooler weather would bring much hardship to scantily clad deep-South soldiers, a few already serving in states in the upper South. The *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* predicted that “the thousands and tens of thousands of brave volunteers who have left their peaceful homes to endure suffering, privation, and perhaps death . . . will need an immense quantity of clothing to make them comfortable [during] the ensuing fall and winter.”³¹

Governor Moore responded by establishing a system whereby the government would supply raw materials to the ladies’ aid societies in return for the production of clothing and other finished products. Moore launched the program in August and requested that the women “in each county, city, town, village, and neighborhood, form ‘Soldiers’ Aid Societies,’ and that each society inform him by letter, as early as possible, the number of woolen uniforms, flannel shirts, and cotton-flannel drawers it can make or supply.” The society in Manningham, for example, promised to make fifty uniforms for Butler County’s soldiers, provided that the governor supply the necessary cloth, thread, buttons, and sewing patterns. “Each suit,” they pledged, “will consist of one great coat, one uniform jacket, one pair of pantaloons, one pair of drawers, and one shirt. Be sure to send enough thread and buttons as they cannot be had here.”³² The governor promptly met their request.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, August 7, 1861

³² W. H. Crenshaw to A.B. Moore, September 11, 1861, Governor Andrew Barry Moore, 1857-1861, Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

The aid society in Troy likewise worked diligently throughout the spring and summer to provide uniforms for 300 Pike County soldiers then serving in three companies, the Quitman Guards, the A.B. Moore Invincibles, and the Pike Volunteers. By the fall “their resources for procuring further supplies of cloth [were] exhausted, and they desire to make for these companies the uniform jackets and pants you mention in your recent circular to the aid societies of the state.” Society members promised to deliver uniforms, undergarments, socks, and other clothing by late September or October if the governor promptly supplied the cloth. Within a few weeks the society received “enough material to make 100 jackets and pants to match.”³³

The vast majority of women in Pine Barren counties did not participate in ladies’ aid societies or any such formal organizations. While women in towns such as Eufaula, Greenville, and Troy enjoyed a greater pool of resources and laborers, those who lived miles from town in the remote corners of the region, especially the communities in the southernmost counties, were forced to work alone or in small, independent groups of family and friends. Mary Love Fleming remembered that in Dale County the people in her neighborhood “had no sewing circles or any other kind of aid societies as were common in towns and in some communities in the South. . . . But almost every family worked hard to supply clothing and other necessaries for the soldiers, and these things were usually collected in the community and shipped together to our men in the army.”³⁴

About twenty miles east of Greenville in Butler County, Mary Bigbie worked hard to provide clothing for her husband Thomas, a member of Company G, 33rd Alabama Infantry, then

³³ C. Cunningham to A.B. Moore, September 9, 1861, Governor Andrew Barry Moore, 1857-1861, Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); Sterkx, *Partners in Rebellion*, 106.

³⁴ Mary Love Edwards Fleming, “Dale County and Its People During the Civil War: Reminiscences of Mary Love (Edwards) Fleming,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 19 (Spring 1957): 90.

serving near Chattanooga, Tennessee. She routinely sent items by way of furloughed soldiers returning to the unit. On one occasion she sent several pairs of socks and a pair of woolen pants with John, a soldier in Bigbie's company. Thomas later informed Mary that even though the socks were a bit too large, "I was very pleas with my pants. I want won more pair of pants and a good coat and I want it lind good and made as warm as you can for this is a mity cold windy country here. Be shore and send my vest and I want them wooling under shirt and drawers."³⁵ On another occasion Mary's sewing was apparently not exactly up to par with her earlier work. This time the socks and shirt fit just fine, "but my pants was way to little. I put them on and ever time I stoop down they busted. I could stand up in them but I could not stoop down in them."³⁶

Like Thomas Bigbie, most of the soldiers fully understood and usually appreciated the hard work of the women back home. When Capt. Pierre D. Costello of Company K, 25th Alabama, offered to share his wife's cakes with Col. John Loomis, "the Colonel tried some of them & wrote at once to his wife to follow your example." These little tastes of home boosted morale and "has raised your wifely qualities to the highest mark," Costello acknowledged.³⁷ Examples such as these demonstrate that the work previously confined solely to the domestic realm now proved essential to helping meet the physical and psychological needs of the men fighting the war. As historian LeeAnn Whites has argued, "these men may have gone to war initially in defense of what they perceived to be their prerogatives as fee men, but the actual demands of fighting the war made them conscious of their own dependence upon women's love

³⁵ Thomas T. Bigbie to Mary Bigbie, August 28, 1862, Thomas T. Bigbie Papers, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama. Bigbie's reference to the cold weather was most likely in anticipation of the fall, especially since he is writing in late August.

³⁶ Thomas T. Bigbie to Mary Bigbie, July 15, 1863, Thomas T. Bigbie Papers, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

³⁷ Pierre D. Costello to Cordilia Costello, July 17, 1862, Pierre D. Costello Civil War Letters, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

and labor in ways that had hitherto been obscured by the latter's subordination within the household."³⁸

While Pine Barren women worked diligently to meet the needs of increasing numbers of soldiers, the war's first major battle gave them a glimpse of the horrors yet to come. Indeed, the First Battle of Bull Run, or First Manassas as the southerners called it, changed the way Alabamians perceived the conflict. On July 21, two opposing armies, made up almost exclusively of men who largely had never fired a shot at another human being, clashed near Manassas Junction, Virginia, about twenty miles southwest of Washington. Throughout most of the day, Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell's untested Union soldiers performed well until Confederate reinforcements arrived, collapsed the Union right flank on Henry Hill, and routed the entire Federal army.³⁹

Four Pine Barren companies were with the Confederate army at Bull Run. Three companies of the 5th and 6th Alabama Infantry regiments were attached to Brig. Gen. Richard Ewell's brigade. It spent most of the day at Union Mills only to be ordered forward late in the afternoon when most of the fighting had subsided. The day went much differently for the Conecuh Guards, officially known as Company E of the 4th Alabama Infantry. The 4th Alabama was one of five regiments in Brig. Gen. Barnard Bee's brigade. On the morning of the battle, Bee's brigade, along with the brigade of Col. Francis Bartow, confronted an overwhelming Union force at Buck Hill, just north of the Warrenton Turnpike. The Confederates fought hard but were unable to hold. By noon the Alabamians were on their heels and headed toward the

³⁸ LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War As A Crisis In Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 54.

³⁹ For a good narrative history of the battle see David Detzer, *Donnybrook: The Battle of Bull Run, 1861* (New York: Harcourt, 2005).

relative safety of Henry Hill. There Confederate reinforcements, led by Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, counterattacked and drove the Federals back in disarray.

In the early fighting, forty of the 4th Alabama's soldiers died, including Col. Egbert Jones, and 157 were wounded, a shocking number for any regiment. In his after-battle report, Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard praised the regiment's sacrifice: "The Fourth Alabama also suffered severely from the deadly fire of the thousands of muskets which they so dauntlessly confronted under the immediate leadership of Bee himself. Its brave colonel (E. J. Jones) was dangerously wounded, and many gallant officers fell, slain or *hors de combat*."⁴⁰

First Manassas was a wake-up call for southerners who realized that their war for independence would be more costly than many had ever imagined. Families of the Conecuh Guardsmen who had died at Bull Run understood the full impact of this new reality. As news of the battle spread and the reality of war began to sink in, other Alabamians pondered their choices for the state's next war governor. Two of the region's most prominent sons, Eufaula's John Gill Shorter and former Butler County resident Thomas Hill Watts, were in the contest. Andrew Moore's second term would come to an end in December 1861, and by law he was prohibited from seeking another term. Five candidates for the governor's seat eventually emerged. Thomas Judge of Montgomery and Tuscaloosa's Robert Jemison Jr. were unable to generate much enthusiasm outside their local communities and withdrew relatively early in the process. John E. Moore of Florence was the candidate of choice for many in the northern part of the state. He was particularly popular with several newspapers who, after his withdrawal from the race, accused Democratic politicians in South Alabama of neglecting northern counties and violating an

⁴⁰ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 490.

unwritten agreement that the governorship would alternate between the two sections of the state. As the August election drew near only Watts and Shorter remained.⁴¹

Thomas Watts spent at least part of the summer recruiting men from Butler and surrounding counties for the 17th Alabama Infantry, a regiment he would soon lead as its colonel. Even though he had lived in Montgomery since 1848, he had spent most of his early life in Butler County. He served three terms as a legislator from Butler County in the 1840s and later, after moving his law practice and residence to Montgomery, represented Montgomery County as well. A staunch Whig, Watts frequently clashed with members of the Democratic Party and strongly opposed the Yanceyite doctrine of secession. Yet, his belief that Southern rights were safer inside the Union than out came to an end with Lincoln's election. "Why delude ourselves with the futile hope of obtaining new securities . . . within the present Union," he wrote shortly after the election.⁴² Watts was a delegate to the secession convention where he opposed the cooperationists and played a key role in the passage of the ordinance of secession. Shorter, in the meantime, served in the Confederate Congress and played an important role in the drafting of the Confederate Constitution.

As the campaign for governor got under way in late spring, many of the state's political leaders realized that politics as usual threatened to reopen old wounds. Immediate secessionists and cooperationists had clashed at the secession convention just a few months prior. Some believed that a political bloodbath between old party rivals, especially at a time when thousands of Alabamians were preparing for war, would be detrimental to the fragile but strengthening unity that existed throughout much of the state. The *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* urged its

⁴¹ Malcolm Cook McMillan, *The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governors and Alabama's Wartime Home Front, 1861-1865* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 30–31.

⁴² *Montgomery Weekly Post*, November 14, 1860.

readers to shun partisanship and avoid any activity that might be regarded by the northern press as a sign of weakness or vacillation: “Let us do nothing or say nothing which can lead our enemies to suppose we have a party in our midst . . . which could in any event be induced to consent to a reconstruction of the Old Union on any terms whatever.”⁴³

Despite the *Advertiser’s* warning, the press and the citizenry generally crystallized along old party lines. Both candidates enjoyed a substantial home base of support. Along with members of the Eufaula Regency, hundreds of prominent citizens from Barbour and surrounding counties endorsed Shorter, as did the newspaper that had served as the beacon for the Democratic Party in the area, the *Spirit of the South*. Watts, on the other hand, found strong support in his home county of Butler, where he expressed thanks “to those who have known me from my boyhood, and who on many occasions have entrusted me with their dearest interests.” Neither candidate officially campaigned, believing that doing so might be seen as undermining the war effort. Watts went so far as to temporarily withdraw from the race: “As I hope and surely trust the slumbering embers of party may never again be rekindled . . . I am unwilling to do anything which may have a tendency to elicit the recollection of bygone party conflicts.”⁴⁴

Malcolm McMillan has noted that the August 8 election returns “typified most of the elections held in Alabama since the rise of the party system in Andrew Jackson’s day.”⁴⁵ By a vote of 37,849 to 28,121, Shorter carried the state in the same way that his Democratic predecessors had, by winning large majorities in northern Alabama and in the southeastern corner of the state. Watts won most of the Black Belt counties and traditional Whig strongholds in south-central and southwestern Alabama. One could certainly argue that Pine Barren counties

⁴³ *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, June 5, 1861.

⁴⁴ *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, June 12, 1861; McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 31–33.

⁴⁵ McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 32.

simply supported their favorite sons, but it is equally compelling to note that old party alliances largely carried the day for both candidates in the Pine Barrens as well. Shorter won resoundingly in the Democratic strongholds of Barbour, Coffee, Dale, Henry, and Pike, while Watts carried his home county of Butler along with Conecuh and Covington, traditional Whig territory (see Table 5.3). Although Watts lost the election, his supporters predicted that he would occupy the governor’s mansion soon enough. “He will be elected Governor or Senator before many years,” wrote Butler County representative Walter Crenshaw to his son Edward, then serving in Watts’s 17th Alabama, “unless the Yankees kill him which it is hoped they will not succeed in doing.”⁴⁶

TABLE 5.3. 1861 Gubernatorial Election

	Shorter (Democrat)	Watts (Former Whig)
Barbour	1,524 (80.3%)	373 (19.7%)
Butler	369 (22%)	1,311 (78%)
Coffee	778 (90.6%)	81 (9.4%)
Conecuh	194 (22.4%)	671 (77.6%)
Covington	309 (45.8%)	365 (55.2%)
Dale	1,225 (96.1%)	51 (3.9%)
Henry	1,552 (96.9%)	49 (3.1%)
Pike	1,380 (60.7%)	893 (39.3%)
<i>Total</i>	7,331 (65.8%)	3,794 (34.1%)

Source: Michael J. Dubin, *United States Gubernatorial Elections, 1861–1911: The Official Results by State and County* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2010).

When Shorter took office in January 1862, he faced an impending Federal invasion of north Alabama and the growing threat of a Union naval attack on the port city of Mobile. Like his predecessor he also was worried that Confederate authorities would abandon Pensacola and

⁴⁶ W.H. Crenshaw to Edward Crenshaw, December 4, 1861, Edward Crenshaw Family Letters, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

give the Union a formidable staging area from which to launch raids into the southern part of the state. Writing to Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin, the governor pointed to the importance of the port city to both the state and the Confederacy and “opposed the abandonment of Pensacola so long as there was the slightest hope of holding it.”⁴⁷

Gen. Braxton Bragg, the commander of the Confederate Department of Alabama and West Florida, had at that time more than 8,000 men at Pensacola, including two full regiments of Alabamians, and another 9,000 at Mobile, nearly all of whom were in-state volunteers. The majority of companies raised in Pine Barren counties during the spring, summer, and fall of 1861 were serving either with the Army of Pensacola or the Army of Mobile. By the end of 1861, many of them were within a few months of seeing their twelve-month enlistments expire. Some had no intention of reenlisting. Writing to his wife from Pensacola, Lt. Hubert Dent of Eufaula’s Company B, 1st Alabama Infantry, noted that “the freshness and first excitement of the war has worn off and men, many of them at least, are tired of the service. Many troops will be entitled to their discharges in the next six months and it will not be easy to supply their places unless the men reenlist.”⁴⁸

What the men were really tired of was inactivity. Despite a handful of minor engagements, including a small attack on Union-held Fort Pickens in early November that involved about 1,000 men, the vast majority of Confederates serving on the Gulf Coast expressed frustration that their service had amounted to little more than drills, dress parades, picket duty, and erecting breastworks. Most of them had never fired a shot in battle. One study of the soldiers who fought at the Battle of Shiloh contends that recruits during the war’s first year had

⁴⁷ McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 36.

⁴⁸ Abstract From Field Return of the Department of Alabama and West Florida, Commanded by Major General Braxton Bragg, February 1, 1862, *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 819; Hubert Dent to Anna Dent, December 7, 1861, S. H. Dent Papers, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

no intentions of becoming permanent, professional soldiers; they enlisted to fight as soon as possible, defeat the Yankee invaders, and return to their homes. “How was it that after all these months, after the mobilization of such enormous armies of volunteers, they had not yet been used?”⁴⁹ Writing to his sister from Fort Gaines, Pvt. Tom Beck sarcastically remarked that his nine-year-old nephew, George Moxley, “must come to the ware and learn to shoot yankees, though I am afraid we will never have to shoot them here.”⁵⁰ There were so many false alarms associated with Union naval activities and erroneous rumors of impending Confederate attacks on Fort Pickens that many of the men simply began to ignore them. “Bragg has an idea that the fight is going to come off,” Dent observed, but “it makes very little impression on me because I have heard it so often.”⁵¹ Even Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin acknowledged the “self-sacrificing spirit displayed by [Bragg] and the gallant spirits that are now chafing in hateful inaction on the sands of Pensacola Harbor.”⁵²

In a circular issued in late November, Bragg encouraged the men to reenlist immediately, promised generous furloughs to those who did so before their current enlistments expired, and vowed to employ the troops in more active roles as soon as practicable. Three weeks later Bragg reported dismal results in his enrollment efforts. He now tried to stimulate reenlistments by offering furloughs to *all* of the men. Bragg believed that the ultimate cure for his enlistment woes was to get the men involved in combat. If the veterans were assured that they would soon face the enemy, “I am satisfied it would have a happy effect in causing many to re-enlist ‘for the

⁴⁹ Joseph Allan Frank and George A. Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*” *Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), 72–75.

⁵⁰ Cutrer, *Oh, What A Loansome Time I Had*, 51.

⁵¹ Stouten Dent to Anna Dent, June 26, 1861, S. H. Dent Papers, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

⁵² *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 52, pt. 2, 169.

war.’ Without such assurance and a short furlough to visit their homes but few can be secured. It would be a great misfortune to lose them, for they are the best troops I have ever known.”⁵³

In December, the Confederate Congress offered bounties and furloughs to every man who reenlisted, and moreover allowed the troops to reorganize their companies and elect their own officers. While Bragg vehemently opposed this last provision, believing that it would seriously undermine combat effectiveness and lead to unnecessary confusion, his earlier predictions of massive departures never materialized. “From what I can see and learn,” he wrote in mid-January, “there seems to be a prospect of reaction taking place, and our success may yet be greater than anticipated when I last wrote.”⁵⁴ Hubert Dent was one of many who took advantage of the opportunity to secure what he hoped would be a better command with higher rank. He joined with Texan Felix Robertson to create an artillery battery made up of soldiers from south Alabama and Florida. “The temptation of going in with Robertson with his light artillery was so great that I have concluded to go in with him,” he informed his wife. “I am busy trying to raise the company or assisting to do it.”⁵⁵

Unfortunately for the Confederacy, but luckily for the troops serving along the Gulf Coast hoping for more active duty, Union victories in February 1862 at Mill Springs in eastern Kentucky and Forts Henry and Donelson near the Tennessee-Kentucky border forced the Confederates to abandon the Bluegrass State, retreat from Nashville, and give up much of middle and western Tennessee. On February 28, Bragg withdrew 10,000 men from Pensacola and Mobile and headed north to Corinth, Mississippi, to rendezvous with Confederate troops under Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston and Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard. Five weeks later 44,000 Confederates

⁵³ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 777.

⁵⁴ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 807

⁵⁵ Hubert Dent to Anna Dent, December 19, 1861, S. H. Dent Papers, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

converged on Federal forces under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant about fifteen miles northeast of Corinth, near a small country church named Shiloh near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee.

The Battle of Shiloh provided the first real taste of combat for most of the companies raised in Pine Barren counties during the first year of the war.⁵⁶ Brig. Gen Adley Gladden's brigade included five companies from the region, two in the 22nd Alabama Infantry and three in the 25th Alabama Infantry. Eight companies from the 17th and 18th Alabama Infantry regiments, of Brig. Gen. John K Jackson's brigade, contained soldiers from Butler, Coffee, Covington, and Pike counties. On March 10, while most of the men had already disembarked at Corinth, Beauregard sent Gladden's brigade a few miles north to intercept a detachment of Union troops rumored to be heading toward Bethel Station, Tennessee. Drenching rains and ankle-deep mud made life miserable for several of the regiments who arrived without tents or cooking utensils. Col. Thomas H. Watts's 17th Alabama bivouacked for nearly two days before finally receiving their supplies.

Beauregard recalled Gladden's brigade when rumors of Federal troop movements proved false. Watts's exhausted regiment refused to budge, a decision that led to his arrest and that of several of his officers. As one soldier later recalled, "here they were in chilling rains and deep mud without shelters of any kind, separated for a time from their baggage [and] cooking utensils. It was in this state of distress that Colonel Watts and the officers of the regiment refused obedience to orders . . . and were put under arrest."⁵⁷ According to Capt. Edward Crenshaw,

⁵⁶ Two traditional narratives of the battle include Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (New York: Morrow, 1974) and Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008). For a revisionist history that challenges many of the traditional interpretations of the battle see Timothy B. Smith, *The Untold Story of Shiloh: The Battle and the Battlefield* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008).

⁵⁷ Illene D. Thompson and Wilbur E. Thompson, *The Seventeenth Alabama Infantry: A Regimental History and Roster* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2001), 43; See also Kenneth W. Noe, "'The Fighting Chaplain of Shiloh': Isaac Tichenor's Civil War and the Roles of Confederate Ministers," in *Politics and Culture of the Civil War Era: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Johannsen* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 245–46.

Watts protested “that his men had been without their tents and cooking utensils for several days in consequence of which more than half the regiment were then sick and that they had just received the cooking utensils and had commenced to cook their rations.”⁵⁸ Within days the arrested Watts learned that he had been appointed by Confederate President Jefferson Davis to the post of Attorney General. Watts left immediately for Richmond, his officers were restored to their units after issuing a formal apology, and the regiment was reassigned to Gen. John K. Jackson’s brigade.⁵⁹

With Ulysses S. Grant’s Army of the Tennessee encamped and waited for reinforcements at Pittsburg Landing, Beauregard and Johnston saw an opportunity to attack Grant before Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell’s Army of the Ohio arrived. Although incessant rains delayed the attack by two days, by the morning of April 6 the Confederates were ready to strike. At daybreak Maj. Gen. William J. Hardee’s corps slammed into the Federal left flank. Gladden’s brigade and Brig. Gen. James R. Chalmers’s troops painstakingly advanced through rough terrain to attack the extreme left of the Union line. Gladden’s Alabamians along with the 1st Louisiana Infantry poured volley after volley into the Blue line, forcing them to retreat across Spain Field and into the woods on the opposite side. There they hastily regrouped and waited for the Rebels to appear.

Just to the right of the reformed line two Federal batteries unlimbered and opened up with both canister and solid shot, every gun firing as rapidly as possible across the field now almost totally obscured by smoke. As the Confederates emerged from the woods they ran headlong into a storm of small arms and artillery fire. According to one soldier, “the bullets passing through

⁵⁸ “Diary of Captain Edward Crenshaw,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 1 (Fall 1930): 266.

⁵⁹ As it turned out, Gladden’s and Jackson’s brigades played a key role in decimating Brig. Gen. Benjamin Prentiss’s division during the first day of battle, forcing the surrender of much of his command.

the trees above us cut the half grown leaves which fell on us in a continuing shower.” When Gladden rode ahead to get a better look and survey the situation, a blast of artillery knocked the general from his horse, nearly ripping off his left arm and rendering him mortally wounded.⁶⁰

The artillery and small arms fire devastated Gladden’s advancing columns (now commanded by Col. Daniel W. Adams) and forced a temporary Confederate retreat back across the field. Adams quickly rallied his men and led a second charge across Spain Field that sent shockwaves up and down what was left of the Federal left flank. Hundreds of Confederates recrossed the field, still partially obscured by the smoke, and emerged right in front of the Federal position with fixed bayonets yelling at the top of their lungs. Union Capt. Andrew Hickenlooper later recalled that hearing the high-pitched shrieks of the Rebel yell for the first time “caused an involuntary thrill of terror to pass like an electric shock through even the bravest hearts.”⁶¹ Federal batteries tried desperately to quell the oncoming attack by spraying the field with double canister fire. Yet the massive shotgun-like blasts caused only temporary pauses to the unrelenting Confederate assault.

At about the same time, Capt. Felix Robertson and Capt. Hubert Dent of Eufaula moved their batteries into position to support the Confederate advance. Their primary objective was to silence Federal artillery on the opposite side of the field. What happened next was nothing short of a nightmare for Union artillerists. As they frantically attempted to limber their cannons, “there comes a crashing volley, that sweeps our front as with a scythe. . . . Every horse in our left section goes down in one . . . mass of struggling horses, wounded men and defenseless guns.

⁶⁰ Felix Robertson to Hubert Dent, April 25, 1909, S. H. Dent Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (New York: Morrow, 1974), 161.

⁶¹ “The Battle of Shiloh, Part 1,” in *Sketches of War History, 1861-1865: Papers Prepared for the Commandery of the State of Ohio Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, vol. 5 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Company, 1903), 415.

The supports break and give way in wild dismay.”⁶² Col. Adams later reported that the artillery “returned the enemy’s fire with such promptness and great effect, that it drove them from their guns and caused them to abandon their battery.”⁶³ The Federals fell back and regrouped in an area of the battlefield that came to be known as the Hornet’s Nest.

In the meantime, the 17th and 18th Alabama of Jackson’s brigade were in a firefight with several Illinois regiments from Brig. Gen. William H. Wallace’s division just east of the Hamburg-Savannah Road. At one point the Alabamians came under a deadly crossfire from three different directions and began taking heavy casualties. Isaac Taylor Tichenor, the 17th Alabama’s “fighting chaplain,” walked up and down the line encouraging the men to stand fast: “I called upon them to stand there, and die, if need be, for their country.”⁶⁴ For two hours the fighting continued until the Confederates launched an attack that finally broke the Union line. For the rest of the afternoon the Rebel army drove the Federals back toward the river, capturing thousands of prisoners in the process. “The officers . . . and men of the regiment conducted themselves throughout the several engagements with much gallantry and spirit,” Col. Eli Shorter of the 18th Alabama later reported.⁶⁵ As the daylight began to fade, Jackson’s Alabamians launched one last attack against fortified Federal positions along a ridge less than a half mile west of the Tennessee River. The attempt failed.⁶⁶

The next morning Grant’s reinforced army launched a multipronged attack over the same ground that they had abandoned the day before. Due to the chaos from the previous day’s fighting, Confederate regiments were spread out all over the place. The 17th Alabama had

⁶² *Ibid.*, 415.

⁶³ *O.R.*, Ser. 1, vol. 10, pt. 1, 537.

⁶⁴ Noe, “Isaac Tichenor’s Civil War,” 252.

⁶⁵ *O.R.*, Ser. 1, vol. 10, pt. 1, 557.

⁶⁶ Noe, “Isaac Tichenor’s Civil War,” 249–54.

moved back all the way to their original staging area more than a mile and half from Pittsburg Landing. The 18th Alabama was en route to Corinth with 1,500 Union prisoners under guard. Gladden's bloodied command, which had passed from Gladden to Adams to Lt. Col. Zachariah Deas, contained only "fragments of regiments, numbering together less than 500" men.⁶⁷ This unit was involved in the day-long attack and counterattack fighting that occurred along the Hamburg-Purdy Road slightly northeast of Shiloh Church. Deas had two horses shot from underneath him and suffered wounds severe enough that by mid-afternoon he was unable to walk. After the battle he had nothing but praise for his shattered brigade: "The indomitable courage and perseverance of the officers and men of this brigade; the willingness and gallantry with which they advanced to the attack when called upon, after having endured almost superhuman fatigues in the desperate and long-continued struggles of Sunday and Monday, are deserving of the highest encomiums."⁶⁸ In two days of fighting Gladden's brigade had suffered more than 700 casualties and Jackson's brigade lost more than 400 killed and wounded.⁶⁹

By late afternoon all of the brigades in Bragg's division were slogging down the muddy roads leading away from the battlefield toward Corinth. As the rain pummeled the retreating masses, one of Bragg's men took shelter under a tree, "but was so exhausted that I actually fell asleep in that position. . . . When I awoke I was lying in water."⁷⁰ As night fell the Confederates must have wondered how the elation of the previous day's victory had turned so quickly into the depths of defeat.

⁶⁷ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 10, pt. 1, 539.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Sword, *Shiloh*, 422.

For decades historians have debated the motivations of the soldiers who fought in the Civil War. With only a handful of sources from Pine Barren soldiers it is difficult to determine with certainty what motivated the men at Shiloh, but there are clues. Joseph Frank and George Reaves argues that duty and patriotism were the primary motivators for the men who fought at Shiloh, while Gerald Linderman has maintained that soldiers were driven primarily by courage. Both duty and courage were motivating factors for Pine Barren soldiers at Shiloh. Certainly Isaac Taylor Tichenor appealed to the troops' sense of duty when he rallied the 17th Alabama. Of course it could have just as easily been Tichenor's courage in walking up and down the line, himself wounded and bleeding, waving his hat in the air that inspired the men to continue the fight. It is likely that both played a role in the regiment's actions that day. "The effect was evident," Tichenor noted, as "every man stood to his post—every eye flashed and every heart beat high with desperate resolve to conquer or die."⁷¹

What is certain is that the men in Bragg's army were itching for a fight, and many of them believed that it would take just one desperate, bloody battle to end the war. According to Frank and Reaves, "they sought battle so that they could get it over with in one fell swoop. Then having at last decided the issue, the soldiers would return home heroes. They had enlisted for a great cause; they wanted to be direct principals in deciding its outcome."⁷² For the Pine Barren troops who crossed Spain Field, drove the Federals through the woods just east of the Hamburg-Savannah Road, and attacked the Union left near the Hornet's Nest, duty and bravery were the keys to getting back home.

⁷¹ John Wesley Brinsfield, *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Confederacy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 104.

⁷² Frank and Reaves, *Seeing the Elephant*, 78.

For the people of the Pine Barrens, the first year of the war began with the recruitment of hundreds of region's young, single men. Companies raised in the area trained in a handful of places, from Montgomery and Auburn to Mobile and Pensacola. Soldiers stationed along the Gulf Coast spent month after month in grueling inactivity, plagued with boredom, and visited all too often by disease and death. Back home the women formed ladies' aid societies or worked in small informal groups to provide adequate clothing for the poorer soldiers from their communities. On the political front the region largely supported Democrat John Gill Shorter as the state's next governor while Thomas H. Watts managed to win solid majorities in several former Whig counties. In April 1862, the soldiers finally got their baptism by fire at the Battle of Shiloh. The troops fought well on the first day only to be forced into retreat the very next day. Meanwhile, the Confederate government in Richmond was about to adopt a policy that would change the very nature of recruitment and the way in which the South fought the rest of the war.

Chapter 6

“I Have No One to Assist Mee on Earth”: The Pine Barrens’ War in 1862

On June 18, 1862, thirty-eight-year-old Sarah Driggers of Coffee County wrote to Governor John Gill Shorter pleading for help. “With an acheing hart and trembling hand,” she explained, “I attempt to address you with a few lins in humble recuest to you for your helpe and your assistence most noble sir as I am left here alone in this world without husban or child.” At the time of the letter, her husband, Pvt. Charles Driggers, was within four days of serving the first year of a three-year enlistment with Company A, 18th Alabama Infantry. Such a plea would have been unimaginable a mere two years earlier. Before the war Charles and Sarah, along their fifteen-year-old son Benjamin, had worked a small thirty-five-acre farm just outside Elba. With the help of a sturdy horse and matching pair of oxen, the Driggers’ family produced in 1860 four bales of cotton, seventy-five bushels of sweet potatoes, and 100 bushels of corn. The family’s three milk cows produced enough milk to make 100 pounds of butter, while the twenty hogs rooting around in the lot next to their home and in the woods nearby provided a hundred dollars worth of meat for household consumption with plenty left over for market.

The condition of the Driggers farm was drastically different by 1862. Sarah had spent the summer alone and destitute. Charles was still in the army. Benjamin had run off and joined the 33rd Alabama Infantry, without his mother’s permission. Without male laborers the farm suffered, production stalled, and the once-thriving homestead declined rapidly. Like many of her neighbors, Sarah found herself on the county’s list of indigent soldiers’ families—though she must have realized that the state’s beneficence was sorely insufficient. Inflation already was on

the rise. Under these circumstances Sarah pleaded with the governor to “have mercy and compashion on a pore disconsolate mother and have my poor son sent home most noble sire I am a pore woman I have no one to assist mee on earth and my son is not 17 years of age till the 31 first day of September next being born in the year 1845.” While the governor’s office forwarded the letter to the secretary of war, the evidence suggests that Benjamin remained in the Confederate army until the end of the war.¹ Aside from a handful of furloughs, Charles stayed with the 18th Alabama, where he was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 1864. He appears to have returned home for good only in March 1865.

A few miles north of the Driggers farm, Zachariah and Christine Blackman’s circumstances were somewhat different. Their 800-acre farm, of which only 60 was improved, was worth over \$2,500. They owned no slaves but employed a farm laborer named John Betterton. It is possible that Betterton joined the army in 1861 but the evidence is too ambiguous to determine with certainty. As for Zachariah, he became one of many to be drafted into the army under the Confederacy’s 1862 conscription act.² By the spring of that year it was clear that the Confederate policy of manning its armies solely with volunteers was not working. Most of the men were serving out twelve-month enlistments that would soon expire. Back in December, the Confederate Congress had tried to promote reenlistments by granting generous furloughs, allotting a \$50 bounty, and providing opportunities for soldiers to reorganize their units and reelect new officers. Confederate commanders such as Braxton Bragg and Robert E. Lee

¹ Sarah A. Driggers to John Gill Shorter, June 18, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); Benjamin D. Simmons, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm); Census or Enumeration of Confederate Soldiers Residing in Alabama, 1907, Coffee County, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

² United States Census, Coffee County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4; Zachariah Blackman, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

opposed this strategy, arguing that it would ultimately weaken the army at precisely the time when the Federals were threatening major portions of the South. The effort ultimately fell far short of expectations.

For his part Lee supported a conscription policy that guaranteed an adequate fighting force for the duration of the war and placed Richmond firmly in charge of enrolling efforts. In this way the Davis administration could bypass the states and draft men directly into Confederate service. Ironically, this position was totally at odds with the principles for which many southerners claimed they were fighting, namely the idea that centralized power should be limited with sovereignty retained primarily by the states. But for the majority of Confederate politicians, pragmatism took precedence over principle when it came to filling the ranks. As even Senator Louis Wigfall of Texas contended, “the enemy are in some portions of every state of the Confederacy. Virginia is enveloped by them. We need a large army. No man has any individual rights which come into conflict with the welfare of the country.”³

Supported by Lee and other commanders, Jefferson Davis presented his case to the legislature in March 1862. The overly complex volunteer system then in place, he argued, would never produce the kind of numbers that the Confederacy needed to win. As historian Albert Burton Moore has observed, Davis “had early become an exponent of a simple and uniform military system with a centralized control, and he urged it with fervor upon Congress from the beginning of 1862.”⁴ Davis also intended to use conscription as a means to enlist thousands of men who were less than enthusiastic about the war. “It is necessary that in a great war like that in which we are now engaged,” he reasoned, “all persons of intermediate age not legally exempt

³ Edward S. Cooper, *Louis Trezevant Wigfall: The Disintegration of the Union and Collapse of the Confederacy* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), 98; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 430.

⁴ Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 14.

for good cause should pay their debt of military service to the country, that the burdens should not fall exclusively on the most ardent and patriotic.”⁵

In April, the Confederate legislature passed overwhelmingly the first of three conscription laws designed to provide a steady supply of troops for southern armies. Officially known as An Act to Further Provide for the Public Defence, the first enrollment act or conscript act stipulated that every able-bodied white male between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five was subject to military service. Those already in the army on short-term enlistments were required to serve an additional two years; the furlough and bounty program adopted four months earlier remained in place for their benefit. The law still allowed draftees to hire substitutes, but only from the pool of men not subject to conscription or specifically prohibited by statute. It also continued to provide bounties and a thirty-day grace period for men to volunteer on their own, thus allowing men to avoid the stigma of being drafted.

Five days later Congress approved a supplementary bill exempting from the draft certain professional and industrial laborers. The legislature believed that some jobs were vital to the overall war effort and recognized that while many of these men would otherwise be subject to conscription, some had little means by which to secure a substitute. The provision included exemptions for Confederate and state officials, mail carriers, telegraph operators, railroad workers, miners, college presidents and professors, nurses and attendants, ministers, teachers, pharmacists, and “superintendents and operatives in wool and cotton factories.” For the moment Congress declined to exempt overseers, an issue they would revisit soon enough.⁶

⁵ Jefferson Davis to George W. Randolph, March 28, 1862, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 4, vol. 1 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 1031 [hereafter cited as *O.R.*].

⁶ James Matthews, ed., *Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America* (Richmond: R.M. Smith, 1862), 29–32, 52; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 429–31; Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy*, 15–16.

In Alabama, Governor Shorter initially opposed the new law, believing that such a move violated the spirit of the Confederate cause and threatened to undermine morale on the home front. “If we are to depend upon [conscription] to maintain the liberty of the South,” he complained, “I should almost despair of our ultimate triumph.”⁷ Within weeks of the law’s passage Shorter implored Richmond to postpone implementation in northern Alabama, the state’s breadbasket, in order to give poor and yeoman farmers enough time to harvest their crops. Having received numerous letters from local citizens, the governor was well aware that the manpower shortage in many neighborhoods threatened to further destabilize whole communities. In some places wives, sisters, and mothers were “left to plow and sow and reap and mow on the principle of ‘root hog or die.’”⁸

The Davis administration denied Shorter’s request. Once the law was implemented, the governor gave it his full support, despite whatever personal reservations he may have had. Shorter nonetheless anticipated problems in the hill counties of northern Alabama, where support for the Confederacy was unenthusiastic and pockets of Unionism flourished. Within months armed resistance broke out in Randolph and several other counties as hundreds of vigilantes reportedly hid out in the woods to escape the enrollment officers. In some neighborhoods Confederate officials were in constant danger of being attacked. An armed mob stormed the Randolph County jail, for example, and freed an unspecified number of deserters and draft evaders. Shorter advised Secretary of War George Wythe Randolph—who apparently wanted to

⁷ Malcolm Cook McMillan, *The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governors and Alabama’s Wartime Home Front, 1861-1865* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 40.

⁸ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 195. For more information on the divisiveness of conscription on the home front see Jonathan D. Sarris, “An Execution in Lumpkin County: Localized Loyalties in North Georgia’s Civil War,” in *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 131–57 and John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 139–86.

avoid any bloodshed and sought out the governor's advice—to meet resistance with force. “Entertaining . . . the firmest conviction as to the policy and necessity of a prompt, rigid, and equal execution of the act in every part of the State, I am of opinion that . . . a cavalry force should at once be ordered out sufficient to put down resistance and arrest the ringleaders. This I have but little doubt could be effected without bloodshed, but the law should be enforced at every hazard.”⁹

While the governor focused his attention on conscription problems in north Alabama, Pine Barren residents experienced difficulties of their own adjusting to the new law. Before the law's enactment, families who were large enough, wealthy enough, or able to retain enough able-bodied relatives to keep the farm going could afford to send one or more of their men off to war. Historian Martin Crawford observes that in Appalachian North Carolina's majority white communities, “informal support systems may have offset the effects of absentee labor. Farm households who could rely on familial or neighborly assistance . . . could more easily adapt to wartime demands, although over time such compensation would have been insufficient to sustain economic activity at prewar levels.”¹⁰ This seems to have been true in the Pine Barrens. Pike County resident James Hill, for instance, was better off than many of his China Grove neighbors. When his two oldest sons, Samuel and Benjamin, joined Dowdell's Volunteers, 37th Alabama Infantry, Hill relied upon his own labor, his fifty-year-old male slave, and his young teenaged son Charles to work the farm.¹¹

⁹ *O.R.*, ser. 4, vol. 2, 87.

¹⁰ Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 92.

¹¹ Muster Rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, Company K, 37th Alabama, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; United States Census, Pike County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

The Riley boys, on the other hand, were members of an extensive kinship network of lower and middle class farming families from Dale County. Brothers Edward, George, Gillum, and John, along with their cousins Samuel and Daniel, joined the Henry Pioneers, 15th Alabama Infantry, in August 1862. At least three other close relatives fought with the Dale County Greys, 33rd Alabama Infantry. Although several of them left wives and young children behind, they relied upon the Riley men who were either too young or too old for the military to take care of their families while they served. Unfortunately for the family's patriarchs, they shouldered a much heavier burden than they could have ever imagined, as five of their sons soon died from disease, several others were captured in battle, and two suffered debilitating wounds.¹²

The Hill and Riley families are just two examples of the hundreds of kinship networks, both extensive and limited, that allowed Pine Barren residents to support the war effort while maintaining some semblance of economic security. To be sure, poor families with limited resources lived on the edge of economic ruin even during the best of times, so it goes without saying that many were less than enthusiastic about giving up their most precious human resources to the Confederacy. The evidence suggests that the Conscription Act changed the dynamic that existed during the first year of the war and forced many of the region's communities to try and adjust to the economic challenges they faced. The most significant effect upon the region, especially in poorer communities and neighborhoods in the southernmost counties, was that hundreds of men, previously counted upon to deliver various goods and services or perform certain tasks, were now subject to the draft. In addition, the conscription of physicians, millers, and blacksmiths, men already in short supply, threatened to undermine economic stability further in neighborhoods strained by the loss of so much manpower. Many

¹² Muster Rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, Company G, 15th Alabama, and Company B, 33rd Alabama, Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; United States Census, Dale County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

citizens accordingly wrote to Montgomery and Richmond, requesting that these men either not be drafted or receive special exemption from the service. As historian Stephanie McCurry notes: “from the very moment that officials began to make demands on the population for the manpower and materiel with which to wage war, requests for relief and revision of government policy poured into the offices of state governors and the various Confederate secretaries of war.”¹³

Within weeks of the law’s passage, for example, fifty-eight women from Pike County sent a petition to Governor Shorter imploring him to “exonerate Dr. James Reynold from servise in the Confederate army under the late law now in forse as a Conscriptive soldier as all of the Phisicians are gon and is going which will leave our familys Destitute of Medical ade and hope you will Release him from going to war.”¹⁴ Residents of nearby Orion similarly asked the governor to “release Dr. B.F. Adams – a conscript, who is now in camp at Camp Wood Notusulga, to us.” The petitioners were quick to inform the governor that their section of the county was “thickly populated especially with women and children. Our brave men are nearly all in the army, but their poor families are here without any medical aid.”¹⁵ In like manner, more than 150 residents from Butler and Covington counties petitioned both the governor and the secretary of war for the return of Dr. John Balden, “as our section of [the] country is left without any medical Physician within any reasonable distance and consequently great suffering there by.”¹⁶

¹³ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 137.

¹⁴ Nancy Boswell to John Gill Shorter, April 28, 1862, Letters Received by the Confederate Secretary of War, 1861-1865, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

¹⁵ William DuBose to John Gill Shorter, August 24, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

¹⁶ G.H. McClure to George Randolph, June 13, 1862, Letters Received by the Confederate Secretary of War, 1861-1865, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

Physicians were not the only citizens whose absence had adversely affected small communities. Alvin May and F.M. Walker were the proprietors of a blacksmith and carriage shop in Elba, Coffee County. Sheriff James T. Moody wrote the governor on behalf of the citizens of the town and surrounding communities, inquiring as to the status of the two men, whether or not they were liable to conscription, and if so, how the town might be able to hold on to them. “The farmers and citizens generally around here are anxious for them to stay at home,” he noted. “The fact is, we don’t know what we will do if they are taken. The farmers cant get along with their farms unless their plows & wagons are kept up.”¹⁷ In Henry County, twenty-six-year-old William C. Capps, another blacksmith and carriage maker from the Woodville community, signed up with the 3rd Alabama Infantry to avoid being conscripted. State Senator William H. Wood, who represented Dale and Henry counties, joined nearly two dozen citizens to petition the governor for Capps’s release. He is a “blacksmith and mechanic located where such workmen is much wanted,” they argued, “and if taken away will cause much disadvantage to the Farmers of his vicinity in cultivating there Farms.”¹⁸

In Butler County, seventeen poor and middle-class soldiers wives meanwhile petitioned the governor for the relief of William H. Capps, a local farmer who had spent considerable time and energy helping the families in his community. Sally McLean, the wealthiest and perhaps most educated of the group, penned the letter to Governor Shorter: “We the undersign petitioners wives of soldiers now in the service of [the] Confederate states,” she wrote, “are in a destitute

¹⁷ J.C. Moody to John Gill Shorter, August 6, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

¹⁸ Citizens of Henry to John Gill Shorter, September 12, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); W.C. Capps, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. (microfilm). Unfortunately for the community, Capps remained in the army, was captured at the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House in May 1864, and died at Elmira Prison just three months before the end of the war.

condition with familys of little children to support.” She made it clear that Capps’s assistance was a godsend: “for the last eight months he has done every thing that a man of his circumstances could of done . . . and is ready and willing at all times to assist us.” Stephanie McCurry has suggested that women such as these grew increasingly bold as the war progressed, exercising their political power as “soldier’s wives” in letters and petitions to government officials. Unfortunately for Sally McLean, Nancy Clancey, Martha Amos, Sarah Combs and seventeen other women, the governor refused to intervene on their behalf.¹⁹

Another example of Pine Barren citizens petitioning the government for the release or exemption of certain individuals from conscription occurred in Coffee County. About 1860, a wealthy twenty-nine-year-old Polish immigrant and merchant named Hyman Yaretsky moved to Elba with his younger brother, Julius, and two business associates, Elias Fitzkosky and Morris Alkus. The elder Yaretsky opened a general store and hired his brother and two partners to help run the business. By the fall of 1862 Alkus was fighting with the Little George Matthews Friends, later Company K, 25th Alabama Infantry, while Julius Yaretsky served in Company A of the 33rd Alabama. Hyman Yaretsky continued to sell much-needed goods at reasonable prices in an area already feeling the pinch of inflation as well as the hardships caused by the absence of so many men fighting in Confederate armies.

When the conscription act made Yaretsky eligible for the draft and indirectly threatened to close his store, Coffee County’s enrolling officer, H. W. Henry, advised several prominent citizens to petition Montgomery on Yaretsky’s behalf. A local lawyer named William D. Roberts wrote to the governor, requesting that Yaretsky receive an exemption on the grounds that he “is the only man that is doing any business of any consequence in this county and I must

¹⁹ Sally McLean, et. al. to John Gill Shorter, November 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 135.

say that he has been as charitable to the poor class as any man. . . . He furnishes the people of this county such articles as they need cheaper than they can buy the same in any market.”

Indeed, Yaretsky often sold spools of sewing thread, needles, cloth, and other items in high demand to poor citizens at or below cost. “If Mr. Yaretsky leaves,” Roberts added, “then his business will close greatly to the misery and probably I might say to the distress of a large number of good citizens and mostly the soldiers families who are depending on him.” The governor agreed, consulted Confederate authorities in Richmond, and secured Yaretsky’s exemption.²⁰

In other cases families were confused about other provisions of the law. Some were more than a little disappointed when they discovered that soldiers whose age exceeded the maximum age limit would not be automatically discharged from the service. Men from Henry, Dale, and Barbour counties serving with the 25th Georgia in Savannah, for example, were frustrated to learn that the older soldiers would not be allowed to return home. Writing on their behalf, Private Joel D. Holt, a forty-seven-year-old farmer from the Green Mill community in Henry County, asked Governor Shorter to explain the law to him and his friends and intervene if possible. “If I understand it correctly all the men over thirty five and under eighteen years was clear of the service on the 16th, wish has past and no one has been made to let us go home. . . . Most of the old men in Captains Holmes company from Alabama are poor men and has left suffering families and some of them sick and we are not allowed to go home and see them.” While Holt’s letter demonstrates the confusion surrounding the law’s implementation, and illustrates as well the mounting problems that poorer families faced back home, it does not contain any underlying threats or suggest in any way that the men were on the verge of abandoning their

²⁰ United States Census, Coffee County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1; W.R. Roberts to John Gill Shorter, September 12, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

cause. The letter does reveal the soldiers' expectations when it came to the state's responsibility to their families: "We apele to you for protection in our trubels about our sick & sufering famleys."²¹

Other men petitioned the governor and the secretary of war directly, trying to secure exemptions. In Dale County's Skipperville community thirty-two-year-old conscript John Munn informed the governor that he was physically unable to fight in the army and suggested that his skill as a blacksmith would be more helpful to the cause than his service in the military. "I live in a poor settlement," he argued, "and thare is not anough a men left here to take Sebastopal [Sevastopol] if thay were to try and thare is so many soldiers familes to attend to and thare is several of them that looks to me for thair blacksmith work without wich they could not till thair little farms." Munn hoped to receive an exemption but also expressed a desire to do whatever was necessary "for the independance of our beloved South." In the end he left his wife and three young children behind, joined the 15th Alabama Infantry, and went on to fight in some of the bloodiest battles of the war, including Gettysburg, Chickamauga, and Cold Harbor.²²

The conscription act presented unique challenges for the men who had already served out their twelve-month enlistments and decided not to reenlist. Some of them believed that they had fulfilled their duty to the Confederacy. Twenty-two-year-old Angus Stewart, for example, was among the first to join the Clayton Guards in early 1861. He left the service a year later when his temporary enlistment expired. Stewart then was elected as a lieutenant in the local militia but did not receive his commission until *after* he had reenlisted in the Confederate army in Capt. R.

²¹ Joel D. Holt to John Gill Shorter, July 29, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); United States Census, Henry County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

²² John Munn to John Gill Shorter, July 8, 1862, Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); Muster Roll Company E, 15th Alabama, Muster Rolls of Alabama Civil War Units, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

F. Kolb's battery, Hilliard's Legion, a decision undertaken "more to avoid enrollment than from the impulse of feeling. When I returned home," he declared to the governor in August 1862, "I did not intend on going into the service again for if I had I could verry easily have received a Lieutenancy in Captain Hargrove's Company 39th Ala Regt." His letter reveals a man who felt all but betrayed by both the governor and the Confederacy. In his view, he had served in the army, was duly elected as an officer in the state militia, and was now being pressed back into Confederate service against his will. "Believing then that I was exempt by your protection . . . I want to know now of you whether it is in your power or not to release me. If it is I demand it and appeal to you for it and if done I will return the bounty and all the funds I have drew from the government." In response, the governor scribbled a note to his clerk on the bottom of the letter that read, "he is a volunteer and therefore I can't relieve him." Like it or not, Angus Stewart was stuck in the army.²³

The evidence suggests that of all of the examples mentioned above only one man, Hyman Yaretzky, ultimately received an exemption from conscription prior to the law's revision in October 1862. The rest joined new or existing companies, most likely to avoid being drafted into units not of their own choosing. Historian Kenneth Noe labels these soldiers "later enlisters" to distinguish them from the men who made up the initial wave of volunteers during the first year of the war. Noe describes several reasons for these later enlistments, but as none of the men presented here left behind diaries or letters, outside of their correspondence with the governor, it is difficult to ascribe any particular motivation other than avoiding conscription for their

²³ Angus A. Stewart to John Gill Shorter, August 30, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; A.A. Stewart, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm). It was common practice for Governors Moore, Shorter, and Watts to make brief notes on incoming letters or envelopes. Clerks would take the notations and formulate formal replies based upon the governor's decision for each case. Some of these notations have been preserved but many have not.

enlistment in the army. Tracking their lives through the end of the war can also be frustrating. Yet by all indications men such as Joel Holt (the only known substitute in the group), William Capps, and John Munn served out their terms of enlistment with as much commitment as any soldier. “With few exceptions,” Noe explains, later enlisters “largely proved to be willing soldiers, driven to defend their kin, homes, and property in an acceptably manly fashion not so unlike their comrades of the class of 1861.”²⁴

The evidence further demonstrates that Pine Barren communities, already strained by the loss of so many men to the army in 1861, risked even greater economic difficulties as conscription drained more manpower from the region. Poor families struggling to make ends meet wrote letters (if they were literate), signed petitions, or expressed their concerns indirectly through local sheriffs, judges, or wealthy neighbors who might have more influence. Throughout the spring, summer, and early fall of 1862, the volume of letters flooding into the governor’s office as well as that of the Confederate Secretary of State in Richmond had the desired effect. In October, Congress amended the original conscript act and added several new categories of exemptions. Even though many restrictions and conditions remained, the new law generally exempted factory owners, shoe-makers, tanners, blacksmiths, wagon-makers, salt-makers, miners, physicians, newspaper editors, and certain other classes of artisans and manufacturers. There was also a provision, the so-called “twenty-negro law,” which exempted one white man for every plantation with twenty or more slaves and one man for “every twenty negroes on two or more plantations within five miles of each other . . . on which there is no white male adult not liable to military duty.”²⁵

²⁴ Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 195.

²⁵ *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865*, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), 490.

The conscription act and the modifications passed in October invited numerous opportunities for evasion, despite the fact that the revisions were supposed to close loopholes in the original law. Covington County, with its relative isolation, high levels of poverty, and comparatively few slaves, along with the influence of Unionists such as Alfred Holly and the growing propensity among many to oppose the Confederacy, represented one of the greatest challenges conscription officers faced. Local attorney James Little—who narrowly lost an 1863 bid to unseat incumbent Alfred Holly in the state legislature—notification the governor that “the disposition to evade the law is so manifest in this (Covington) county, that, I judged it proper to inform you of the same.” Apparently men who had never shown an interest in teaching, law enforcement, or other exempt positions were “taking the Deputy Clerks office, some the Deputy Sheriffs office, and some are taking schools—all to keep from going to the war.”²⁶ As the war progressed the problems in Covington County would become increasingly worse.

In Eufaula, meanwhile, Lewis Cato, a member of the vigilance committee in Barbour County, likewise informed the governor that one of the local citizens—who appears to have been under arrest at the time for evading conscription—positively refused to join the army. According to Cato, the unnamed man boastfully declared that he “would see every woman and child in the South killed & every negro freed before he would go to the war!” He furthermore hoped that the next time the Confederate Congress met they “might all be captured.” Cato believed that the man was a threat and asked the governor if there were any legal penalties or charges that might be brought against him. There is no indication of the governor’s response or the final disposition

²⁶ James M.K. Little to John Gill Shorter, September 1, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

of the case, but given the violence sometimes meted out to those considered disloyal, one can only imagine the extralegal recourse committee members could have taken.²⁷

Butler County's Zechariah Bush was at least honest when he told the governor, of whom he claimed an old acquaintance, of his plans to escape the draft by becoming an overseer. "I cant stand camp life," he acknowledged, "and I wont to do somting for the Southern confederat states." Bush wanted nothing to do with the fighting, but it appears he had little if any actual experience as an overseer. "I have folard overseeing a grate deal of my time an as they is a grate cal for overseers I would like ta be detail for that buisness." Shorter actually recommended that he locate a plantation with "20 negroes" that did not already have an overseer and try to get a job there. Otherwise there was nothing the governor could do.²⁸

Congress added the "twenty-negro law," as it was commonly called, to the list of exemptions after large planters complained that the conscription act created a situation whereby there were not enough able-bodied men to serve as overseers. Women likewise worried that the act would leave them unprotected from slave rebellion. Sixty-two-year-old Thomas Richards, for example, a plantation owner whose extended family owned hundreds of acres of land and dozens of slaves in both Barbour and Henry counties, had four sons and multiple family members serving in Confederate armies. If Richard's account is accurate his young nephew, Benjamin Franklin Richards, must have worked himself to a frazzle trying to take care of three family farms. In May 1862, twenty-four family members and neighbors including twelve women and two soldiers petitioned the governor on his behalf: "If he has to leave under this conscript act his family and these others that he has had in [his] care are bound to suffer as thare

²⁷ Lewis Cato to John Gill Shorter, June 10, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

²⁸ Zechariah Bush to John Gill Shorter, November 21, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

childring are small, fer the most of the men have heartofour voluntered an are gon before the pasing of this act.” Their efforts were in vain; Richards joined the 37th Alabama Infantry later that month. He was killed at the Battle of Iuka on September 19, 1862, just weeks before revisions to the conscript act might have aided his father’s efforts to get him out of the army.²⁹

In Pike County, meanwhile, John Blair Sr. was eager to use the “twenty-negro law” to get his son Leonard, one of four sons who fought during the war, out of the army. Leonard and brothers Needham and Zephaniah had joined the 53rd Alabama Partisan Rangers back during the summer of 1862, ostensibly to avoid being drafted. Zephaniah served nine months with the 4th Alabama Cavalry Battalion before receiving a disability discharge. Levi, the youngest of the four brothers, was a private in the 15th Alabama Infantry until he died of typhoid fever in January 1862. In November, John Blair requested that the governor release Leonard from the army “to act as an overseer and agent for me [as] I am getting very old and not able to do the business on my plantation.” Shorter responded that the “affidavit shows no cause of exemption from conscription.” Within two months Leonard was dead as well.³⁰

While the home front struggled to adjust to the new law, conscription came as something of a welcome relief to Confederate armies starved for manpower. Thousands of new recruits such as the Blair brothers were either drafted or volunteered to avoid the humiliation. Yet the majority of newly-formed Pine Barren companies missed the bloody battles in Virginia and Maryland during the summer and early fall. While new recruits were training in Auburn,

²⁹ Thomas Richards to John Gill Shorter, May 8, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); Benjamin Franklin Richards, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

³⁰ John Blair to John Gill Shorter, November 12, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); Levi Blair, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

Montgomery, Mobile, and other locations, such regiments as the 15th Alabama Infantry, made up almost exclusively of men from Pine Barren counties, participated in Maj. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley Campaign, and played a key role in the Confederate victory at Port Republic. There on June 9, 1862, the 15th Alabama “regiment made a gallant resistance,” impeding the Union advance just long enough for the Rebel army to move into place, occupy the best ground, and ultimately win the fight.³¹

East of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Pine Barren soldiers also were fighting by summer in a series of battles that came to be known as the Peninsula Campaign. From March through July of 1862, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan’s Union Army of the Potomac attacked up the Yorktown Peninsula with the goal of capturing the Confederate capital of Richmond and ending the war. A dozen Pine Barren companies from eight infantry regiments participated in some of the campaign’s bloodiest engagements.³²

At the Battle of Seven Pines Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston attacked two Federal corps at Fair Oaks Station about five miles east of Richmond. Rebel assaults were initially successful but Union reinforcements prevented a clear-cut victory. In an eastward attack running parallel with the Williamsburg Road, the 6th Alabama Infantry suffered more than 300 casualties, fully 60 percent of its effective fighting force. Capt. Thomas H. Bell of the Henry County Blues (Company A, 6th Alabama) lost nearly every man in his command. “In a sheet of fire . . . this company stood until the last officer and non-commissioned officer, except 1 corporal, and 44 of

³¹ *O.R.*, ser.1, vol. 12, pt. 1, 713. See also Peter Cozzens, *Shenandoah 1862: Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

³² Two good studies of the Peninsula Campaign include Gary W. Gallagher, *The Richmond Campaign of 1862: The Peninsula and the Seven Days* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and Stephen W. Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1992).

the 56 men carried into action, had fallen.”³³ Lying mortally wounded, Bell carefully loaded his revolver and fired round after round into the Blue line less than fifty yards from his position.

About 400 yards to the right, Capt. Eugene Blackford’s Barbour County Grays of the 5th Alabama Infantry fought through a barrage of canister fire and musketry to capture one of the Federal batteries. “Thick as hail fell the shot around us,” wrote one Alabamian, “some burst as they struck, others a fluttering noise, and then the keen whistle of the minnie ball.”³⁴ Along that same line of attack, the 12th Alabama’s Coffee County Rangers pushed through the Yankee encampment and a second line of abatis only to find themselves pinned down by enfilading fire. The men dropped to the ground, loaded their rifles, and raised up just long enough to take aim and fire. “I saw him fall!” shouted several of the Rebels whose slugs found their marks.³⁵ Sixteen Rangers were wounded during this exchange, including Capt. Exton Tucker, Pvt. Edward Roads, and Cpl. Michael Horn, all from the Buzbeeville community in Coffee County. Pvt. William Cardwell, a poor farmer who lived just a few houses down from Tucker, and Pvt. Franklin Winslow, the son of the wealthiest planter in the community, were killed alongside six of their comrades from the same neighborhood. Seven Pines turned out to be a costly affair for the small community of Buzbeeville.³⁶

During the Seven Days’ Battles—a series of six major engagements fought on the outskirts of Richmond at the climax of the Peninsula Campaign—Pine Barren companies saw the most action at Gaines’ Mill and Malvern Hill, the two bloodiest days. On June 27 at Gaines’ Mill, Capt. Eugene Blackford’s Eufaula boys performed admirably when their regiment, the 5th

³³ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 11, no. 1, 980.

³⁴ *Voices From Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 89.

³⁵ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 11. pt. 1, 981.

³⁶ Robert E. Park, “The Twelfth Alabama Infantry, Confederate States Army,” *Southern Historical Society Papers* 33 (1905): 202.

Alabama, spearheaded an assault on the Union right that led to the capture of a Yankee battery. In less than three hours the regiment lost forty-five wounded and twenty-one killed, including the regimental colonel, Christopher Pegues.³⁷ About a mile to the west, the Greenville Guards (8th Alabama Infantry) and the Jeff Davis Rangers (9th Alabama Infantry), both raised in Butler County, were heavily engaged alongside the 10th and 11th Alabama Infantry in the attack on the Union left. Under a murderous fire, 1,800 Alabamians crossed an open field, fought through a creek bed that the Yankees were using as a makeshift rifle pit, overran two lines of breastworks, and swept the Federals over the back side of the hill. Lt. Col. Hillary Herbert later recalled that “in spite of brush, briars and ditches and under the concentrated fire of two lines, our men drove the enemy’s first line back pell mell upon the second, and charging up the heights it too broke and fled in confusion, leaving us the masters of the strong position” at the crest of the hill.³⁸ “The victory is complete,” reported Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox, “the enemy is repulsed and pursued at every point, and those that escape falling into our hands do so under the cover of the darkness of the night.”³⁹ The 8th and 9th Alabama lost nearly 300 men killed or wounded, including Rangers’ captain Edward Young Hill who died early in the assault, evidently the victim of a Union sharpshooter.

Meanwhile, about 500 yards northeast of the Watt farm, the 15th Alabama hammered the Federal center. Nineteen-year-old Pvt. Thomas Burke, the only son of one of the wealthiest planters in Eufaula, was one of the first to fall. Fatally shot through the “pit of the stomach” and writhing in pain, he tried to stop the gushing blood by plugging the wound with his canteen cork.

³⁷ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 10, pt. 2, 632-33.

³⁸ “Short History of the 8th Alabama Regiment, 1864: Written by Lieutenant Colonel Hilary A. Herbert at Orange Court House, Virginia,” Manuscript Copy, Hilary A. Herbert Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

³⁹ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 2, 774.

Pvt. Samuel Dickerson from Dale County was shot through the chest and died almost instantly. The firing was so rapid that some of the men feared their gun barrels were becoming too hot and began using the rifles of the wounded and the dead. Cpl. Gus McClendon was nearly shot in the head by one of his own men. “The stinging about my neck,” he later recall, “was caused by grains of powder” penetrating his skin. McClendon remembered that the weather that day was so hot and humid that several men died from heat exhaustion. Despite suffering more than 100 casualties, the 15th Alabama captured a battery of seven guns and helped push the Federals off the hill into full retreat. Gaines Mill was a disaster for the Union and convinced McClellan to abandon his effort to capture Richmond.⁴⁰

Four days later at Malvern Hill, three companies of Pine Barren troops from the 5th and 6th Alabama joined the leading elements of Maj. Gen. Daniel H. Hill’s division in an ill-fated attack against fortified positions at the Union center. At 6:30 p.m. the Confederate assault faced a barrage of artillery and small arms fire. Brigade commander Col. John B. Gordon reported that “the canister and musketry mowed down my already thinned ranks so rapidly that it became impossible to advance without support.”⁴¹ The men charged the batteries, then fell back, reformed, and charged again without success. “We murdered them by the hundreds,” recalled one Union soldier, “but they again formed and came up to be slaughtered.” Capt. Eugene Blackford called it “the most shocking scene of butchery” he had ever witnessed. “We could not shoot a gun, but simply marched up to be mowed down by the storm of canister poured upon us.”⁴²

With no hope of support, Gordon ordered the regiments to fall back. Despite the Union victory

⁴⁰ William Calvin Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, and Its Lost Opportunities* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 114–23; Ben H. Severance, *Portraits of Conflict: A Photographic History of Alabama During the Civil War* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2012), 50–51.

⁴¹ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 2, 634.

⁴² Brian K. Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances: The Seven Days Battles* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 339.

at Malvern Hill, McClellan retreated to Harrison's Landing and eventually withdrew his army from the peninsula under the cover of Federal gunboats.

McClellan's unsuccessful Peninsula Campaign led to the creation of a new Union Army under Maj. Gen. John Pope. In late August, Pope's Army of Virginia clashed with Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at the Second Battle of Bull Run, known to Confederates as Second Manassas. On the night of August 28, the 15th Alabama joined in Stonewall Jackson's attack against Brig. Gen. John Gibbon's brigade about two miles west of Bull Run Creek, near Brawner's Farm. For the 15th Alabama, this bloody night raid resulted in at least fifteen dead and thirty-eight wounded. Some of the men were so terrified that they hugged the ground "like a frightened squirrel lay upon the branch of a tree."⁴³ Pvt. John Sauls from Henry County was shot in the head, "the ball entered between his left eye and his nose . . . and came out behind his right ear." Sauls miraculously survived but suffered permanent blindness in one eye, facial disfigurement, and a lifetime of mental disability. Cpl. Lott McMath's head wound was thought not to be serious until a day later when his fever spiked. He soon began showing signs of insanity, escaped from the field hospital, and died alone in the woods.⁴⁴ For two days Stonewall Jackson's three divisions held off repeated Federal assaults until Maj. Gen. James Longstreet's corps arrived at noon on August 29. The following day, fresh off their victory at Thoroughfare Gap, Longstreet's five divisions shattered the Union left flank and routed Pope's army. The 15th Alabama helped repel the Federal attack of August 29 with few losses and participated in the rout of the Union army the next day.⁴⁵

⁴³ Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy*, 140.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁴⁵ John J. Hennessy, *Return to Bull Run: The Campaign and Battle of Second Manassas* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

Following his victory at Second Manassas, Lee launched an invasion onto Union soil. On September 17, 1862, the Army of the Potomac, essentially back under the command of George B. McClellan, clashed with the Rebel army just outside the town of Sharpsburg, Maryland. Pine Barren companies were involved in several phases of the Battle of Antietam, a battle that sadly earned its place as the bloodiest single day of the war. With fewer than sixty men present for duty, the Conecuh Guards (Company G, 4th Alabama Infantry) lost about half its strength in the vicious early morning fighting that occurred on the Confederate left, an area known as the Cornfield. One soldier recalled that “it was the severest clash of arms in which the 4th Alabama ever participated.”⁴⁶ About two hours later, Pine Barren companies from the 5th Alabama, 6th Alabama, and 12th Alabama, all part of Rodes’ Brigade, were heavily engaged in the fighting at the Sunken Road— a wagon-worn, weather-beaten side road off Hagerstown Pike known afterwards as the Bloody Lane. John B. Gordon was wounded five times before being carried off the field and replaced by his twenty-two-year-old second-in-command, Lt. Col. James Lightfoot. In the chaos, Lightfoot—a store clerk from Abbeville whose gallantry during the war earned him several promotions—misunderstood an order from Gen. Rodes and mistakenly pulled his entire regiment out of line, a move that caused other units to retreat and ultimately resulted in the Rebel abandonment of the Sunken Road.⁴⁷ By nightfall the Confederate Army was on its heels, badly outnumbered, while the Federals controlled nearly every part of the battlefield. Still, McClellan failed to take advantage of the situation and allowed Lee’s army to retreat back across the Potomac into Virginia.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey D. Stocker, ed., *From Huntsville to Appomattox: R.T. Coles History of 4th Regiment, Alabama Volunteer Infantry, C.S.A., Army of Northern Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 70.

⁴⁷ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 19, pt. 1, 1036-1039; Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam*, First Mariner Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003), 246. See also Joseph L. Harsh, *Taken at the Flood: Robert E. Lee and Confederate Strategy in the Maryland Campaign of 1862* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999).

While thousands of Americans were fighting and dying at Sharpsburg, three hundred miles to the west at Munfordville, Kentucky, Col. John T. Wilder surrendered his 4,000-man Union garrison to Confederate General Braxton Bragg. For weeks Bragg's Army of the Mississippi had traversed through Tennessee north into Kentucky. The morale of the army was extraordinarily high despite marching through some of the most Unionist territory in the South as well as a searing drought. "The people about here love the Union with all their perverse traitorous hearts," wrote Capt. Pierre Costello to his wife, and "should be banished from the south they curse by their presence."⁴⁸

After the fall of Munfordville, Bragg's army was on a collision course with Union Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio in a struggle to determine Kentucky's fate in the war. The two sides met on October 8, 1862, at the Battle of Perryville, the first major battle to include significant numbers of conscription-related recruits from the Pine Barrens. The 45th Alabama Infantry, which included two Barbour County companies (Companies A and C), participated in the Confederate attack against Brig. Gen. Phillip Sheridan's division along the Springville Pike about a mile west of Perryville. With orders to silence Capt. Henry Hescocock's Federal artillery on Peters Hill, the 45th Alabama, 24th Mississippi Infantry, and 29th Tennessee Infantry were overwhelmingly outgunned and after a valiant effort forced to retreat.⁴⁹

While the 45th Alabama contained only two Pine Barren companies, the 39th and 33rd Alabama Infantry were raised almost exclusively in south-central and southeastern Alabama. At Perryville the 39th Alabama was inactive but the 33rd Alabama, with companies from Dale, Coffee, Butler, and Covington counties, took part in its first major engagement of the war.

⁴⁸ Pierre D. Costello to Cordelia Costello, August 23, 1862, Pierre D. Costello Civil War Letters, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁴⁹ Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 292–305.

Attached to Brig. Gen. Sterling Alexander Martin Wood's Brigade, the regiment took part in the bloody fighting just before sunset at the crucial Dixville Crossroads. The plan was to take the intersection, isolate Maj. Gen. Alexander M. McCook's I Corps on the Union right, and cut him off from the main body. At first the Rebels gained the upper hand but fresh Union reinforcements soon drove the Alabamians back with heavy losses. Sgt. George D. Bush from Company G, the Daleville Blues, explained the carnage to his father:

Our Company went in with 14 men and there was 6 wounded and 1 killed. D.A. Thomas was killed dead on the field A.J. Nobling was wound very bad L.W. Bigbie was shot in the shoulder with one ball and in the neck with another . . . J.M.P. Talley shot in the leg Henry McCulough shot in the knee and broke his knee all to smash Jas. M. Ellis slitley threw the belly W.G. Waren struck with a piece of a bum on the shoulder.⁵⁰

Col. Adams himself was shot in the foot, thrown from his horse, and dragged for some distance before his foot fell free. Adams, Lt. Col. Robert Crittenden, from Coffee County, and Maj. James Dunklin from Butler had their horses shot from underneath them, which prompted them to lead on foot in subsequent battles. Capt. Robert E. Ward was mortally wounded and allegedly told his slave, Jesse, to return home to Dale County and inform his family of his death. All total, the 33rd Alabama suffered 167 casualties out of fewer than 400 engaged.⁵¹

As the sun set the battle ended. Yet, despite setbacks late in the day the Rebel army had pushed the Federals back more than a mile from their original positions. Many Confederate soldiers were thrilled that they had won a great victory and were understandably frustrated when orders came to abandon the field. "The army are terribly disappointed at the result of the Kentucky Campaign," Pierre Costello later complained, and "accuse their generals of bad

⁵⁰ G.D. Bush to Dear Father, October 22, 1862, Thomas T. Bigbie Papers, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

⁵¹ Severance, *Portraits of Conflict*, 120; Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville*, 292–305, 372; W.E. Preston, "The 33rd Alabama Regiment in the Civil War," ed. L. B. Williams, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama (typescript), 27-29.

management in not fighting the Yankees at various points in Ky.”⁵² Bragg, on the other hand, rightly concluded that he was overwhelmingly outnumbered and feared the Yankees would get in behind him and cut off his escape route. In the end the Confederacy’s hope of holding on to Kentucky was all but lost when Bragg retreated back into Tennessee.⁵³

On October 27, just days after Bragg’s army moved through the Cumberland Gap out of Kentucky into Tennessee, the General Assembly convened in Montgomery for a special session. The conscription act had exacerbated the economic problems that had been mounting since the fall of 1861 and Governor Shorter needed the legislature to address the growing crisis. In majority-white areas such as the Pine Barrens the hardship began for poor families as soon as the men went into the army. Historian Bessie Martin has estimated that 10,263 families received state aid in 1862, roughly 10 percent of the total number of families for the whole state—and these figures are based upon reports submitted by the counties before to conscription. In 1863 the number tripled to 31,915 an increase of more than 200 percent. The 1863 reports further suggest that, with the exception of Barbour, at least one-third of the families in Pine Barren counties received at least some support from the state.⁵⁴

The initial 1861 legislation that set aside funds “for the aid of the indigent families of absent volunteers” meanwhile had failed adequately to meet the needs of the state’s impoverished families.⁵⁵ Each county maintained a list of needy families and made periodic reports to the governor suggesting the amount of funds that it would take to help each family.

⁵² Pierre Costello to Cordelia Costello, October 26, 1862, Pierre D. Costello Civil War Letters, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁵³ Noe, *Perryville*, 334–36.

⁵⁴ Bessie Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops From the Confederate Army: A Study in Sectionalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 128–30.

⁵⁵ *Acts of the Second Called Session, 1861 and of the First Regular Annual Session of the General Assembly of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the 28th Day of October and Second Monday in November, 1861* (Montgomery: Montgomery Advertiser and Job Office, 1862), 4.

On June 12, 1862, for example, Judge E.W. Teague of Henry County reported that 170 families consisting of 831 individuals required at least some help from the state and of that number 392 were entirely destitute.⁵⁶ But not everyone felt that they were being treated fairly. Just weeks after Teague's report, several women complained. "They say they are upon sufferances," one man wrote on their behalf, "and they think very hard of it, knowing that the women of Barbour [County] fair very different from what they do, for they get more every month than [the women of Henry] get for the year."⁵⁷

In Coffee County, Lucretia Simmons wrote to the governor on behalf "of some of the soldiers wives in this settlement. Some of them is living on bread alone without salt we have understood here that thare was some appropriations made for the releaf of them if it is so its not attended to here." Simmons added that Nancy Rudd, whose husband had been in the army for almost a year, "was left quite distitute of the means to live on and she has never recd but 12 buoshel of corn and 30 lbs meat." Rudd did not yet know that her husband, Francis Marion Rudd, had been killed a few weeks earlier at Gaines' Mill. The governor could only inform her that indigent funds were administered by the local officials and complaints needed to be handled on the local level if possible.⁵⁸

At the governor's urging the special session of the legislature that met in October 1862, appropriated an additional \$2 million to support indigent families of soldiers and conscripts; the families of substitutes and deserters were disallowed from receiving assistance. To pay for the

⁵⁶ List of Families from Henry County, Alabama, Eligible to Receive Relief from the State Government During the Civil War, June 12, 1862, Military Volunteer Family Assistance Records, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁵⁷ H.J. Marley to John Gill Shorter, July 20, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁵⁸ Lucreesy Simmons to John Gill Shorter, July 17, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

program, the Assembly empowered the governor to sell bonds. Funds would be distributed by county probate judges under the direction of the local courts of county commissioners. Stiff penalties would be imposed on county officials convicted of embezzling or misusing indigent funds. The legislature later revisited this issue twice in 1863 and again in 1864, each time appropriating more money as the ranks of the poor increased.⁵⁹

One problem closely associated with poverty was the dwindling grain supply. By 1862, commodity prices throughout the Confederacy were at record highs, due partly to the Union blockade, but also to drought conditions in several parts of the state that nearly wiped out the 1862 wheat crop and contributed to significantly lower yields of corn. In addition, as historian Ben Severance observes, “planters often persisted in growing cotton despite the official embargo, while small farmers pursued the greater profits of distilled spirits. As a consequence, food shortages led to inflation and gradually pushed the state to the brink of starvation.”⁶⁰ To combat shortages, inflation, and the increasing likelihood of widespread poverty, Shorter issued a proclamation in March 1862, exhorting Alabamians to “plant not then one seed of cotton beyond your home wants, but put down your lands in grains and every other kind and description of farm product, and raise every kind of livestock which may contribute to the support of your own families and the needy families of your brave defenders.”⁶¹ Shorter further threatened large producers with a cotton tax should he feel that the state’s farmers were not planting their fair share of grain crops.

⁵⁹ Phyllis LaRue LeGrand, “Destitution and Relief of the Indigent Soldiers’ Families of Alabama During the Civil War” diss. (Auburn University, 1964), 116–25.

⁶⁰ Severance, *Portraits of Conflict*, 234–35.

⁶¹ Ralph Brannen, “John Gill Shorter: War Governor of Alabama, 1861-1863” (Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1956), 53–54.

The governor's efforts appear to have worked to a certain extent. While wheat yields remained depressed, the number of acres devoted to corn and other provision crops increased to such a degree that overall production numbers multiplied. "Owing to the largely increased quantity of land planted in corn," the governor affirmed in October, "there is an abundant supply for all the people of the state, and a heavy excess to spare for the use of our troops in the field."⁶² Nevertheless, he recommended that the legislature tax the cotton crop in anticipation that the additional cost would encourage planters to grow even more corn. The tax on cotton was part of a much larger revenue bill passed by the legislature in November 1862. The law imposed a ten cent tax on every pound of seed cotton harvested in excess of 2,500 pounds per hand. Every pound of ginned cotton was equal to four pounds of seed cotton, which meant that farmers and planters were allowed only a bale and half before the new tax kicked in. The legislative journals do not reveal specific voting patterns on this issue, but the debate appears to have been more about the size and scope of the tax than whether or not the tax should be levied in the first place.

The General Assembly also took up a prohibition bill outlawing the distillation of whiskey that originated with an executive military order issued by the governor in March. Earlier in the year Tennessee and Georgia had restricted the manufacture and sale of whiskey, a move that prompted many distilleries to relocate across state lines into Alabama. In several parts of the state distillers soon were buying up corn so rapidly that poorer families were priced out of the market. This was particularly true in remote areas in the southernmost Pine Barrens, where converting corn into whiskey was more profitable than hauling the crop to market. In the past, of course, this was not a problem, but the demand for grain brought on by the war created a situation whereby the need for animal feed and human consumption took precedence over

⁶² *Journal of the Called Session, 1862, and the Second Regular Annual Session of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the 27th October, and the Second Monday in November, 1862* (Montgomery, AL: Montgomery Advertiser Book and Job Printing Office, 1863), 92–93.

whiskey production. The governor also hoped that his order would discourage inebriation on the part of the troops in training camps in the state. “The baneful effects of intemperance among our troops,” he argued, “were daily seen in the demoralization and wild excesses of a large number who, for the first time, had thrown off the restraints of peaceful pursuits and devoted themselves to the arts of war.”⁶³

While the governor’s antistillation order was clearly intended to preserve corn supplies for human and animal consumption, it appears to have had the unintended consequence of severely limiting medicinal alcohol. From the moment the order was issued, requests from distillers all over the state poured into the governor’s office, including numerous requests from Pine Barren residents. Some of these operators almost certainly saw this as an opportunity for financial gain. Shorter tried to be careful to differentiate between those who wanted to distill for medical purposes and those who were interested in manufacturing and selling their wares for recreational consumption. Requests made by ordinary citizens were almost always denied. Thomas Bement from Greenville in Butler County, for example, sent an affidavit to the governor signed by two prominent Butler County citizens, Judge Samuel Bolling and Benjamin F. Porter, requesting a contract to provide “pure whiskey” to the state. Shorter insisted that “the state has made no contract for whiskey and is not in the market.”⁶⁴ Hosea Bailey’s request to distill up to one thousand gallons of whiskey for Barbour County’s druggists and physicians was similarly denied; the governor informed Bailey that his offer would be forwarded to the legislature in October. These types of requests were usually rejected.

⁶³ *Journal of the Called Session, 1862, and the Second Regular Session of the Senate of the State of Alabama Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the 27th October, and the Second Monday in November, 1862* (Montgomery, AL: Montgomery Advertiser Book and Job Printing Office, 1863), 16.

⁶⁴ T. Bement to John Gill Shorter, July 30, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

On the other hand, Shorter was quick to approve appeals submitted by physicians. In July, Drs. Charles Pickett and W. A. Andrews of Fort Browder, Alabama—a small community located about twenty-five miles west of Eufaula—sent word to the governor that their stockpiles of medicinal whiskey were nearly exhausted. Their letter sums up candidly the situation that existed in many Pine Barren neighborhoods:

You are aware of the scarcity of the article and the enormously high price of it in our county. Now in view of the approaching summer and fall sickness, what are the physicians to do. We know of no substitute that we can bring in, in cases of typhoid fever, dysentery and a number of others. Also we are compelled to have alcohol or good whiskey in preparing [most of our] tinctures. We now ask you the privilege of having H. Baily of our county to still us as much as sixty gallons of good whiskey, which spirits shall be used for medical purposes. We pledge ourselves that no person shall have any unless his condition absolutely requires it.⁶⁵

Pickett and Andrews's letter further verified what the governor already knew to be true. Just four months after the ban doctors were already running out of an important and necessary remedy. While Shorter approved this request and others like it, it was clear that he needed and preferred the support of the legislature to continue the program, strengthen his ability to provide for the medical needs of the state, and limit the manufacture of illegal whiskey.

When state House and Senate members convened in October, they supported Shorter's proposal by wide margins. From the Pine Barrens, eight of the eleven house members present at the time voted in favor of the legislation.⁶⁶ While it is difficult to determine with certainty the motives of the men who voted, whether for or against, the evidence suggests that several of the latter may have believed that the law did not go far enough to restrict the manufacture of illegal whiskey. Pike County senator E.L. McIntyre, for example, proposed an amendment that

⁶⁵ Charles Pickett and W.A. Andrews to John Gill Shorter, July 18, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm). The "H. Baily" mentioned here is almost certainly the Hosea Bailey in the letter above. It is obvious that at this stage the governor trusted physicians more than ordinary citizens, even if citizen requests included endorsements from judges or other county officials.

⁶⁶ *House Journal*, 1862, 151–52.

removed the reference to “spirituous liquors” altogether and provided instead “that nothing but alcohol shall be distilled . . . and that of 95 percent strength,” an indication that distillation should be utilized exclusively for medicinal purposes.⁶⁷ Although his amendment failed, he ultimately supported the bill, believing perhaps that doing something was better than doing nothing. Barbour County’s Charles Parker, on the other hand, voted against the legislation. Parker was a wealthy planter, slaveholder, and Primitive Baptist minister whose religious convictions may have convinced him that the law was not strict enough. DeWitt Davis from Covington County was another Primitive Baptist minister who refused to support the bill. As a middle-class farmer who owned no slaves and whose net worth was based almost entirely in land and livestock production, he would have had a keen understanding of the importance of feed corn to the farmers in his county, many of whom relied solely upon livestock for their livelihoods. Of course it was just as probable that he disagreed with prohibition altogether.⁶⁸

The legislation passed by the General Assembly in October strengthened the governor’s proclamation and gave it the force of statutory law. Importantly, the law allowed the governor to issue distillation licenses for high-volume production of alcohol to be inspected and bought by the state. In the southern half of the state, those who wished to distill smaller amounts had until January 20, 1863, to apply for licenses, otherwise distillers were required to deliver no less than 100 barrels or 4,000 gallons of spirits per contract. Because the new law stipulated that these licenses would only be issued to individuals producing alcohol for “medical, chemical, and

⁶⁷ *Senate Journal 1862*, 159.

⁶⁸ United States Census, Barbour County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 2; United States Census, Covington County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1, 2, and 4.

manufacturing purposes,” the governor required that every application be endorsed by “two or more responsible persons,” preferably physicians, and signed by local probate judges.⁶⁹

Shorter determined that twenty counties, including Conecuh and Covington in the Pine Barrens, would not be eligible for contracts due to insufficient supplies of grain. Yet contract offers came from many of the other counties. Butler County’s James R. Yeldell, who had been producing legal spirits for physicians in the surrounding area for at least five months, applied for a license to continue to make up to sixty gallons of whiskey per week. Judge Walter Crenshaw endorsed the application, arguing that because Yeldell’s still was located in the fertile northwest corner of the county, where corn was plentiful, there would be more than enough grain to meet the county’s needs. “All of the practicing physicians for 15 miles around him,” he added, “think it is very necessary that this distillery should not be closed up, for if it is, they will be put to very great inconvenience in getting alcohol for tinctures and other uses in their practices.”⁷⁰

Coffee County’s probate judge, Benjamin Starke, meanwhile, wrote to the governor on behalf of Joseph Blue, a local physician who wanted to set up his own still. “His chief object,” Starke wrote, “is to get whiskey enough for medical purposes, that the county is entirely destitute of that article and he knows that his patients have greatly suffered for want of it and there is no way to get it.” The judge further insisted that the corn mash produced from the manufacture of this whiskey was just as effective for feeding and fattening up livestock as an equal amount of grain. Starke assured the governor that intemperance would not be an issue since most of the county’s young men were already in the army and “if the 45 year men are called into service, as I

⁶⁹ “Proclamation by the Governor of Alabama,” December 24, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁷⁰ W.H. Crenshaw to John Gill Shorter, December 15, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

have no doubt they will shortly, there will be but few left in the county but women and children.”⁷¹ Joseph Blue received the contract.

Despite the state’s efforts, prices for almost everything else continued to rise. By late 1862 corn was selling for more than \$2.00 a bushel. One planter observed that in some parts of the state flour was selling at \$40 a barrel, whiskey \$16 a gallon, and eggs 25 cents per dozen. Yet few other economic problems aroused the interest of state authorities more than the rising cost of salt. While salt is an important nutritional supplement for both humans and animals, it is essential for the proper development of beef cattle. Sodium deficiency in cattle leads to reduced feed intake, inhibits growth, limits milk production, and exposes the animal to numerous diseases. Salt also was absolutely essential for preserving meat, especially pork products. Governor Shorter was so concerned over the threat of a possible “salt famine” that he devoted more than one-third of his 1862 General Assembly address to the subject. His wartime correspondence contains so many items related to salt that one wonders how he found time to deal with any other issue with equal enthusiasm.⁷²

The price of a bushel of salt rose from less than \$1 in 1860 to nearly \$20 in 1862. Before the war salt was abundant and cheap, but the gradual tightening of the Union blockade prevented salt-laden European ships from entering southern ports.⁷³ As early as November 1861, the General Assembly passed a series of laws aimed at curtailing speculators, building salt reserves, and ensuring that the salt produced within the state remained in Alabama. When a group of speculators attempted to bypass the new law by moving 1,400 sacks of salt across the state line

⁷¹ B.W. Starke to John Gill Shorter, October 24, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁷² Augustus Benners, *Disunion, War, Defeat, and Recovery in Alabama: The Journal of Augustus Benners, 1850-1885* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2007), 90; *House Journal, 1862*, 9–14.

⁷³ Ship captains often used bags of salt as ballast on long voyages.

into Georgia, Governor Moore seized the salt and arrested the culprits. But when Mobile's quartermaster general, Duff Green, prevented Mississippi families from buying salt the governor's reaction was decidedly different. "I cannot suppose . . . that it could have been the intention of the Legislature to cut off the citizens of Mississippi who from their local position have been and are dependant upon the Mobile market for their supply of this commodity. You will therefore not interfere with the sales for family use which may be made to any citizen of Mississippi."⁷⁴

Through a series of executive orders and legislative mandates, Governor Shorter continued the process of procuring domestic salt. The state leased a portion of the salt reservations in Clarke County and advanced \$10,000 to John P. Figh and Company to construct on-site furnaces and provide salt directly to the people at reduced prices. Alabama's salt commissioner, A.G. McGehee, traveled to Virginia, studied the salt-making process at Saltville, and returned to oversee the construction of a state site in Clarke County known as the Upper Works. Shorter took the additional step of opening up all of the state's salt reservations to Alabamians who wished to come and make salt for their own families. On at least one occasion the governor threatened to seize a company for lack of adequate production. "I, as executive of the state will feel it my duty to seize your works as a military necessity, that the same may be made completely subservient to the public welfare." Indeed, the state's involvement in salt procurement became so direct that Malcolm McMillan has suggested that it "created a veritable revolution in the economic affairs of Alabama, . . . actions unthinkable to antebellum

⁷⁴ *Acts of the Second Called Session, 1861 and of the First Regular Annual Session of the General Assembly of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the 28th Day of October and Second Monday in November, 1861* (Montgomery: Montgomery Advertiser and Job Office, 1862), 25–32; McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 20; A.B. Moore to Duff Green, November 16, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

Alabamians.” William C. Davis takes it a step further by referring to the intervention of Confederate state governments as “salt socialism.”⁷⁵

Given the circumstances, Pine Barren counties fared relatively well when it came to salt resources, particularly when compared with counties in the northern part of the state. Butler, Conecuh, and Covington were all reasonably close to the salt works in Clarke County, while the eastern counties came to rely more upon works that dotted the Gulf Coast from Pensacola to Apalachicola. Salt companies shipped their product by railroad or wagon to county seats all over the region. Local justices of the peace in partnership with probate judges distributed salt to the citizens either free of charge, for indigent families, or at a reduced cost based upon the needs of each household. Residents had to sign affidavits swearing that the purchased salt would be used for household purposes only and would not be resold or bartered. On April 28, 1862, Eliza Coleman of Butler County traveled twenty-four miles roundtrip, from Armadillo to Greenville and back, to buy three bushels of Figh and Company salt from Justice of the Peace Coleman O’Gwynn. Eliza’s husband Jesse was off fighting with the Confederate Army of Mississippi in Company B, 17th Alabama Infantry, a regiment that only three weeks earlier lost 125 men or 10 percent of its effective fighting force, at the Battle of Shiloh. It is entirely possible that even at this point Eliza may not have known that her husband survived the battle, but one thing is certain, the salt that she bought that day was essential to the well-being of her two young girls, Rachel and Sarah, and the small herd of livestock she attended on the family’s sixty-acre farm in the southwestern corner of the county.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 48–50; William C. Davis, *Look Away!: A History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 287–88.

⁷⁶ Affidavit of Eliza Coleman, April 28, 1862, Alabama Salt Commission: Affidavits to Obtain Salt, Butler County, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); Willis Brewer, *Alabama, Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men: From 1540 to 1872* (Montgomery: Barrett & Brown, 1872), 616–17; United States Census, Butler County, Alabama, 1860, Schedules 1 and 4.

While the scarcity of salt was a problem for Pine Barren families throughout the entire war, the winter of 1862-1863 proved particularly challenging. Ella Lonn argues that for the Confederacy as a whole the “clamor for [salt] rose in a mounting crescendo during the first two years, probably striking the most strident note during the packing season of 1862-1863.”⁷⁷ In fact, the evidence suggests that while hogs were readily available in most Pine Barren counties that winter the scarcity of salt threatened to undermine the usual production of cured pork. James Darby, a merchant and planter from Troy proposed that the farmers in his area would gladly provide meat to the Confederate army if the governor would guarantee the requisite amount of salt for the upcoming curing season. “My neighbors could spair a few thousand lbs of bacon,” he wrote in June 1862, “provided they can git salt in lieu of it. If not they cant do it as they have not salt to salt their butter, poltry, beef nor preserve their pork next winter, but by gitting salt they can spair bacon now.” Darby promised to deliver “good country cured sides . . . clear sides and sides with ribs in it” to Montgomery as soon as the governor approved the trade in salt. Unfortunately, Shorter’s response is not included in the administrative files but given the nature of feeding the armies it is hard to believe that he did not take advantage of the offer.⁷⁸

As early as October 1862, Florida Governor John Milton warned Confederate officials about the exposed condition of the entire panhandle region. He suggested that a force of 500 troops and two or three cavalry companies would aid in protecting “the arrangements for making salt by citizens of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, which will otherwise be defeated [by Union raiders] and cause much suffering among citizens and soldiers for the want of beef, bacon, and

⁷⁷ Ella Lonn, *Salt As a Factor in the Confederacy* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 1965), 38.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 17; Jeff Darby to John Gill Shorter, June 8, 1862, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

pork.”⁷⁹ In fact the Union Navy routinely attacked salt works along the coast but the effect, while significant, was only temporary as most were up and running again within days to a few weeks. Indeed, the Union never completely stamped out the flow of salt from the coast into the Pine Barrens.

The conscription act had changed the socioeconomic dynamic on the home front. In majority-white communities such as those in the Pine Barrens the new law drained even more manpower into the army. Poor families already strained by the realities of war experienced even greater hardships. State and county officials took measures to alleviate some of the effects of poverty especially among destitute soldiers’ families. The state appropriated millions of dollars in direct aid to the poor, opened or expanded salt works, and took steps to increase the production of grain crops. Despite growing problems on the home front the morale of the region’s fighting men remained high. The Pine Barrens as a whole continued to support the war effort and send their men into the fight. In 1863, the hardships of war would finally begin to take their toll.

⁷⁹ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 52, pt. 2, 372-73.

Chapter 7

“It Was the Carnival of Death”: The Battlefield, 1863–1865

On November 30, 1864, less than five months before Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, Gen. John Bell Hood’s Army of Tennessee launched one of the bloodiest assaults of the war at Franklin, Tennessee. Col. Virgil S. Murphy of the 17th Alabama, who was captured during the battle, recorded in his diary that “men fell like leaves before an autumn blast . . . they flung themselves defiantly before their ramparts and were repulsed bleeding torn and decimated.”¹ Murphy’s regiment, which included four companies of Pine Barren soldiers from Butler and Pike counties, was almost completely wiped out at the Battles of Franklin and Nashville. Those who were not killed or wounded were captured and sent to prisoner of war camps in the North. In the aftermath, the Army of Tennessee practically disintegrated, with the remaining soldiers joining other Confederate units fighting William Tecumseh Sherman’s army in the Carolinas. The point here is not that Hood’s army was a nonfactor by January 1865, but that the soldiers who made up the army could launch such bold and daring (suicidal?) attacks so late in the war.² For Pine Barren soldiers, and Confederate soldiers as a whole, morale plummeted in 1863 after the losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, but rebounded later that year and continued into 1864. The evidence suggests that the majority of soldiers from south-central and southeastern Alabama remained dedicated to the Confederate war right up until the end.

¹ Illene D. Thompson and Wilbur E. Thompson, *The Seventeenth Alabama Infantry: A Regimental History and Roster* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2001), 108.

² Gary Gallagher argues that the primary reason the Confederacy did not collapse sooner than April 1865 was due to the fact that so many Confederate citizens tied their hopes to Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. See Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

On May 1, 1863, the Union Army of the Potomac, now under the command of Gen. Joseph Hooker, attacked Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia about two miles east of Chancellorsville, Virginia.³ Despite his numerical and tactical advantage, Hooker withdrew his army to defensive positions closer to his headquarters located in the home of Francis Chancellor. That night Lee decided to split his own force, sending Stonewall Jackson's corps on a risky but ultimately successful twelve-mile flanking maneuver around the Union right the next day. At about 5:00 p.m. on May 2, Jackson's tattered veterans slammed into Gen. Oliver Otis Howard's Union XI Corps, driving them back over a mile until confusion and Federal artillery finally forced the Rebels to stop. Men from the Pine Barrens were there. During the attack, the Coffee Rangers and other soldiers from the 12th Alabama Infantry "received a heavy volley from the enemy . . . passed over two formidable works, and assisted in taking several pieces of artillery."⁴ Over on their right flank, Col. James Lightfoot from Henry County commanded the 6th Alabama Infantry. His brother, Capt. Thomas Lightfoot of the Henry Blues, "was the first to plant the colors of the regiment on the artillery captured." The regiment captured 105 prisoners that afternoon and feasted on Yankee rations later on that evening. "My officers and men all acted so very gallantly," he reported. "I had 5 color-bearers shot down, 2 of whom were killed, besides 1 color-corporal killed and 1 wounded."⁵ Not too far down the line, the Barbour Grays of the 5th Alabama Infantry anchored the left flank of Robert E. Rodes's entire brigade. After taking a line of breastworks, the unit was nearly cut off and surrounded, losing its regimental flag

³ For a good narrative history of the Battle of Chancellorsville see Stephen W. Sears, *Chancellorsville* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

⁴ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 25, pt. 1, 960-61.

⁵ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 25, pt. 1, 959-60.

in the process and leaving behind 100 men as prisoners of war. With the help of Confederate artillery, the 5th Alabama regrouped, charged, and recaptured the ground.⁶

On May 3, Lee launched a dawn attack against the Federal center, routing the Yankees and ultimately forcing Hooker to withdraw his army a day later. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Jubal Early's division—which had been fighting a rearguard action in Fredericksburg⁷ to prevent Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick's VI Corps from reinforcing Hooker—was finally overwhelmed and forced to try and link up with Lee at Chancellorsville. Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's Alabamians delayed Sedgwick's advance at the Battle of Salem Church, buying time for reinforcements to arrive. Ben Severance has noted that "Lee's Alabama boys not only held but successfully counterattacked against heavy odds, thereby making the battle at Salem Church arguably Alabama's finest hour of the war."⁸ Lt. Col. Hilary Herbert of the 8th Alabama Infantry, former captain of the regiment's Greenville Guards, recalled later that the Alabamians not only boldly attacked the Yankees but "followed the enemy between one-half and three-quarters of a mile, with a very deadly fire."⁹ While the brigade suffered 495 casualties, reinforcements soon arrived and defeated Sedgwick. Lee noted in his report that "Brigadier-General (now Major-General) Wilcox is entitled to especial praise for the judgment and bravery displayed in impeding the

⁶ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 25, pt. 1, 958-59.

⁷ Pine Barren companies were only marginally involved in the Battle of Fredericksburg. The evidence suggests that casualties were light and caused mainly by long-range Union artillery fire.

⁸ Ben Severance, "Confederate Alabama's Finest Hour: The Battle of Salem Church, May 3, 1863," in *The Yellowhammer War: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013), 55.

⁹ "Short History of the 8th Alabama Regiment, 1864: Written by Lieutenant Colonel Hilary A. Herbert at Orange Court House, Virginia," Manuscript Copy, Hilary A. Herbert Papers, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

advance of General Sedgwick toward Chancellorsville, and for the gallant and successful stand at Salem Church.”¹⁰

While Lee’s Pine Barren Alabamians celebrated their victory in Virginia, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant’s Union Army of the Tennessee had crossed the Mississippi River at Bruinsburg, skirmished with the Rebels at Port Gibson, and marched east toward Jackson, Mississippi’s capital. Grant’s ultimate objective was to destroy the Confederate garrison at Vicksburg, one of the last major impediments to complete Union control of the Mississippi River.¹¹ The Federals took Jackson on May 14 and then defeated the Army of Mississippi at the Battle of Champion Hill two days later, a mere twenty miles from the outskirts of Vicksburg. During the battle, the Union army captured hundreds of Confederate soldiers, including most of the 46th Alabama Infantry. The assault against Col. Michael L. Woods’s position was so rapid that he never received orders, sent just minutes before the attack, to withdraw his regiment. Nearly all of the officers were killed or captured. Capt. Ley L. Croft from Henry County was taken prisoner along with most of his men, as was Pike County’s Capt. Alexander McCaskill. He was severely wounded, his company was captured, and he died a few days later from pneumonia.¹²

The Union army that had fought and maneuvered so brilliantly for nearly three weeks now prepared to take Vicksburg. Historian James McPherson has noted: “Thus had Grant wrought in a seventeen-day campaign during which his army marched 180 miles, fought and won five engagements against separate enemy forces . . . inflicted 7,200 casualties at the cost of

¹⁰ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 25, pt. 1, 803.

¹¹ For a good history of the Vicksburg Campaign see, Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹² *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 24, pt. 2, 101-103.

4,300, and cooped up an apparently demoralized enemy in the Vicksburg defenses.”¹³ For the next six weeks Grant laid siege to the city. By the end of June half of the Confederate army defending Vicksburg was suffering from scurvy, the population had been reduced to eating rats and squirrels, and troop morale reached its lowest point of the war. In a stroke of irony, the Rebel garrison finally surrendered on July 4, Independence Day. Years later Grant wrote in his memoirs that the “fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell.”¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Union Army of the Potomac was fighting for its life at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. During the first three days in July, the Federals battled Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia in a brutal struggle that began with the Confederacy’s second invasion of the North. Back in June, as his army marched northward through western Virginia, Lee hoped that a major victory on northern soil would strengthen the antiwar factions in the North, secure recognition of the Confederacy from European states, and possibly end the war. Fresh off its victory at Chancellorsville, the Rebel army, now 75,000 strong, was at the pinnacle of its power. Spirits were high as the men marched through Pennsylvania farm country past hundreds of Yankee civilians curious to get a glance at the “Johnny Rebs.” One attractive young woman sat on the steps of her home glaring derisively at the soldiers, “her bosom covered by a jaunty little Union flag.” Upon seeing her, Martin Riley, a young private from Greenville with a penchant for humor, yelled out, “Madam, you had better be particular how you flaunt that flag—these boys are in the habit of charging breast-works wherever they see that flag flying.”¹⁵

¹³ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 631.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 637.

¹⁵ “Short History of the 8th Alabama Regiment, 1864: Written by Lieutenant Colonel Hilary A. Herbert at Orange Court House, Virginia,” Manuscript Copy, Hilary A. Herbert Papers, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

By the end of June, Lee's army and the Union army, now under the command of Maj. Gen. George Meade, converged upon Gettysburg. On the first day of battle the Confederates drove Union cavalry and the leading elements of Meade's army out of Gettysburg onto the hills south of town. Four companies of Pine Barren soldiers, men from Butler, Henry, and Barbour counties, participated in the Rebel assault against Brig. Gen. John C. Reynolds Union I Corps northwest of town. At first, the 5th Alabama, 6th Alabama, and 12th Alabama of Col. Edward O'Neal's brigade did not have enough manpower to break through. Reinforcements soon arrived and gave the Alabamians the upper hand. The Federal counterattack against Maj. Eugene Blackford's Henry County sharpshooters "drove in my men there posted behind the trees. These retired, firing from tree to tree until they met Gordon's brigade advancing, after which they were rallied on the center at the sound of my bugle."¹⁶

The next day the Confederates launched simultaneous attacks against the Union right flank on Culp's Hill and against the left flank just east of the Emmitsburg Road, an area encompassing the Peach Orchard, Wheat Field, Devils Den, and Little Round Top. Divisions from Lt. Gens. Ambrose Powell Hill's and James Longstreet's corps launched attacks against the Union left at about 5:00 p.m. Amidst all of the bitter fighting that afternoon, the role the 15th Alabama Infantry played in the struggle for Little Round Top became the stuff of legend. The vast majority of the regiment's soldiers came from Pine Barren companies, with a greater portion of those from Barbour and Henry counties, including the regimental commander, Col. William C. Oates. Born in 1835, Oates had spent his boyhood years on his family's small farm in Pike County. With a reputation for being a boisterous young troublemaker, he had left home in his late teens and traveled from Alabama and northern Florida to Louisiana and Texas, taking on odd

¹⁶ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 27, pt. 2, 597-98.

jobs to support himself. He moved back to Alabama in 1854, settled in Henry County, took a job as a schoolteacher, and within two years began studying law in Eufaula. By 1860 he owned his own small law firm in Abbeville, Henry County, and supplemented his income as a newspaper editor. He not only supported secession, but raised and outfitted one of the county's first infantry companies, the Henry Pioneers.¹⁷

At the Little Round Top, the 15th Alabama was in position on the extreme right of the entire Confederate army.¹⁸ Ordered to find the Federal left flank and do as much damage as possible, the regiment moved up the western slope of Round Top hill, down the other side, and up the smaller hill slightly to the northeast. There they encountered Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's 20th Maine, a regiment that had arrived at its position about fifteen minutes beforehand and hastily piled up rocks to create a strong defensive position. "From behind this ledge, unexpectedly to us," Oates recalled, "they poured into us the most destructive fire I ever saw."¹⁹ After multiple charges the Alabamians finally broke through the blue line, but only temporarily. In fierce hand-to-hand combat the men shot, stabbed, punched, bayoneted, and clubbed one another. At one point Sgt. Patrick O'Conner from Eufaula thrust his bayonet through the head of a Union soldier trying to grab the 15th Alabama's colors. The intensity of the fight finally forced the Confederates back down the hill where they prepared for yet another charge. Knowing that his men were almost out of ammunition, Chamberlain rallied the Mainers and led a bayonet charge of their own. Whether Oates ordered a full retreat, as he later insisted,

¹⁷ Paul M. Pruitt, "William Calvin Oates (1894-96), *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1410> (accessed February 14, 2014).

¹⁸ For a good narrative history of the Battle of Little Round Top see Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The Second Day* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

¹⁹ William Calvin Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, and Its Lost Opportunities* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 214.

or Chamberlain's men swept them down the hill, the Rebels "ran like a herd of wild cattle" before the onrushing Federals.²⁰

The 15th Alabama's losses were severe. Out of 400 men the regiment suffered 161 casualties. Col. Isaac Feagin from Barbour County was shot in the leg and later required amputation. Captain Henry C. Brainard, a twenty-three-year-old school teacher from Henry County and "one of the bravest and best officers in the regiment," fell mortally wounded. "Oh God! That I could see my mother," he exclaimed only moments before he died.²¹ Just before the regiment's movement up the hill, Oates had tried to get his younger brother, Lt. John Oates, to remain behind. "If I were to remain here," John replied, "people would say that I did it through cowardice; no, sir, I am an officer and will never disgrace the uniform I wear; I shall go through, unless I am killed, which I think is quite likely."²² He suffered multiple gunshot wounds and died three weeks later from his injuries. Pvt. John Keels was shot in the throat, his windpipe mutilated, and he died the next day. Oates recalled that the blood from the dead and wounded "stood in puddles in some places on the rocks; the ground was soaked with the blood of as brave men as ever fell on the red field of battle."²³

On the final day of the battle, 13,000 Confederate soldiers attacked the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge, an action that came to be known as Pickett's Charge.²⁴ In reality, Maj. Gen. George Pickett's Division was joined by the non-Virginian divisions of Brig. Gen. Johnston Pettigrew and Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble. An hour-long artillery barrage preceded

²⁰ Ibid., 220.

²¹ Ibid., 218.

²² Pfanz, *Gettysburg*, 231–232.

²³ Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, and Its Lost Opportunities*, 220. Also see Oates's report of the battle: *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 27, pt. 2, 392-93.

²⁴ For a comprehensive narrative history of the third day at Gettysburg see Earl J. Hess, *Pickett's Charge: The Last Attack at Gettysburg* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

the attack, which Lee hoped would soften the Federal line and make the infantry's job easier. Unfortunately, the Confederate artillery was largely ineffectual. The foot soldiers moved against an enemy line being reinforced with every passing minute. The assaulting forces were under fire almost immediately from Union long-range artillery, then ran headlong into a withering barrage of both canister and small arms fire as they neared the Emmitsburg Road, about 400 yards from the crest of the hill.

Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's brigade of Alabamians, including the Greenville Guards and the Jeff Davis Rangers—the only Pine Barren companies on the field that day—watched the bombardment and the attack, having been drawn up in reserve to the right of Pickett's original starting position. About thirty minutes into the fight Wilcox's men moved forward, crossing the same ground that Pickett's men had crossed just a little while before. As they neared the stone wall they encountered the same destructive fire as had their comrades, yet Wilcox could see none of the units that he was ordered to support. It is probable that by the time Wilcox arrived there may have been few if any of Pickett's men left to support along that section of the line. He rode back to the artillery and requested support, but they had already used up all of their ammunition. "Not getting any artillery to fire upon the enemy's infantry that were on my left flank . . . and knowing that my small force could do nothing save to make a useless sacrifice of themselves, I ordered them back."²⁵ Pickett's Charge failed. After three days of hard, bloody fighting Lee's army slowly retreated back into Virginia. Longstreet, Pickett's commanding officer, recalled years later, "that day at Gettysburg was one of the saddest of my life."²⁶

The devastating losses at Vicksburg and Gettysburg weighed heavily upon the army as well as the Confederacy. James McPherson contends that the loss of Vicksburg was an even

²⁵ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 27, pt. 2, 620.

²⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 661.

greater blow to the men of the Army of Northern Virginia than their own defeat at Gettysburg. Jason Phillips similarly observes that “much of the grief in the summer of 1863 did not derive from a fear that the war was lost. Instead many men lamented that setbacks prolonged the conflict. During the preceding winter and spring, soldiers had hoped to win independence with the coming campaigns. . . . Vicksburg crushed their dreams of an early peace.”²⁷ Pine Barren men agreed. “I fear the War will last for the next 50 years,” Lt. Joshua Callaway of the 28th Alabama Infantry wrote to his wife just days after the city’s fall. “We were all cheerful and in good spirits till [Vicksburg’s] fall. Now we are sad and depressed. That is the most paralyzing stroke that we have ever sustained. I am now afraid that Lee’s invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania will do us no good. The future does indeed look dark and gloomy. Oh, when will the end be!”²⁸

To make matters worse, in early September Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg abandoned Chattanooga without a fight, leaving one of the South’s most important railroad hubs in Union hands. Yet later in the month, southern optimism lifted with the Confederate Army of Tennessee’s victory at the Battle of Chickamauga in northern Georgia. On September 19, Bragg attacked Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans’s Union Army of the Cumberland just west of Chickamauga Creek. The early morning attack began on the Union left in the woods north of Brotherton Road, but by mid-day the fighting had spread south along a two-mile front running roughly parallel with the Lafayette/Chattanooga Road. About 2:00 p.m., Brig. Gen. Henry D. Clayton’s Alabama brigade was among the first to engage the Union center about 200 yards

²⁷ Ibid., 163; Jason Phillips, *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 119–20.

²⁸ Judith Lee Hallock, ed., *The Civil War Letters of Joshua K. Callaway* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 110–11. Joshua and Dulcinea Callaway lived in Coffee County, Alabama, until the late 1850s when their family moved to Dallas County. They left behind several extended family members and often mention their Coffee County ties in their wartime correspondence.

southeast of Brotherton Farm in woods and undergrowth so thick that many of the men could not see twenty feet beyond their position. One hour later the brigade fell back, cut to pieces by Union artillery and small arms fire. The 18th Alabama Infantry, consisting of four companies of Pine Barren soldiers, suffered 35 killed and 175 wounded, about 40 percent of its strength. Yet, their day was not done. Thirty minutes later, while the brigades of Brig. Gens. William Bates and John C. Brown pushed through the same woods, Clayton's men reengaged and helped drive the Federals back. The men "moved forward in good order," Maj. Peter F. Hunley of the 18th Alabama later reported, "passed General Bate's line, and, having broken the enemy's line, drove him about 1 mile or more, capturing a battery."²⁹

About a mile away, Brig. Gen. Sterling Wood's brigade prepared to attack the Federal left, an area already strewn with the bodies of dead Confederates repulsed hours earlier. With only a half hour of daylight left the brigade's 33rd Alabama Infantry—soldiers from Butler, Dale, Coffee, Covington, and Montgomery counties—took position on the far left of the formation. Under a hailstorm of bullets and shrapnel, which Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne later reported "was the heaviest I had ever heard," the gray line edged forward through the woods and over an open field, pushing the enemy before them.³⁰ In the fading twilight soldiers from both sides relied upon the orange flash of musketry to guide them. Hundreds fell behind, confused, disoriented, or downright terrified. Stragglers from the 33rd Alabama accidentally fired into the backs of their own friends. "In advancing and fighting in the dark, some laggards persisted in shooting from the rear," Pvt. William E. Matthews recalled. "Such a one of our men killed Adjutant Alfred M.

²⁹ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 30, pt. 2, 404-405.

³⁰ Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 269; *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 30, pt. 2, 165-67.

Moore . . . shooting him in the neck accidentally from the rear.”³¹ Moore’s personal slave accompanied the body back to Alabama, where it was received by a grieving father, the former governor.

While Wood’s Brigade had pushed the Yankees back about 300 yards, the issue was far from settled. That night Longstreet’s two divisions arrived from Virginia. About mid-morning the next day, Wood’s Brigade, Clayton’s Brigade, and several units from Longstreet’s command attacked the Federal line near the Poe Farm. From behind makeshift breastworks, the Yankees poured a deadly mixture of canister and small arms fire into the Confederate ranks. Col. Samuel Adams led his Pine Barren regiment across Poe Field and past the burning farmhouse to within forty yards of the blue line. There he grabbed his regiment’s colors and tried in vain to rally the fewer than 100 nonstragglers who were still with him. In less than an hour no fewer than five brigades had been repulsed. After this failed attempt, Longstreet orchestrated a massive, concentrated attack that broke the Union line, sending two-thirds of the Federal army into full retreat.³² Pvt. Thomas Bigbie of Company C, 33rd Alabama, wrote to his wife the day after the battle: “on sundy wee [attacked] their brest work and faild to take them the first time. late in the evening wee drove them back form the brest works and they left that night. wee have advanced five or six miles and it is said that they are in full retret and I am in hops that is so and I think that wee will keep them a going. we have got a reinforcement from Verginia and I think that wee will push them [though] we lost a heepe of men and they lost a heap.” He reported that his neighbor, Pvt. R.R. Bush, was killed during the battle. One man lost a toe, two others had their fingers shot off, another was shot through the hand, and Pvt. George Bush “was wounded

³¹ William E. Matthews, “The 33rd Alabama Regiment in the Civil War,” L.B. Williams, ed., Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

³² Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga*, 338–56.

slightly with a piece of bum” in his shoulder. “I went through it unhurt,” he wrote, “it doe seem that nothing but the finger of god could cary a man through such a seen.”³³

Thomas Bigbie was one of many Pine Barren soldiers whose wartime experiences sparked a renewed sense of religious devotion. Larry Daniel argues that the religious revivals that began during the summer and fall of 1863 and lasted until the end of the war were essential to maintaining soldier morale and sustaining unit cohesion in the Army of Tennessee. Steven Woodworth similarly notes that religion shaped the way soldiers’ perceived and fought the war. He suggests that the revivals of 1862-1863 and 1863-1864, often characterized by historians as singular events, can best be described as one continuous spiritual renewal. Kent Dollar concludes that the war’s hardships, including death and destruction on a scale most men had never experienced, strengthened soldiers’ religious commitment while simultaneously bolstering their dedication to the war.³⁴

It was not uncommon for soldiers who had shown little interest in religion before the war to become increasingly devout. Their newfound piety often expressed itself in the abandonment of sinful vices. Pvt. Elisha Flournoy of the 46th Alabama Infantry, for example, informed his wife that he had quit smoking, sold his chewing tobacco, and stopped cursing. “I never expect to be as wicked as I have been,” he wrote. “I have quit my wicked ways and turned for the better . . . I want to come home to go to church I want to hear preaching You know that I have never cared anything about preaching when at home but there is so much wickedness here I have become disgusted and turned for the better I intend to belong to the church when I come home.”

³³ Thomas T. Bigbie to Mary Bigbie, Thomas T. Bigbie Papers, September 22, 1863, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

³⁴ Larry J. Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee: A Portrait of Life in a Confederate Army* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Steven E. Woodworth, *While God Is Marching on: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Kent T. Dollar, *Soldiers of the Cross: Confederate Soldier-Christians and the Impact of War on Their Faith* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005).

His efforts to change, he admitted, often ended in failure. Yet he vowed to “quit all the bad habits that I can and live right and do better. You must pray for me and I shall pray for you we must be a praying people and fight and go to the better world where parting is no more.”³⁵

Soldiers often believed that the outcome of the war, as well as their own personal fates, rested in God’s hands. George Rable maintains that “serving in the army meant serving the Lord as men proudly battled for Christ and country. Victory rested both with the cause and with the redeemer; all the pious statements about dying men sanctified their sacrifice.”³⁶ Pine Barren men reflected this. Writing to his wife in Henry County, Alabama, Pvt. Joseph Green Terry of the 27th Georgia Infantry was resolved to die in God’s service. “O may the good lord help us to live as we would wish to die,” he declared, “so let me fall on the battle field or die in the hospital or out on the road side . . . only let me die in the favor of God and with his spirit all will be well with me not withstanding a loved companion and dear children behind.”³⁷ On the eve of what he thought would be a pitched battle near Tullahoma, Tennessee, Joshua Callaway vowed that “we may all be killed or captured, but our trust is in God and we mean to give them the best there is in us. I know you are all praying for our success, then how can we be other than conquerors.”³⁸ Elisha Flournoy similarly noted that “I trust not altogether in my officers for my lifes protection but in my God. He is the great officer.”³⁹

³⁵ Elisha K. Flournoy to Martha Flournoy, April 15, 1863, Elisha K. Flournoy Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

³⁶ George C. Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 176.

³⁷ Joseph Green Terry to Sarah Terry, February 21, 1865, Terry Family Papers, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

³⁸ Hallock, *The Civil War Letters of Joshua K. Callaway*, 106.

³⁹ Elisha K. Flournoy to Martha Flournoy, July 15, 1863, Elisha K. Flournoy Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

The revivals that swept through Confederate armies from 1862 to the end of the war made a profound impression on many Pine Barren soldiers. Robert J. Miller observes that the revivals began in the Army of Northern Virginia but quickly spread to other armies, eventually affecting both Union and Confederate soldiers. “An outpouring of deep religious fervor and intensity,” he suggests, “began unmatched perhaps even to the present time. The Great Revival which began in the late fall of 1863, ebbed and fell in intensity and location, but remained strong and continuous until the end of the Civil War.”⁴⁰ Writing from Wartrace, Tennessee, Thomas Bigbie informed his wife that “we have got a very good meeting a going on here close to us and I have seen some of the best meetings here that I have ever seen.”⁴¹ On numerous occasions Joshua Callaway wrote about the religious meetings and services he attended. After one such sermon he immediately wrote to his wife informing her that he had made up his mind to join the church back home. He intended to write to the pastor and “shall ask him to let my membership date from the day on which you joined.” On another occasion Callaway was so impressed with the preaching that he provided a detailed description to his wife. “Now, my Dear, let us join the chorus and keep it up,” he wrote enthusiastically, “till old Earth shall resound with the soul thrilling song of redeeming grace and dying love, and our spirits shall at last be caught up on the strain and wafted to Heaven. Let us praise God always for this great salvation.”⁴²

Following the Battle of Chickamauga the Union army fled back to Chattanooga in disarray, giving the Army of Tennessee its most significant victory of the war. Bragg soon occupied the heights on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, cut the supply lines to the

⁴⁰ Robert J. Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the American Civil War* (Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books, 2007), 121.

⁴¹ Thomas T. Bigbie to Mary Bigbie, May 31, 1863, Thomas T. Bigbie Papers, Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

⁴² Hallock, *The Civil War Letters of Joshua K. Callaway*, 159.

city, and prepared to starve the Yankees into submission. By the end of November the Confederates had been defeated and retreated into northern Georgia. For soldiers and civilians alike, the brief season of hope and jubilation following Confederate victory at Chickamauga had once again turned to defeat and despair.

The final year of the war proved to be an especially bloody one. Southern armies fought with an intensity that belied all of their problems with desertion, lack of supplies, and casualties that often could not be replaced. It must have appeared to northern observers that despite the blows, the Confederacy refused to fall, and indeed seemed to recover with unusual ferocity. While there were plenty of setbacks on the battlefield, Rebel victories at Cold Harbor and Kennesaw Mountain, along with the defiant sieges of Atlanta and Petersburg, kept the cause alive. Yet even with their losses, Confederate armies exacted such a toll in Union casualties during the spring and summer of 1864 that Abraham Lincoln nearly lost the November election.

In sheer intensity and brutality, the fighting during Ulysses S. Grant's Overland Campaign eclipsed that of previous operations. From early May until late June, Confederates inflicted nearly 60,000 casualties on the Federal army. "Great confidence is felt in Grant," wrote Union Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, "but the immense slaughter of our brave men chills and sickens us all. The hospitals are crowded with the thousands of mutilated and dying heroes who have poured out their blood for the Union cause."⁴³ Lee learned quickly that Grant, unlike his predecessors, would not run away or disengage for months at a time after getting his nose bloodied in battle.

On May 5, two corps from Lee's army clashed with three Federal corps in a thickly wooded area about five miles west of Chancellorsville. The Battle of the Wilderness raged back

⁴³ Gideon Welles and Edgar Thaddeus Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles in Three Volumes*, vol. 2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 44.

and forth in woods so dense and smoke so thick that men often could not see five or ten feet in front of their faces. Embers from artillery and small arms ignited the woods, engulfing the wounded in horrifying deaths. Brig. Gen. Cullen Battle's Brigade participated in the ferocious fighting that took place in Saunders Field, a relatively small clearing along the Orange Turnpike. Battle personally led the brigade's newest regiment, the 61st Alabama Infantry. The regiment had been organized in Pollard in 1863 as part of an effort by Gen. James Clanton to recruit men from south Alabama to protect the region from Union raiders. Soon, rumors of disaffection and desertion in the ranks led Gen. Dabney Maury to suggest a "transfer of the troops of this department, when practicable, to more active fields of service, as the natural remedy for the discontent supposed to exist."⁴⁴ When the 61st Alabama took the field for the first time on May 5, they inflicted massive casualties on the 104th New York Zouaves, in addition to capturing a battery of six guns. The regiment "loomed up in magnificent proportions . . . and its men were the first to place their hands on the captured guns," Battle reported. Capt. Archibald McCaskill, a twenty-seven-year-old merchant from Buzbeeville, was one of many Alabamians killed during the assault.⁴⁵ The next day both armies launched attacks and counterattacks but neither side gained a tactical advantage. This time the Union army did not retreat back across the Rappahannock River but moved south toward Richmond.

Lee temporarily halted the Union army's advance at Spotsylvania Court House, a struggle that lasted for two weeks. Most Pine Barren companies that can be traced fought on May 12 at the Bloody Angle. Anchoring the left flank of Maj. Gen. Robert Rodes's Division,

⁴⁴ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 26, pt. 2, 548.

⁴⁵ Cullen Andrews Battle, *Third Alabama!: The Civil War Memoir of Brigadier General Cullen Andrews Battle, CSA* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 106–107; Ben H. Severance, *Portraits of Conflict: A Photographic History of Alabama During the Civil War* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2012), 169; Manuscript Census, Coffee County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

Cullen Battle's Alabamians absorbed the brunt of the massive Federal attack launched early that morning. The brigade was on the verge of collapse when Brig. Gen. Abner Perrin's five Alabama regiments waded into the fray. This brigade included several hundred Pine Barren soldiers, as well as men from Mobile, Perry, and Coosa counties. While Perrin was shot dead almost immediately, his men continued to fight and ultimately helped save the Confederate army from disaster in that sector. While nearly 18,000 Federals and 12,000 Rebels fell at Spotsylvania, Grant ultimately continued his relentless march toward Richmond.⁴⁶

We have been "engaged in battle for the last two days," Joseph Terry wrote on June 7 to his wife in Henry County. Yet despite "the hot firing of the enemy and the whistling of the balls of two hard fought battles I have come out without a [scratch]."⁴⁷ Terry referred to the Battle of Cold Harbor. Less than a week after leaving Spotsylvania, Confederate and Union armies began building a series of parallel trenches and earthworks stretching for seven miles from Cold Harbor northwest to just above Attlee's Station on the Virginia Central Railroad. On June 3, three Federal Corps launched a massive attack against fortified Confederate entrenchments in one of the most ill-fated attacks of the war. Perhaps because of their heavy losses in previous engagements, most Pine Barren companies, with the exception of the 15th Alabama Infantry, were not heavily engaged. The 15th Alabama worked all night building up their defensive works. As the sun began to rise, Noah Feagin's Barbour County boys, who had been sent out a couple of hours earlier as skirmishers, came running back toward the trenches with the advancing Yankees in close pursuit. As the Alabamians fired volley after volley, the artillery poured double canister into the bluecoat lines as fast as the men could load and fire. "The blaze of fire from it at each

⁴⁶ Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House and the Road to Yellow Tavern, May 7-12, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Severance, *Portraits of Conflict*, 163-64.

⁴⁷ Joseph Green Terry to Sarah Terry, June 7, 1864, Terry Family Papers, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

shot went right into the ranks of our assailants and made frightful gaps through the dense mass of men,” Col. William C. Oates wrote. The Federals regrouped and charged again, only this time they met both direct and flanking fire. “I could see the dust fog out of a man’s clothing in two or three places at once where as many balls would strike him at the same moment. In two minutes not a man of them was standing.”⁴⁸ Seven thousand Union soldiers fell in about six hours that day, while Rebel losses amounted to fewer than 1,500. “I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made,” Grant recorded in his memoirs.⁴⁹

While Grant and Lee were slugging it out in Virginia, Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman’s army group—three separate Union armies fighting together under Sherman’s generalship—executed a series of flanking movements around the Confederate Army of Tennessee from Chattanooga south to Atlanta.⁵⁰ The mountains of northern Georgia provided the perfect terrain for fighting defensive battles, a strategy that suited the overly-cautious Rebel commander Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. On the other hand, Sherman was not interested in bleeding his army to death by launching suicidal assaults against fortified Confederate positions. Each time Johnston moved his army onto advantageous ground, Sherman simply moved around the flanks, threatened Johnston’s railroad supply lines, and forced the Rebels to retreat. This strategy worked well at Rocky Face Ridge, Resaca, New Hope Church, Dallas, and Picketts’ Mill. Despite several tactical losses, the Federals suffered relatively few casualties and moved closer and closer to their target in Atlanta.

In early June Sherman’s end-around campaign literally bogged down less than twenty miles from Atlanta. For three weeks, drenching rains, coupled with Johnston’s ever-expanding

⁴⁸ Oates, *War Between the Union and the Confederacy*, 366–67.

⁴⁹ Ulysses Simpson Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster, 1894), 503.

⁵⁰ For a good study of the Atlanta Campaign see Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

defensive fortifications around Marietta, frustrated the Union high command and prompted Sherman to launch an attack against Confederate entrenchments at Kennesaw Mountain in hopes of breaking the stalemate. On June 27, the Federals feigned an attack against Kennesaw Mountain while launching the main assaults several miles south at Pigeon Hill and Cheatham's Hill.⁵¹ Nearly all of the 3,000 bluecoats who fell that day perished in front of the "Dead Angle," a point on Cheatham's Hill where the Rebel earthworks made a sharp turn southward. "The ground was piled up with one solid mass of dead and wounded Yankees," wrote Pvt. Sam Watkins of the 1st Tennessee Infantry. "I learned afterwards from the burying squad that in some places they were piled up like cord wood, twelve deep."⁵² To the right of the Dead Angle, the 33rd Alabama Infantry of Patrick Cleburne's Division, a regiment raised almost entirely in the Pine Barrens, participated in the slaughter. The division killed or wounded an estimated 1,000 Yankees in their front while suffering only two dead and seven injured. One of the two soldiers killed in Cleburne's Division was Capt. William E. Dodson, a twenty-nine year old merchant from Greenville.⁵³ The battle was a much-needed victory for the Confederates but, true to form, Sherman's flanking movements forced Johnston to retreat yet again.

Jefferson Davis grew tired of Johnston's slow, demoralizing retreat and replaced him with Lt. Gen. John Bell Hood, a commander known for his aggressiveness in battle, once Johnston crossed the Chattahoochee River. Although historians have debunked the famous phrase once attributed to Robert E. Lee that Hood was "all lion and no fox," the reality may have actually come closer to the truth than the mythical statement. "When we learned Hood was in

⁵¹ For the most recent treatment of the battle see: Earl J. Hess, *Kennesaw Mountain: Sherman, Johnston, and the Atlanta Campaign* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁵² Sam R. Watkins, *Co. Aytch: A Confederate Memoir of the Civil War* (Simon and Schuster, 2008), 144.

⁵³ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 38, pt. 3, 703; Willis Brewer, *Alabama, Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men: From 1540 to 1872* (Barrett and Brown, 1872), 642; Manuscript Census, Butler County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

command,” wrote Pvt. William E. Matthews of the 33rd Alabama Infantry, “all agreed that we had hard work in front of us.”⁵⁴ On July 20, just three days after taking command, Hood launched an attack against Sherman’s army two miles north of Atlanta at Peachtree Creek. At first the Rebels caught the Federals off guard but the bluecoats quickly rallied, held their ground, and inflicted 2,500 casualties on their attackers. For the soldiers of the 57th Alabama Infantry, a regiment of later-enlisters from Coffee, Dale, Henry, Pike, and Barbour counties, this was their first real taste of battle. “Our men acted bravely, drove the enemy out of their first line of fortifications but were unable to hold their position, and were driven back by force of numbers,” wrote Joel Dyer Murphree to his wife the day after the battle. “The last [I] seen of Baily he was retreating from the enemy in the rear of his Company exposed to the fire of the enemies shot and shell. . . . He may have laid down behind something to protect him and was captured.”⁵⁵ In fact, Baily M. Talbot, a thirty-year-old grocer from Troy and close neighbor to the Murphrees, was killed that day along with Maj. William R. Arnold, while Lt. Col. Richard Bethune and Lt. Alexander Faison, Talbot’s second in command, were seriously wounded.⁵⁶ The regiment lost 157 out of just 330 men at Peachtree Creek, nearly 50 percent of its effective fighting force. Capt. Augustus L. Milligan from Dale County later reported:

The long list of casualties in this regiment in the engagement of the 20th instant will be sufficient evidence of its deep devotion to the cause of Southern liberty and independence. . . . Although our losses have been severe, and we regret the loss of so many good and brave men, we are ready to again meet the enemy at such times and places as the commanding general directs. We can console ourselves by believing that the enemy were severely punished. We charged and took a portion of his works, capturing

⁵⁴ William E. Matthews, “The 33rd Alabama Regiment in the Civil War,” L.B. Williams, ed., Auburn University Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

⁵⁵ H.E. Sterkx, “Autobiography and Civil War Letters of Joel Murphree of Troy, Alabama,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 19 (1957): 185.

⁵⁶ Brewer, *Alabama, Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men*, 669; Manuscript Census, Pike County, Alabama, 1860, Schedule 1.

some prisoners, but for want of support had to withdraw without prisoners, he being well supported by two lines of battle.⁵⁷

During the next four weeks Hood tried again and again to strike a significant blow against the Union army, but each time his plans were foiled and his soldiers defeated. In late August, Sherman maneuvered the main portion of his army around Atlanta in an effort to permanently sever Confederate supply lines south of the city. On August 31, Lt. Gen. William J. Hardee intercepted the Federals fifteen miles south of Atlanta at Jonesboro, but once again Confederate forces failed to win the day. Historian Earl Hess argues that Hood relied upon “poorly executed attacks that achieved nothing but irredeemable casualties and [blamed] the rank and file for not fighting hard enough.”⁵⁸

Hood’s strategy wreaked havoc on Pine Barren soldiers. “The change in commanders no doubt caused the death or capture of those near and dear to us,” Joel Murphree lamented, “but I do believe it was the best for the success of our cause.”⁵⁹ The 33rd Alabama, for instance, suffered seventy-nine casualties at the Battle of Peachtree Creek, including the death of Col. Samuel Adams. Shot dead by a Union sharpshooter, “this true patriot and Christian hero—a perfect specimen of a soldier and gentleman—who had distinguished himself on many well-fought fields, fell at his post, leaving his gallant regiment to feel as orphans, and many other friends and comrades in arms to mourn an irreparable loss.”⁶⁰ Two days later the same regiment was under fire in the Battle of Atlanta when Pvt. William Matthews witnessed a ghastly sight. “One of the regiment wondered among us with a minie ball in his forehead and a knot of brains as big as a hen’s egg over the hole. Occasionally we could hear another ball strike him. He did

⁵⁷ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 38, pt. 3, 897.

⁵⁸ Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi*, The Littlefield History of the Civil War Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 232.

⁵⁹ Sterkx, “Autobiography and Civil War Letters of Joel Murphree of Troy, Alabama,” 194.

⁶⁰ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 38, pt. 3, 734.

not appear to mind, and we not caring, thinking the sooner he died, the better.”⁶¹ At the Battle of Jonesboro, Brig. Gen. James Holtzclaw’s Brigade, which included the 18th Alabama and the 39th Alabama, drove through the first line of bluecoat defenders and came to within forty yards of the main Union lines before turning back under a barrage of artillery and small arms fire. “I regret to say that the conduct of the brigade after halting at the picket-line of the enemy was not satisfactory,” reported Col. Bushrod Jones. “The men seemed possessed of some great horror of charging breast-works, which no power, persuasion, or example could dispel, yet I must say that the officers generally did their duty.”⁶² Overwhelmingly outnumbered, the Confederates were unable to stop Sherman at Jonesboro. On September 1, Hood abandoned Atlanta to avoid being cut off and surrounded. As the victorious Yankees marched into the city, Sherman wired President Lincoln: “Atlanta is ours, and fairly won.”⁶³

Sherman spent the better part of the next five weeks chasing Hood through northern Georgia, finally deciding in mid-November to cut his supply lines, live off the land, and move his army south to Savannah. On the other hand, Hood’s plan, which James McPherson has called a fantasy “scripted in never-never land,” was to move northward through Tennessee and Kentucky, pick up 20,000 recruits, defeat a Union army almost twice the size of his own, and link up with Lee in Virginia.”⁶⁴ This plan came crashing down after the Battle of Franklin, an ill-advised and reckless attack that cost the Army of Tennessee nearly 7,000 soldiers, at least a dozen generals, and more than fifty regimental commanders.⁶⁵ In the late afternoon hours of

⁶¹ Matthews, “The 33rd Alabama Regiment in the Civil War.”

⁶² *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 38, pt. 3, 835.

⁶³ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 774.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 811.

⁶⁵ Two excellent studies of the Battle of Franklin include: James L. McDonough and Thomas L Connelly, *Five Tragic Hours: The Battle of Franklin* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Wiley Sword, *Embrace An*

November 30, twenty thousand Confederates attacked fortified Union entrenchments in the bloodiest, most violent engagement of the war west of the Appalachian Mountains. The assault lasted for almost six hours and often involved brutal hand-to-hand combat. “When we got to their works, our ranks were so thin that our boys could not get over,” Pvt. William Matthews of the 33rd Alabama later recalled. “Many were shot in the attempt. Among them was our color bearer, Neal Godwin, and the flag was seized by the enemy. But we did not need any colors since the regiment was almost annihilated.”⁶⁶ Brig. Gen. Zachary Deas’s Brigade, which included eleven Pine Barren companies, entered the fray right as the sun set and was cut to pieces. “Their dead were mostly in the trenches and on the works of the enemy, where they nobly fell in a desperate hand-to-hand conflict.”⁶⁷ The 17th Alabama Infantry, which included about 200 soldiers from Butler and Pike counties, entered the battle with Brig. Gen. Charles Shelley’s Brigade. According to Maj. Gen. Edward Walthall, while these men were “terribly torn at every step by an oblique fire from a battery advantageously posted at the enemy’s left, no less than by the destructive fire in front, the line moved on and did not falter till, just to the right of the [Lewisburg] pike, it reached the abatis fronting the works.” The 17th Alabama lost two-thirds of its men trying to drive the Federals from their fortifications. Capt. Thomas A. McCane from Butler County was captured, along with Col. Virgil S. Murphy, Capt. William W. McMillian, and dozens of others.⁶⁸ “The men bounded over like infuriated demons,” Murphy wrote in his diary, “and were either shot down on the summit of the works or were [bayoneted].

Angry Wind: The Confederacy’s Last Hurrah - Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

⁶⁶ Matthews, “The 33rd Alabama Regiment in the Civil War.”

⁶⁷ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 45, pt. 1, 688.

⁶⁸ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 45, pt. 1, 720-721.

The conflict was brief, bloody, and decisive. I was a prisoner.”⁶⁹ Most of what was left of the regiment was either killed or captured at Nashville two weeks later. Years after the war, Lt. Col. Isaac R. Sherwood of the 111th Ohio Infantry noted in his memoirs that “Franklin dug the grave of the Confederacy. . . . At midnight on the battlefield of Franklin, the finger of destiny was lifted, pointing the open road to Appomattox.”⁷⁰

As the western Confederacy crumbled, Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia barely held on in Virginia. For ten months, in the wake of the Overland Campaign, Grant carried out siege operations against Petersburg, an important railroad hub and key supply center south of the Confederate capital at Richmond. Despite numerous setbacks, Grant used his 100,000-man army to tighten the noose slowly and methodically around just 45,000 Confederates. By mid-March, with his army evaporating and his supplies dwindling, Lee ordered an attack on Fort Stedman in hopes that this would buy time to withdraw from Petersburg and save what was left of his army. This disaster, combined with the Confederate fiasco at Five Forks several days later, forced the evacuation of Richmond. Lee attempted to move his skeleton army south to join up with Joseph E. Johnston in North Carolina but the retreating Confederates were cut off at Appomattox Court House. Lee surrendered his army on April 9, 1865.⁷¹

Although Lee surrendered in early April, there were a number of Confederate forces that continued the fight. James H. Wilson’s raiders swept through the Alabama Black Belt and captured Columbus, Georgia, on April 16. Five days later in Virginia, Col. John S. Mosby disbanded—but did not formally surrender—his force of partisan rangers, also known as the 43rd

⁶⁹ “Virgil S. Murphy Diary,” University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (microfilm).”

⁷⁰ Isaac R. Sherwood, *Memories of the War* (New York: H.J. Chittenden, 1923), 141–42.

⁷¹ For an extensive treatment of the Union siege at Petersburg see: Noah Andre Trudeau, *The Last Citadel: Petersburg, Virginia, June 1864-April 1865* (Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

Battalion Virginia Cavalry. On April 26, Joseph E. Johnston surrendered his army and the various departments under his authority at Durham, North Carolina. Maj. Gen. Dabney H. Maury yielded his command of the District of the Gulf on May 5 at Citronelle, Alabama. The next three weeks produced a flurry of Confederate capitulations as Union forces arrested Jefferson Davis in Georgia, captured Tallahassee, Florida, forced the surrender of Brig. Gen. William T. Wofford in Kingston, Georgia, and negotiated the eventual surrender of Kirby Smith's Trans-Mississippi Department.

One final issue needs to be addressed, and that is the lingering problem of desertion. Estimates for the number of Alabamians who fought for the Confederacy range from a low of 60,000 to more than 120,000. In January 1864 Lt. Col. Edward D. Blake reported the total number volunteers and conscripts from the state at 90,857.⁷² Bessie Martin concludes in her study of desertion in Alabama that up to 20,000 of the state's soldiers deserted at some point during the war, a rate of 22 percent based upon Blake's findings.⁷³ If true, this percentage was more than twice as high as the average rate of desertion for the Confederacy as a whole. Martin's figures were almost certainly inflated, yet they serve as a measure for understanding desertion in Pine Barren counties. If her argument is correct that the southeastern counties were a hotbed of desertion, then the 33rd Alabama Infantry—a regiment composed of 1,800 soldiers mostly from Coffee, Dale, Butler, Covington, and Montgomery—should have been full of such men. Yet the evidence suggests that the desertion rate for this unit was about 5 percent. Even if

⁷² *O.R.*, ser. 4, vol. 3, 102.

⁷³ Bessie Martin, *A Rich Man's War, a Poor Man's Fight: Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army*, Reprint (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 43.

one were to double the regiment's total number of deserters to compensate for existing gaps or inaccuracies in the historical record, the rate would still fall within the Confederate average.⁷⁴

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that most Pine Barren soldiers remained faithful to the war effort until the fighting ended in the spring of 1865. Despite obvious indications that the war was lost, the majority of men stuck it out, leaned on their comrades, their families, and their God for support and encouragement. In the aftermath of the bloody Battle of Cold Harbor, for instance, Joseph Green Terry of the 27th Georgia Infantry wrote to his wife: “we fought them desperately but our loss was only 9 killed but several wounded and our duty has bin here ever since. But we came to fight and we would do it cheerfully if it would end the war but the prospects are very gloomy at this time but it is thought that it will end soon. Lord end it for I want to be at home with my lovely little family for they are all that I have and I feel that they are very dear to me. What an awful war this is.”⁷⁵ From the surviving letters it appears that Pine Barren soldiers were willing to continue the fight and encouraged their families back home to do the same. To be sure, some men deserted or slipped home for extended unauthorized leaves of absence, but many if not most of these returned to their units or joined other commands. While some soldiers abandoned the Confederate cause, most remained loyal even as it became obvious that the cause was lost.

⁷⁴ Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, Thirty-third Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

⁷⁵ Joseph Green Terry to Sarah Terry, June 10, 1864, Terry Family Papers, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Chapter 8

“I Feel Like We are Almost Ruined”: The War’s Final Years on the Home Front

According to legend, one night in February 1865, former Confederate soldier-turned-outlaw John Ward murdered Columbus Holly on his plantation near Kinston in Coffee County. One source claims that no one actually knew who the killer was until years later when Ward confessed to the crime on his deathbed. Holly supposedly died because he strongly supported efforts to hunt down men like Ward, and may have even participated in several manhunts against deserters in the area. Several of Holly’s slaves also reportedly collaborated with Ward. Not only did they provide critical information about their owner’s whereabouts and habits, they also carried Ward on their shoulders from his horse to the main house and back in order to fool the bloodhounds. The myth and mystery surrounding the death of Holly and Ward’s involvement in the crime continues to the present day, but the internal violence that occurred during the war’s final years was real.¹

By 1863 the deprivations of war had begun to take their toll on Pine Barren families. Hotspots of desertion caught the attention of both Union and Confederate authorities. Raids carried out by both armies often gave residents the feeling of being besieged by friend and foe alike. Deprivation, especially in the southernmost counties, led to increased numbers of deserters and stragglers by men who remained at home to protect and provide for their families. Bands of outlaws gathered together and carried out raids in the lower counties. Yet the region as

¹ Fred Shelton Watson, *Coffee Grounds; A History of Coffee County, Alabama, 1841-1970* (Anniston, AL: Higginbotham, 1970), 234–35.

a whole slogged through the difficulties, with most whites doing everything within their power to support the war effort. There was never a wholesale abandonment of the Confederate cause. The most severe home front disruptions generally occurred in specific subregions or neighborhoods. The evidence from the Pine Barrens thus supports similar findings by historians who argue that white Confederates remained intensely loyal to the Confederacy despite the war's desolation.²

White women faced some of their greatest challenges during the war's final years. Conscription had stripped nearly every able-bodied man from the countryside leaving women with little if any support in raising children, attending slaves, or working farms. Yeoman-class women more than ever had to take care of livestock, plow up and plant fields, harvest crops, keep records, and attend to all of the financial aspects of running a farm. Husbands often wrote letters advising their wives when to slaughter the hogs and how many, which crops to plant in which fields, and who they should turn to for help if things went wrong. Capt. Pierre D. Costello of the 25th Alabama, for example, encouraged his wife in Coffee County to "take the best care you can of our little stock of cows & hogs as they will be scarce articles if this war continues. Increase them all you can they will be more valuable than negroes. Keep my tax paid so that none of my lands may sell, & keep the store house & other houses rented out to the best advantage."³

Costello also chided his wife's depression. "From what I learn there is less dissatisfaction in the army than at home," he wrote. Cordelia, who seemingly felt completely

² Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North From the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); William Blair, *Virginia's Private War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

³ Pierre Costello to Cordelia Costello, October 30, 1862, Pierre D. Costello Civil War Letters, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

overwhelmed by the added responsibilities, urged her husband to resign and return home. Pierre conveyed his displeasure in a sternly worded reply. “Where was the use of commencing this war,” he insisted, “if we did not intend to continue it until we achieved our independence & to accomplish this there must be no resigning, deserting, holding back, or backing out.” After a few additional patriotic pronouncements, he brazenly answered her question: “No Delia! don't ask your husband to resign & abandon a crowd of gallant boys who left home to remain with him during the war. Let him continue with them who can't resign & when their work is done if it be Gods will to spare them, they can return as they left together.”⁴ Writing from Vicksburg in 1863, Pvt. Elisha Flournoy of the 46th Alabama also was anxious to learn all he could about his wife, Martha, and their farm. “Write me how your garden is,” he asked, “your cane potatos fruit fence pasture cows calves hogs and horse and dogs emily chickens you and everything else is getting along.” He later instructed her to buy a sow from a nearby neighbor. “You must pay him the money,” he wrote, “and put her in that field at the house with the fatening hogs so she will stay at home or cary some corn over there to fead her...I had rather have hogs than money at this time.”⁵

Other women begged their husbands to hire substitutes, despite that such men were becoming more and more difficult to find. Writing from her home in Henry County in April, 1863 Sarah Terry assured her husband that she could raise the money that it would take to buy a substitute. “I am perfectly willing my self to give it,” she wrote. “I think I could rase it by

⁴ Pierre Costello to Cordelia Costello, December 14, 1862, Pierre D. Costello Civil War Letters, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Elisabeth Lauterbach Laskin, “Good Old Rebels: Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003), 388.

⁵ Elisha K. Flournoy to Martha Flournoy, April 15, 1863, Elisha K. Flournoy Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. The evidence suggests that Emily was a rented slave but there is no indication as to when she was returned to her owner. For a discussion of soldiers who rented slaves to help their families back home see Kenneth Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 57-59.

putting your horse and saddle in at 5 hundred dollars . . . it is worth that much to try and get it if they is any chance for I want to see you worse than I ever did.” She ended her letter with a pointed reminder of her discontent, stating, “nothing more at present I remain your unhappy wife until death pray for me and the poor little farther less children.”⁶

Nimrod Long from Pike County, meanwhile, told his wife to abandon any ideas of hiring a substitute. “You are in the notion of hiring a sub,” he wrote, “yet I do not want one and if I did there would be no chance to get one into this regiment.” Long, a wealthy planter from Perote who served in Company B, 51st Alabama Cavalry, insisted that his colonel, James D. Webb, would not allow any substitutes to join the regiment anyway. On one occasion, he recalled, one of the officers hired a substitute, brought him to the front, but was forced to send him back home. “Webb had no objection to the man but said he would not receive a substitute for any body,” Long wrote.⁷

For many Pine Barren families the growing sense of desperation became even more pronounced in April 1863, the month that Sarah Terry wrote her husband, with the passage of the Confederate “tax-in-kind” law. The “tithing” as some called it, was a 10-percent direct tax on everything from potatoes, beans, and corn, to sugar, molasses, cotton, wool, tobacco, and peanuts. As was to be expected, farmers did everything they could to evade the new taxes. Sarah Terry informed her husband that she planned to limit her cane production for the upcoming year. “I shall not sell no more sugar,” she noted, “they say that the tenth of all we

⁶ Sarah Terry to Joseph Green Terry, April 4, 1863, Terry Family Papers, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Joseph Terry never hired a substitute. He served with the 27th Georgia Infantry until the end of the war.

⁷ Nimrod Long to My Dear Wife, March 30, 1863, Nimrod William Ezekiel Long papers, 1860-1865, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (microfilm).

make we have to give it for the support of the army.”⁸ Worse, the tax came at precisely the time when the ranks of the destitute on the home front were swelling and the state was trying to meet the needs of its poorest citizens. By the summer of 1863 the situation was so desperate in southeastern Alabama that Confederate authorities suspended the collection of produce in Pike, Henry, Coffee, Dale, and Covington counties. Indeed, the tax fell so heavily upon majority-white neighborhoods that the General Assembly petitioned Richmond to exempt soldiers’ families completely “whenever the support of such families is derived entirely from the proceeds of white labor.”⁹

Yet another problem facing Pine Barren neighborhoods in 1863, particularly in the southernmost counties, was the growing number of armed bands of deserters, shirkers, and Unionists. These outlaws hid out in the swamps of southeastern Alabama and northern Florida, robbing homes and occasionally raiding unsuspecting neighborhoods. To be sure, such discontentment had not arisen overnight but instead had evolved slowly, beginning with relatively small numbers of “tories” and conscription evaders in late 1862. In December 1862, a Union raiding party from Union-occupied Pensacola attacked and burned several buildings in Geneva, Coffee County. Florida governor John Milton wired John Gill Shorter that a number of “Tories, deserters, and Negroes” had joined the party, which was heading north toward Elba. Governor Shorter immediately dispatched Col. James H. Clanton to raise a force of thirty-day

⁸ Sarah Terry to Joseph Green Terry, May 4, 1863, Terry Family Papers, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

⁹ Phyllis LaRue LeGrand, “Destitution and Relief of the Indigent Soldiers’ Families of Alabama During the Civil War,” Thesis (Auburn University, 1964), 33–34; Bessie Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops From the Confederate Army: A Study in Sectionalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 137.

volunteers from Coffee, Covington, Dale, Henry, Pike, and Barbour counties “adequate to drive out the enemy and protect for the present that part of the state.”¹⁰

A few days later the Davis administration approved Shorter’s request to enlist conscription-age men, some of whom had managed to escape the enrollment officers, for a period of six months. “Reluctance to leave their unprotected families . . . is an excuse of some speciousness,” the governor wrote, “which they make and accompany with a profession of readiness to take up arms for the purpose of local defense. While some of them are disloyal, many of them have, on account of their unprotected families, availed themselves of the facilities which their territory, generally poor and sparsely populated, affords for escape and concealment.”¹¹

In January 1863, Clanton’s new regiment, numbering between 600 and 800 soldiers, took the fight into northwest Florida. They arrested suspected Unionists, destroyed their property, and rooted out deserters.¹² Two months later, Shorter confidently reported to Secretary of War James Seddon that the temporary policy allowing men on the home front to “join Colonel Clanton’s organization has had a most happy effect in silencing all clamors against the conscript act in those counties, and in inducing many who were hiding to come into the service.”¹³ The evidence suggests that deprivation in the southernmost counties, the threat of Union invasion, and the loss of so many men to the army, had indeed enticed some of them to remain at home as long as possible even if it meant hiding from conscription officers. The fact that hundreds of them volunteered to hunt down deserters suggests that these men were not disloyal and were

¹⁰ Allen W. Jones, “A Federal Raid Into Southeast Alabama,” *Alabama Review* (October 1961): 4–6; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 15 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 939 [hereafter cited as *O.R.*].

¹¹ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 15, 939.

¹² *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 19, 574-75.

¹³ *O.R.*, ser. 4, vol. 2, 419.

certainly not Unionists. Indeed, Clanton's recruitment efforts were so successful that Richmond allowed him to expand his unit into a full brigade. By September 1863, it included forty companies from all over South Alabama. "What had begun as a small force for the protection of Southeast Alabama," Allen Jones has noted, "had become one of the Alabama's greatest contributions to the Confederate cause."¹⁴

As late as the fall of 1863, the number of Unionists and deserters in Pine Barren counties remained relatively small, especially when compared with the mountain counties of North Alabama, where they numbered in the thousands.¹⁵ Yet the situation had begun to worsen. On July 2, word reached Governor Shorter that a dozen deserters hiding out in the Pea River swamps in southern Coffee County were harassing the local citizenry. "These men and all who are harboring them should be forthwith arrested," he wrote to Col. Sevard Lee in Clanton, "and I am surprised that our people who are at home and can as easily circumvent and arrest them do not do it."¹⁶ Reports of deserters in Henry and Dale counties prompted Shorter to send again in a small force of home guards to investigate and make arrests. Capt. Thomas Armstrong's Henry Rebels, a home guard unit in Abbeville, soon captured a handful of deserters and arrested several old men "who have aided and abetted the deserters in that section." The governor directed Armstrong to join with other militia companies in the region, including a small contingent of Confederate regulars operating near Campbellton, Florida, to "keep the woods and swamps

¹⁴ Jones, "A Federal Raid Into Southeast Alabama," 267.

¹⁵ For an in-depth look at Unionism in Alabama see Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004). Storey focuses mainly on northern Alabama but she does include information related to the southern counties and the Wiregrass. During this period the amount of correspondence devoted to disloyalty in the Pine Barrens, in both the governor's papers and the *Official Records*, pales in comparison with that of the mountain counties. Moreover, in her study of desertion in Alabama Bessie Martin argues that between 1862 and 1863 only a few hundred deserters inhabited South Alabama while the mountain and hill counties contained several thousand.

¹⁶ John Gill Shorter to Sevard Lee Jr., July 6, 1863, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

constantly scoured, and use your most earnest endeavours to rid your county and the community of these outlyers.”¹⁷ A few weeks later Armstrong’s men arrested six deserters. A small band of bushwhackers ambushed the squad on the road to Abbeville, set the prisoners free, and wounded one of the guards in the process.

Not only had the outlaws become more violent, but rumor had it that furloughed troops out of Campbellton were supplying them with weapons and ammunition. “It is reported to me, with what truth I cannot vouch,” Shorter wrote, “that these men have been supplied with ammunition by furloughed soldiers of the commands of Captains Curry and Tanner, stationed near Campbellton. I have also been informed . . . that men belonging to this band and deserters from other commands have recently enlisted in the companies above named.”¹⁸ The implication was that local bushwhackers were attempting to join Confederate units close to home in order to funnel firearms, ammunition, and information to their outlaw friends.

Shorter further worried that Confederate defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg earlier that summer had eroded public confidence and that would now swell the ranks of deserters in the southernmost counties. By September, having largely failed to dislodge them, he complained to Gen. D.H. Maury that if the bands were “permitted to remain with impunity, their numbers will soon be largely increased by the paroled men from Vicksburg who are already evading their duty under pretext of their obligations of their parole.”¹⁹

It is unclear whether or not the governor’s prediction concerning Vicksburg parolees fully materialized, but the evidence suggests that all of the regiments containing Pine Barren

¹⁷ John Gill Shorter to Thomas Armstrong, July 7, 1863, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

¹⁸ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 28, pt. 2, 273-74.

¹⁹ John Gill Shorter to D.H. Maury, September 4, 1863, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

companies were back with the army in Demopolis by the end of August.²⁰ Elisha Flournoy, for example, was not with his regiment, the 46th Alabama Infantry, when it surrendered at Vicksburg. He had been captured at the Battle of Port Gibson several months earlier, exchanged in June, and hospitalized in Virginia until his release in mid-July. “I intend to go by home if I go back to Miss. whether I get a furlough or not,” he wrote to his wife a few days before leaving the hospital. “Every one of the people tells me to come by my home a few days and they never will bother me for it. Go by home and see how my business is going on and then go on to my command and all will be right. A private soldier is cared no more for than a sheep killing dog. . . . I intend to come by home and that will be no killing crime.”²¹ The evidence suggests that Flournoy did go home and remained there for several months. Yet he penned his next letter to Martha from Demopolis on October 11, 1863, having rejoined his regiment at last. “My eating so much when I was at home,” he wrote, “must have been the cause of my [recent] sickness, for we get nothing hearty to eat here and my health is improving. If I ever get home again you must not give me so much to eat.”²² This does not mean, of course, that every soldier returned to duty; many decided that protecting and providing for their families took precedence over the army.²³ Yet for Flournoy and men like him, overstaying furloughs or slipping home did not translate into disloyalty. Most of the regiments captured at Vicksburg, however depleted, went on to fight in the Army of Tennessee until the end of the war.

In some cases, zealous officials nonetheless went too far in their dealings with suspected deserters and draft dodgers. On October 22, 1863, a group of prisoners captured in Coffee

²⁰ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 24, pt. 3, 1060-61.

²¹ Elisha K. Flournoy to Martha Flournoy, July 15, 1863, Elisha K. Flournoy Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

²² Elisha K. Flournoy to Martha Flournoy, October 11, 1863, Elisha K. Flournoy Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

²³ Laskin, “Good Old Rebels,” 332.

County stopped in Troy en route to Montgomery. Four of the men requested to see local attorney Benjamin Gardner. When he arrived, the post commander, a Captain McKay, turned him away. Within an hour all of the prisoners “started for Montgomery under a strong guard.” Even though he did not know the men personally and had never spoken to them, an alerted Gardner discovered that two of the prisoners should have been exempt from the service. One was a Baptist minister and the other a shoe maker who claimed to have exemption papers approved by the previous enabling officer. In a subsequent letter to the governor, Gardner admitted that “I know myself nothing about the men referred to above—they may not have been entitled to relief—but they certainly were entitled to have their complaint heard by an attorney.”²⁴ Shorter promptly fired off a series of letters to administration officials, including Gen. Gideon Pillow, head of the Confederate Volunteer and Conscript Bureau, insisting that “in all cases where the citizen claims the right of an appeal to the judicial tribunals to determine his status and liability to conscription, before he shall be forced away from his home and into the army, will mollify the harshness of the law if he be allowed every reasonable facility to test the legality of the claims made upon him.”²⁵ By the time this letter was written, the four men were well on their way to join the Army of Northern Virginia.

McKay was soon replaced, but the conflict between state and Confederate officials continued and at times worsened under Alabama’s third Civil War governor, Thomas Hill Watts. The 1863 governor’s race between Watts and Shorter was in many ways a repeat of the previous contest two years earlier, but with a drastically different outcome. Following his defeat in 1861, Watts had organized the 17th Alabama Infantry, served with that unit until a few days before the

²⁴ Benjamin Gardner to John Gill Shorter, October 23, 1863, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

²⁵ John Gill Shorter to Gideon Pillow, October 27, 1863, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm)

Battle of Shiloh, found himself under arrest for disobeying orders, and resigned when he heard of his appointment as Attorney General in the Davis administration. For eighteen months he used the power of his office to strengthen the supremacy of the central government. Watts authored more than 100 opinions—four times more than both of his predecessors combined—and even challenged organizations and businesses in his home state. As the August 1863 election approached Watts was determined not to actively campaign for the job, declaring instead that he would “accept the governorship if the people so desired.”²⁶ Both Watts and Shorter did allow their friends to campaign for them. The election resulted in a landslide for Watts, who captured 74 percent of the statewide vote, and four out of five ballots in the Pine Barren counties (see Table 8.1).²⁷

Several possible explanations have been offered for Shorter’s defeat. As governor he rarely took steps to defend or explain his political decisions to the general public. Historian Malcolm McMillan argues that he “was an able and energetic war governor [and] statesman who made difficult decisions while ignoring political expediency.”²⁸ Yet Shorter’s impressment of slaves for state and Confederate work projects particularly angered so many slave owners that he all but lost his planter base. Impressment was the “strongest element which carried the state so largely against me,” he later admitted.²⁹

To make matters worse, Union occupation in northern Alabama, raids in the southeast, and deepening deprivation affected large segments of the population who increasingly blamed

²⁶ Malcolm Cook McMillan, *The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governors and Alabama’s Wartime Home Front, 1861-1865* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 78–79.

²⁷ *Journal Called Session, 1863, and the Third Regular Annual Session, of the Senate, of the State of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the 17th August and the Second Monday in November, 1863* (Montgomery: Saffold and Figures, 1864), 109.

²⁸ McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 69–70.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

Shorter for their plight. According to McMillan, Watts and other former Whigs also were “fortunate to be the ‘outs’ in a war situation that had become deplorable and intolerable.”³⁰

Perhaps most damaging of all, the election came on the heels of two of the Confederacy’s worst defeats. “I have good reason to believe,” he predicted just days before the election, that the disasters at Gettysburg and Vicksburg “will have a prejudicial influence over our approaching elections.”³¹ He seems to have been right.

Watts certainly benefitted from the overall dissatisfaction Alabamians had experienced, but his victory should in no way be construed as an effort by the majority to give up on the Confederacy and return to the Union. He was an unlikely choice for voters who desired peace, and there was no reason to believe otherwise. Even McMillan concedes that Watts was a “war man all over.”³² His former work at the secession convention, where he came out in support of secession, his military service in the Confederate army, and his job as Attorney General in the Davis administration all confirmed his dedication to the cause. William Blair argues that in 1862 Virginians returned a former Whig to the governorship in hopes that a new administration would be more responsive to the people’s needs and provide more effective leadership. Because Watts was a household name and had come close to winning the governorship in the 1861, it is reasonable to suggest that Alabamians likewise felt comfortable that his leadership would surpass that of his predecessor. He may have also benefitted from the fact that the state’s Confederate soldiers, who may or may not have been as eager to effect change in Montgomery, were unable to vote. Yet Watts’s margin of victory in the Pine Barrens was so overwhelming

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

³¹ John Gill Shorter to Braxton Bragg, July 24, 1863, John Gill Shorter Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

³² McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 73.

that it is difficult to imagine that Shorter would have overcome the odds, even in the unlikely event that every soldier had voted the Democratic ticket.³³

TABLE 8.1. 1863 Gubernatorial Election Results

Counties	Watts	Shorter
Barbour	826	447
Butler	797	42
Coffee	507	73
Conecuh	388	62
Covington	438	40
Dale	434	115
Henry	422	227
Pike	966	229
<i>Total</i>	4,778	1,235

Source: *Journal Called Session, 1863, and the Third Regular Annual Session, of the Senate, of the State of Alabama, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing on the 17th August and the Second Monday in November, 1863* (Montgomery: Saffold and Figures, 1864), 109.

The dawn of a new year and the beginning of a new administration did little to arrest the deterioration of economic conditions on the home front. For women in the Pine Barrens, inflation, deprivation, and the toils of labor, even among some in the upper classes, took their toll. Things were so distressing to Martha Flournoy that by February 1864 she seriously contemplated abandoning her Pike County farm and moving back with her parents. This was not the first time that she had considered such a move. Two years earlier she employed the use of a slave named Celia to help out around the house. By the spring of 1863 Celia was gone. Martha then convinced her younger brother Jimmy, who appears to have been in his teens at the time, to

³³ Blair, *Virginia's Private War*, 84–85; McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 81.

come and live with her part-time to work the farm and tend the livestock. “Brother I am so glad to hear that you and your sister is doing so well,” Elisha later wrote. “You shall never lose any thing for being so good to her. I will do something for you if I ever come home that will pay you for your trouble. Stay with her all you can and help her to take care of her stock.”³⁴

Unfortunately, Jimmy joined the 45th Alabama Infantry in January 1864, leaving his sister all alone and desperate for help. Writing from Dalton, Georgia, Elisha admitted that the possibility of his wife “breaking up house” was more upsetting than anything he had experienced since the war began—quite a statement considering that he had fought in some of the conflict’s bloodiest battles and been a Union prisoner. “Just think for a moment what will become of our stock and everything else,” he wrote in February, 1864. “I feel like we are almost ruined now and if you do break up and leave home you will find that it is the worst thing you ever done in life I am sorry to think you ever had such a notion it is the most distressing thing that has ever crossed my mind.” He encouraged Martha once again to try and find someone to stay with her and help out on the farm. “I know it seems lonely and hard for you to stay there but . . . there is no other place so good as your own home.”³⁵ Elisha’s handling of this situation suggests that, while he was well aware of Martha’s predicament, he was unwilling to desert his company. The fact that he remained in the service demonstrates his dedication to the Confederacy, or at least to the men with which he served.

For Martha Flournoy and her neighbors, the final sixteen months of the war brought the conflict closer to their doorsteps than they could have imagined three years earlier. At times the population must have felt that they were under siege from both the Yankees as well as their own

³⁴ Elisha K. Flournoy to Jimmy, April 20, 1863, Elisha K. Flournoy Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

³⁵ Elisha K. Flournoy to Martha Flournoy, February 10, 1864, Elisha K. Flournoy Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

government. Confederate cavalry operating mostly in northwest Florida occasionally ventured into South Alabama foraging or hunting for deserters. A force of about 300 infantry and cavalry from Col. Orlando S. Holland's 37th Mississippi Infantry marched through the region in April 1864, again rounding up deserters and confiscating the property of suspected Unionists. The regiment traveled by rail from Pollard to Sparta, then on foot southeast to Brooklyn, through Covington County, and down into Florida. At Sparta, according to one report, "we met with a most hospitable reception; the ladies manifesting their joy and sympathies for our cause by an invitation 'to trip the light fantastic toe' at an evening party. Our soldiers accepted the honor with becoming grace. . . .Our next march brought us to Brooklyn, on the Sepulga river, where we were welcomed amid bright faces, the waving of white kerchiefs and miniature flags."³⁶

Despite the writer's glowing account, other citizens were not at all happy to have the Mississippians in their neighborhoods. Thomas P. Cottle, Covington County's enrollment officer, informed Governor Watts that Lt. Needham Cannady's cavalry was terrorizing the citizenry. They "went to the house of an absent soldier and insulted his wife and daughters and threatened to ravish them," arrested men suspected of desertion without proper authority, and stole private property without compensating the owners. When Cottle demanded the prisoners' release, Cannady angrily responded that he "would be d---d if he did not send them to the army." The ensuing argument became so heated that Cannady arrested Cottle, only to free him a short time later when cooler heads prevailed. "Our most loyal responsible and upright citizens say that they do not feel safe while they are in the county and earnestly desire that they may be ordered a way and others sent in their place," Cottle wrote. The governor sent letters to both Richmond

³⁶ "Col. Holland's Florida Expedition," April 17, 1864, *Mobile Advertiser and Register*.

and to Gen. Dabney Maury, commander of the District of the Gulf in Mobile, protesting what he believed to be flagrant violations of the conscript laws.³⁷

If Holland's men were harassing Confederate citizens, their tactics were even more brutal toward suspected Unionists. Union Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth reported from Pensacola that Confederate soldiers were committing all sorts of atrocities. "Very few recruits can reach our lines at present," he noted, "as all West Florida is swarming with rebel cavalry hunting refugees and deserters. In Walton County 7 citizens were hung last week for entertaining Unionist sentiments, and a woman, refusing to give information about her husband's whereabouts, was killed in a shocking manner, and two of her children caught and torn to pieces by bloodhounds."³⁸

Meanwhile, the Confederate Congress amended the conscription laws again in February 1864. The new law expanded the pool of recruits to those between the ages of seventeen and fifty, finally eliminated substitution, reduced the number of exemption categories by half, gave the president more authority over the exemption process, and changed the "twenty negro law" to a "fifteen negro law" with added restrictions. The legislation also allowed states to recruit younger men between ages seventeen and eighteen and older men between forty-five and fifty to serve completely within the confines of their respective states.³⁹ In many respects Richmond was not only responding to the growing manpower crisis but also reacting to public pressure to change a system perceived to be wholly unfair. The "fifteen negro law," according to William Blair, "served the interests of the needy at the expense of the rich. . . . This new regulation turned

³⁷ Thomas P. Cottle to Thomas A. Watts, April 21, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

³⁸ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 35, pt. 2, 64.

³⁹ *Public Laws of the Confederate States of America: Passed at the Fourth Session of the First Congress, 1863-1864* (Richmond, VA: R.M. Smith, 1864), 211–15.

the exempted planters into government growers who had to supply crops not only to the army but also to the selected civilians in their neighborhoods at reduced prices.”⁴⁰ In other words, some planters may have been able to escape the war, but in return they would supply both the army and their neighbors with meat at reasonable prices. In addition, by developing a system of state reserves, the Congress hoped to encourage the men who remained at home, regardless of the reason, to get involved in the war.

Some Pine Barren communities responded to the new law by raising new companies for local defense.⁴¹ In Greenville, former Confederate soldier David Gaffney requested permission from the governor to raise a company in Butler County. Judge Samuel J. Bolling and state Representative S.F. Gafford endorsed the idea: “We think if you would give him authority to raise a company that he would be able to do so in a few days. We will use all our influence in assisting him.” Two weeks later the company appeared to have enough volunteers but lacked the necessary weapons. “Can you let us have guns and ammunition,” Gafford requested, “and when you furnish us with these articles I think we can make a pretty good fight.”⁴² In Clayton, meanwhile, Capt. Lovard Lee wanted to send a portion of his company to help protect Selma—one of the South’s major manufacturing centers and a prime Federal target—and then raise

⁴⁰ Blair, *Virginia’s Private War*, 104.

⁴¹ The state legislature actually weakened the militia in 1863 by creating a two-tier system that proved unworkable. The first-class militia was comprised solely of boys and men not subject to conscription who would serve only within the confines of their home counties. The second class included men within the conscription age who could be used anywhere in the state and were subject to Confederate service. Thus, the governor had no authority to mobilize companies outside of their respective counties. According to historian Walter Fleming, “the stupid conduct of the legislature during the last two years of the war in failing to provide for the defence of the state cannot be too strongly condemned. The final result would have been the same, but a strong force of militia would have enabled Governor Watts to execute the laws in all parts of the state, and to protect the families of loyal citizens from outrage by Tories and deserters.” Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905), 88-92.

⁴² Samuel J. Bolling and S.F. Gafford to Thomas H. Watts, February 20, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm); S.F. Gafford to Thomas H. Watts, March 1, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

additional men at home to replace them. “I have some forty men who would be pleased to receive orders for proper authority to report at Selma to give all the aid in our power in driving back [the Yankees] from our beloved state.”⁴³ The governor endorsed the plan.

The primary role of county reserve forces in the Pine Barrens was the same as other nearby Confederate units, combatting bands of deserters and Unionists whose numbers grew during the final months of the war. Local desertion became especially problematic after Confederate defeats at Mobile Bay in August and Atlanta in September 1864. In January 1865, Judge Gappa T. Yelverton of Coffee County estimated that there were some 2,000 deserters between southeastern Alabama and the Florida Gulf Coast.⁴⁴ At this late stage of the war many of the disaffected were not just deserters trying to take care of their destitute families, or draft dodgers hiding out in the woods close to home to avoid the war, but organized bands of heavily armed ex-soldiers who continued to prey upon the local citizenry. They were essentially violent guerrilla forces operating on the border, “no longer committed to the Confederacy, not quite committed to the Union . . . but fully committed to survival.”⁴⁵ Malcolm McMillan suggest that “all were outside the law after deserting and thus were forced to become bushwhackers to sustain themselves and their families.”⁴⁶

In Evergreen, Andrew Jay, one of the wealthiest planters in Conecuh County, created a company of mounted reserves to protect the southern portion of the county from both Federal raiders and local bushwhackers. In Jay’s estimation this was the only way to respond effectively to such emergencies. “I have not the confidence in the reserve militia force,” he wrote to

⁴³ Lovard Lee to Thomas H. Watts, February 26, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, February 26, 1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁴⁴ *O.R.*, ser. 4, vol. 3, 1044.

⁴⁵ Maxine T. Turner, *Navy Gray: A Story of the Confederate Navy on the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola Rivers* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), 130.

⁴⁶ McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 128.

Governor Watts. “Scattered as they are throughout the county it must be a tedious business to gather them, and then the tardiness of movement will render them in my opinion of little avail.” He assured the governor that the men would provide their horses and shotguns but needed some help procuring ammunition. “I don’t want a better weapon than my own double barrel,” Jay wrote, “but give us good heavy blue whistlers and good [percussion] caps and we will try and take care of Conecuh.”⁴⁷

Perhaps the most interesting episodes involving the disaffected occurred in Henry, Dale, and Coffee counties. Stories about anti-Confederates such as “Speckled” John Ward, Joseph Sanders, and Bill Sketoe would attain near mythological status in the annals of Alabama’s post-Civil War history. To be sure, the counties of Dale and Coffee were so volatile that the circuit judge had already refused to hold court without a military escort during the final two years of the war. In April 1864, a band of deserters, reportedly led by John Ward, slipped into Elba late one night and burned down the courthouse. According to legend, Ward had been discharged from the Confederate army in 1863 only to be conscripted back into the military a year later. He murdered the conscript officer who tried to arrest him and became an outlaw deserter hiding out in the swamps of southeastern Alabama. The torching of the courthouse, where all of the conscription records and tax records were kept, was an attack upon the system that Ward and his men believed to be unfair. Fortunately for the citizens of Elba, a group of Masons meeting nearby rushed into the burning building and saved most of the county’s records.⁴⁸

In September, the outlaws hit the town again, this time at one in the morning. Three targeted buildings were soon ablaze; one housed the new conscript office, the others were

⁴⁷ Andrew Jay to Thomas A. Watts, September 12, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁴⁸ David Williams, *Rich Man’s War: Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 144–45.

temporary offices being used by county officials. A group of slaves who lived and worked at a nearby sawmill extinguished the fires, thus saving the town square from certain destruction. Meanwhile, a ten-man posse rounded up a pack of bloodhounds, hunted down the perpetrators, and caught up with them seventeen miles south of Elba. The skirmish that ensued, known locally as the Battle of Fairview, resulted in the deaths of three posse members: a Confederate tax assessor, a local tax collector, and the deputy sheriff. Several deserters also were killed or wounded. In response, twenty-five influential citizens petitioned Montgomery for the return of a company of reserves recently called up by the governor. According to O.G. Payne, the local enrolling officer who endorsed the petition, I “feel that my own life is in danger. If some protection is not afforded now, I will be unable to discharge the duties of my office.”⁴⁹

The governor’s response is not recorded, but several soldiers returning home on furlough or permanent discharge were eager to help. Col. James Lightfoot of the 6th Alabama Infantry spent a few weeks on furlough at his home in Henry County. He learned that the county had six or seven reserve companies and suggested to the governor “that it would be a good idea to station one or more companies in the lower portion of the county in that region mostly affected with deserters & Tories and relieve them every week or ten days. By doing this I think it would effectively break them up and no person would be absent from his business longer than a week or ten days.”⁵⁰ Pvt. Charles H. Reading, who had lost an arm in the battles around Atlanta, hoped likewise to raise a company of mounted infantry in Henry County. “I have made application to be retired,” he wrote. “I purpose (when I get my retired or discharge papers) to

⁴⁹ B.W. Starke et. al. to Thomas H. Watts, September 6, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁵⁰ James N. Lightfoot to Thomas H. Watts, October 18, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

raise a company of boys (under seventeen) to remain in the 8th congressional dist for the purpose of hunting up deserters.”⁵¹

Still, another soldier who attempted to solve the desertion problem in the southeastern counties was Capt. John C. Brown, part of the posse that fought in the Battle of Fairview. He later served as captain of a home guard company in Maj. Joseph Barbriere's Cavalry Battalion.⁵² Sometime about January 1865, he hatched a plan to organize a regiment or possibly even a brigade of disaffected citizens and ex-soldiers to fight solely under his command, with guarantees that the unit would not be divided and would not be sent into the Confederate army. According to both Judge Yelverton and Alabama Attorney General Marvin A. Baldwin, Brown was the perfect man for the job. As a middle-class merchant, farmer, and small slave owner from Buzbeeville in southern Coffee County, he understood that section of the state and knew many of the deserters and their families personally. “As to Captain Brown,” wrote Solicitor James Arrington, “I have been well acquainted with him for years, and take pleasure in saying that I know of no one better fitted than him for such an undertaking. He is an experienced officer, bold, firm, intelligent, and of unswerving integrity.”⁵³

As far as some of the deserters were concerned, Baldwin summed up their grievances:

What private griefs they have to take their present status I know not, except they are generally poor men, and there was much difficulty in the way of having their families provided for in their absence. This, added to the fact that they were assigned to companies in the service not of their choice, and the fact that they resided near the coast of Florida, from whence were occasional raids by the enemy, partly prompted them to take the position as deserters. Considering that they had perhaps forfeited their lives, and their characters ruined, many of them, I understand, have been giving the enemy not only aid and comfort, but actually fighting against us. Many of them desire to return if they

⁵¹ C.H. Reading to Thomas H. Watts, November 19, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁵² John C. Brown, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

⁵³ *O.R.*, ser. 4, vol. 3, 1043.

can be allowed to join in an organization by Captain Brown, whom they all know. He lives among them and they know him well, and know that he is a high-minded, brave, and generous man.⁵⁴

While there is no record that Brown's plan was put into effect, Baldwin's assessment of the growing bands of outlaws in the southernmost counties demonstrates three things. First, some men were eager to serve but would not sacrifice the safety of their homes or families to do so. Second, and perhaps most important, the Confederacy had failed to protect families on the home front. If the state and national governments could not provide for and protect their families then they would, even if it meant collaborating with Union forces in northern Florida. Finally, if Baldwin was right, then as late as January 1865 some individuals continued to demand the right to choose their own companies. In many respects then, the southernmost Pine Barren counties in Alabama were similar to certain areas in Piney Woods Georgia late in the war. "Although deep within the Confederate interior," Mark Wetherington observes, "wiregrass Georgia was not clearly under Confederate control. In many respects, the landscape resembled a no-man's-land." Some soldiers decided to return home, "in essence deserting a front-line war with the Yankees to face another threat within the Confederacy's deteriorating interior."⁵⁵ As for John C. Brown, the evidence suggests that his company served out the rest of the war defending the central part of the state, surrendering with Barbieri's Battalion at Citronelle in May 1865.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the region's slaves did their best to adapt to the same crumbling home front conditions as whites. Yet their aspirations, if not experiences, were drastically different. Beginning in 1863 Confederate officials utilized slaves from all over South Alabama to construct defensive fortifications at Mobile. Slaves from every Pine Barren county worked under the most

⁵⁴ *O.R.*, ser. 4, vol. 3, 1043.

⁵⁵ Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight*, 221.

⁵⁶ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 39, pt. 2, 894.

unfavorable conditions preparing the city for a Union attack. While many African Americans became sick from heat exhaustion, others suffered from long-term illnesses brought on by cramped quarters and unhealthy living conditions. Some even died. Confederate officials often returned sick or dying slaves to their owners, but transporting them sometimes involved little more than dropping them off at railroad stations and leaving them. In May 1864, Benjamin Porter wrote to the governor from Greenville that “negroes residing at a distance from this place are frequently sent up from the works about Mobile sick, put off the cars at night, and but for accident, left to die.” On several occasions he discovered slaves who had been abandoned and left for dead, paid to have them nursed back to health, and returned them to their owners. “Today I found one from Coffee [County] belonging to a Mr. Waters lying in the woods nearly dead,” he wrote. “I have had measures taken for his relief and written to his master.”⁵⁷

African Americans often used disintegrating home front conditions to find their way to freedom. With large numbers of white men already in the army, and increasing numbers of home guard units being sent for the defense of Mobile, slaves sought every opportunity to escape and make their way to the Union lines in Pensacola. Located fewer than twenty miles from the Florida border, slave owners from Brooklyn in Conecuh County complained that “incendiary agents” were collaborating with their slaves, providing information on possible escape routes, and promising help from the Federal army. Many slaves had already escaped, and rumors abounded that once the county reserves departed, others planned a “general stampede” for freedom. “We believe they are organizing secretly for this purpose,” G.W. Snowden wrote.

⁵⁷ Benjamin F. Porter to Thomas H. Watts, May 3, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

“Plantations are being left without a white man upon them and the negroes turned loose to save or destroy the crops already made as they see proper.”⁵⁸

In similar fashion, African Americans laboring in the salt works on the Gulf Coast were eager to escape. By the summer of 1864 Union raids along the coast had become so frequent that many slave owners previously engaged in making salt refused to continue their operations for fear of losing both their slaves and their salt-making equipment. On two separate occasions in June, a total of thirty-nine slaves escaped when Union raiding parties attacked the salt works.⁵⁹ That same month Bushwhackers robbed a salt maker from Pike County, burned his wagon, and carried off “all the negroes they could get to go with them. The negroes are delivered over to the yankees.”⁶⁰ These slaves were so eager to escape bondage that they willingly sought refuge with outlaws in hopes of reaching Pensacola.

The problems in the southernmost counties worsened as increasing numbers of men became outlaws and collaborated with the Union army in Pensacola. The most famous Pine Barren Unionist, or infamous depending upon one’s perspective, was Alfred Holley of Covington County. Before the war Holly had served multiple terms in the lower house of the state legislature. During that time he focused almost exclusively upon helping his constituents and supporting his county while avoiding the sectional issues of the late 1850s. Yet in the months leading up to war, Holly declared his opposition to secession and voted against every piece of legislation that he believed would weaken the Union. He lost his bid for reelection in 1861 but ran again two years later, successfully winning yet a fifth term in office. True to form,

⁵⁸ G.W. Snowden et al. to Thomas H. Watts, August 12, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁵⁹ H.E. Owens to Thomas H. Watts, June 22, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

⁶⁰ M.W. Murphey et al. to Thomas H. Watts, June 12, 1864, Thomas H. Watts Administrative Files, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (microfilm).

he opposed a bill to reorganize the militia system and attacked proposals that would have made it easier for officials to hunt down deserters and Unionists. His opposition to this last measure may have been an attempt to protect his own self-interest.

During the war Holly and his oldest son Calvin frequently sold cotton, cattle, and horses to the Federals in Pensacola. Col. Orlando S. Holland's cavalry raid in March 1864, exposed these activities. Holland's men seized 1,000 head of cattle, confiscated thousands of dollars worth of tobacco, horses, and mules, and sent Holly fleeing toward the coast. On April 1, a party of Confederates attacked Holly and five members of the Bass family as they tried to escape by boat from present-day Niceville, Florida, through Boggy Bayou, down to Union-held Santa Rosa Island. The next day he reported to Union officials that three members of the family were killed and two wounded in the attack. He and Calvin spent the remainder of the war in Pensacola helping the Union army in every way that they could. In March 1865, Alfred Holly accompanied a Federal cavalry force of 900 soldiers into Covington County and personally supervised the arrest of a half dozen county officials, most of whom were old personal and political enemies.⁶¹

By this point of the war most Alabamians understood that the end of the conflict was near. Governor Watts issued one last desperate appeal to the state's male population, especially the young men:

I make one more appeal to your manhood and your love of country. Do you love your state? You will not hesitate to rally to her defense. Would you keep and enjoy your property? You must now defend it. Do you love your wives and children? You must prepare, at once, to defend them. . . . Do you love your mother and sisters? Then, young men! put on the armour of war and strike for them 'for God and your native land.' Do you love liberty? You must draw your swords – shoulder your guns – and show, by your acts, that you will be freemen.”

⁶¹ Allen W. Jones, “Unionism and Disaffection in South Alabama: The Case of Alfred Holley,” *Alabama Review* 24 (July 1971): 114–32; *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, April 17, 1864; *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 53, pt. 1, 386.

Yet by this late date there was little that could be done to halt the Union advance or alter the outcome of the war. Federal cavalry rode more or less unopposed throughout the region while deserters from both armies continued to pillage local citizens and raid towns and neighborhoods along the Florida border. In late March, Joseph Sanders, a former Confederate captain who had deserted and joined the 1st Florida Cavalry (U.S.), led a small detachment into Newton.

Fortunately for the townspeople, word of the raid leaked out and a handful of citizens led by a partially disabled veteran of the 15th Alabama Infantry surprised the raiders and ran them out of town.⁶² Two weeks later Maj. Gen. Benjamin H. Grierson's Federal cavalry raided an area from Conecuh County through Butler, Pike, and Barbour all the way to Eufaula on the Chattahoochee River. On April 12, three days after Robert E. Lee's surrender in Virginia, Gen. James Wilson's cavalry rode into Montgomery unopposed and burned many of the city's industrial works including foundries, rolling mills, and railroad cars. That same day Mobile capitulated. On May 4, Gen. Richard Taylor surrendered his Department of the West, effectively ending the Civil War in Alabama.

Despite the hardships, poverty, deprivation, and occasional violence that occurred during the war's final two years, the Pine Barren counties of south-central and southeastern Alabama were determined to support the Confederate war effort. Although women suffered through deprivations unimaginable four years earlier, they did the best they could to keep their homes, farms, and families intact. While growing bands of deserters and outlaws populated the swamps and wilderness of the southernmost counties, most of the region appears to have been comparatively unaffected by the violence that ensued in that area. Many of the most elaborate stories and legends depicting violent acts are usually based upon events that occurred within the

⁶² Williams, *Rich Man's War*, 145–47.

last four to six months of the war. Yet even these events paled in comparison with the bloodletting that took place between sectional belligerents in Tennessee, Kentucky, western Virginia, and other regions of the Confederacy.⁶³ Simply put, the majority of Pine Barren residents remained loyal Confederates until the end of the war.

⁶³ Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Wayne K Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Kenneth W. Noe, "Exterminating Savages: The Union Army and Mountain Guerrillas in Southern West Virginia, 1861-1862," in *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Kenneth W. Noe, "'Battle against the Traitors': Unionist Middle Tennesseans in the Ninth Kentucky Infantry and What They Fought For," in *Sister States Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009). For a good historiography of the literature on guerrilla warfare see Daniel E. Sutherland, "Sideshow No Longer: A Historiographical Review of the Guerrilla War," *Civil War History* 46 (March 2000): 5-23.

Conclusion

On June 23, 1865, Capt. E.D. Johnson arrived in Elba, Alabama, with thirty of his troopers from the 2nd Maine Cavalry. Their mission was to find out whether or not the reports of attacks against the citizens of Coffee County were true. “From the best information I could gather,” he reported, “more than fifty men, mostly deserters from the First Florida Cavalry, U.S. Army, are engaged in robbing, plundering, and committing acts of violence.”¹ By the fall, most of these bands had been cleared out by the Union army, but the onset of Reconstruction created a whole new dynamic for Pine Barren communities.

Four years of war had practically destroyed the region’s economy and left many of its citizens destitute. Johnson witnessed widespread poverty as his cavalry rode through southeastern Alabama. “The country is very poor in Coffee County,” he observed, “and the whole country in that section of the State of Alabama and those parts of Florida contiguous to it.”² In Sparta, Judge John Henderson counted more than 700 indigent women and children, most without any visible means of support. “It is impossible almost to enumerate the different Reasons or Causes of the indigence of these families,” he noted, “the greater number of them have been rendered indigent by the death or disability of their husbands or protectors in the war.”³ Union Gen. Wager Swayne served as Alabama’s assistant commissioner for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, also known as the Freedmen’s Bureau. “It is my

¹ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 1, 1044-45.

² *Ibid.*

³ John M. Henderson to W.A. Ashley, November 30, 1865, Military Volunteer Family Assistance Records, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama, <http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/2131> (accessed May 6, 2014).

desire,” he wrote to Young M. Rabb of Conecuh County, “being charged with certain [responsibilities] for the general welfare of the destitute white and of all black persons, to employ the assistance of every right minded man who can be got to work with me, and to render what help I can in turn.”⁴ Rabb became the bureau’s assistant superintendent for Conecuh County and immediately began distributing rations, clothing, and medical care to the poor. Superintendents from other Pine Barren counties also contributed to the relief efforts.⁵

The bureau worked closely with northern aid societies to raise money and provide foodstuffs for the needy. Between April and August 1867, for instance, relief organizations from New York, Philadelphia, Boston, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Louisville contributed 9,083 bushels of corn and 3,958 pounds of bacon to Pine Barren counties. Some of these supplies went to impoverished African Americans, but a goodly amount provided sustenance to struggling white families. In his annual report in October 1867, Swayne noted that “the condition of those persons left in destitution by the war, of whom a great majority were white . . . was very far from promising.” Yet despite the summer drought and poor crops, “it is not too much to say that by [the aid societies’] timely exercise not only have the poorer counties been relieved from numerous individual cases of starvation, they have been rescued from disorder and disease as results from famine.”⁶

⁴ Wager Swayne to Y.M. Rabb, December 14, 1865, Assistant Commissioner for the State of Alabama, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

⁵ John B. Myers, “The Alabama Freedmen and the Economic Adjustments During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867,” *Alabama Review* 26 (October 1973), 252-66. For a fresh assessment of the Freedmen’s Bureau in Alabama under the administration of Wager Swayne see Jason J. Battles, “Labor, Law, and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Alabama, 1865-1867,” in *The Yellowhammer War: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013), 240–57.

⁶ Wager Swayne to O.O. Howard, October 10, 1867, Assistant Commissioner for the State of Alabama, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC (microfilm).

The soldiers returning home from war faced a whole new set of challenges. Many were maimed or disfigured. Others suffered long-term or permanent mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. Despite the best efforts of the family members left behind, men often returned to find farms in disrepair, fields overrun with weeds, sickly livestock, fences damaged, broken or worn-out equipment, and barns and outbuildings falling apart. Crop failures in 1865 and 1866 exacerbated the problem. By 1870, the annual income for many veterans had declined dramatically from where they were just a decade earlier. Economic challenges hit poor and landless farmers the hardest, but even wealthy men struggled to recover their former status. In Pike County, Sgt. John Breedlove's annual income dwindled from \$5,000 as an engineer before the war to just \$1,300 as a farmer in 1870, still a comfortable living by the standards of the day. Private Edward Blacklidge's carriage making business in Abbeville shrank from nearly \$6,000 in 1860 to \$2,500 in 1870. On the other hand, there were signs that some veterans were making the best of a difficult situation. Private Crawford Dillard's bottom line as a Dale County farmer actually improved from \$900 in 1860 to almost \$1,400 a decade later. Similarly, Pvt. William Neal's farm in Coffee County saw a slight increase in his bottom line from \$800 to \$1,000.⁷ Although economic conditions varied widely, the evidence suggests that it took years for the average veteran to regain his former socioeconomic status.

In addition to economic difficulties, returning veterans and Pine Barren residents in general faced new political realities. In the immediate aftermath of the war political change came slowly. For nearly two years, a period historians refer to as Presidential Reconstruction, former Confederates held nearly all of the local and statewide political offices. That changed in 1867 when the Republican-controlled Congress asserted its authority over the reconstruction

⁷ United States Census, Pike County, Henry County, Dale County, Coffee County, Alabama, 1860 and 1870, Schedule 1.

process. Many so-called Radical Republicans believed that President Andrew Johnson's administration had been far too lenient with the former Rebels and dismissive of the plight of the freedmen. Congressional Reconstruction therefore led to major changes to the state's political system. For the first time African American men exercised the right to vote, black legislators took their seats in the General Assembly, and the state sent its first black congressman, Benjamin S. Turner, to Washington in 1871.

The convention to rewrite the state's constitution met in Montgomery in November 1867. Since many former Confederates could not vote, and others were disqualified from running for office—along with a large number of whites who boycotted the election in protest—most representatives elected from Pine Barren counties were most likely carpetbaggers or scalawags, disparaging terms aimed at northerners who supported reconstruction and their southern allies. Massachusetts native Samuel S. Gardner, for instance, was one of two elected representatives from the fourth district, encompassing Butler and Covington counties. Gardner had been a chaplain in the Union army during the war, took the job of subassistant commissioner for the Freedman's Bureau in Greenville in 1865, and worked tirelessly to educate the region's freedmen concerning their political rights. With help from the large African American vote in Butler County, both Gardner and the district's second representative, Covington's William R. Jones, easily defeated their conservative opponents.⁸

With the exception of Samuel Gardner little is known about the remainder of the region's delegates, other than their names and the likelihood that few if any were conservatives. Ransom Deal from Dale County was a young Baptist minister who represented the Fifth District. Richard

⁸ Richard L. Hume, "The Freedman's Bureau and the Freedman's Vote in the Reconstruction of Southern Alabama: An Account by Agent Samuel S. Gardner," *Alabama Review* 37 (Fall 1975): 217–24; Wyley Donald Ward, *Early History of Covington County, Alabama, 1821-1871* (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company., 1991), 203. Late nineteenth-century historian Walter Fleming has defined conservatives generally as whites who opposed reconstruction efforts in the South after the war. The Democratic Party embodied this conservative philosophy.

M. Johnson was an Illinois native who resided in Montgomery but represented Henry County. Dale County's John C. Jolly had served with distinction as a second lieutenant in the 33rd Alabama Infantry during the war. Barbour County sent David Lore, Henry C. Russell, and the region's only African American representative, Thomas Deggs.

Despite conservative rhetoric to the contrary, Alabama's new constitution struck a moderate tone by contemporary standards. While the law protected the political rights of the freedmen, guaranteed basic freedoms and legal rights to every Alabamian, and required former Confederates to take a simple loyalty oath in order to vote, it did not address social equality between the races. Michael Fitzgerald argues that conservative whites believed the constitution went too far, while African Americans and an outspoken minority of carpetbaggers were disappointed that the document did not go far enough. The state's leading Democratic newspapers urged white voters to boycott the ratification vote. Nearly 20,000 whites voted statewide to call the convention; only 7,500 showed up for the ratification vote. In Eufaula, for instance, just 34 of 2,727 votes in favor of the constitution came from white voters.⁹

Conservatives were not above using intimidation tactics to keep people away from the polls. "Union men were cursed at the polls by rebels, better known in democratic ranks as 'conservatives,'" reported Jacob Black, chairman of the Barbour County Board of Registration. "They were slandered in every way imaginable, and their names are now published under the captions of 'the roll of infamy.'" Black also pointed to the intimidation of African American voters, possibly at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan. "Freedmen were kept from the polls by various contrivances," he noted, "such as threatening them with discharges from their homes,

⁹ Michael W. Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 82.

stopping them en route to the polls, [and] stealing their tickets.”¹⁰ Threats of violence forced Republicans in Dale County to close down the voting in at least one precinct. Conservatives either destroyed the county’s registration books or purposely “misplaced” them, leaving election officials scrambling. “The election has just passed over with many difficulties to encounter,” one report explained, “with all the threats of mobs and violence we . . . have had to encounter.”¹¹

The conservative approach was effective. Out of 5,123 registered voters in Barbour County fewer than 3,000 voted in favor of the new constitution with the overwhelming majority of votes coming from African Americans. Only 42 percent of eligible voters cast a yes vote in Butler County, along with 22 percent in Conecuh and 19 percent in Coffee. Pike, Henry, Dale, and Covington posted no returns, most likely the result of Democratic intimidation tactics or outright violence against the carpetbaggers, scalawags, and black voters. Statewide the ratification vote fell short of the required majority of eligible voters in order for the constitution to become law. Yet during the summer of 1868 Congress repealed the majority-vote provision, thus activating the new constitution retroactively.

It is impossible to determine from existing evidence the political affiliations of all of the region’s representatives during the era of Congressional Reconstruction. While most of the men were residents of the counties in which they lived, few had ever held political office before. Because many former Confederates could neither vote nor hold political office, at least initially, it is reasonable to suggest that some Pine Barren representatives were Republicans. In 1868, Republican William Miller Jr. narrowly defeated his Democratic rival for the Senate seat that encompassed Butler and Covington counties. The heavy African American vote assured Miller’s

¹⁰ *Index to Miscellaneous Documents of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Fortieth Congress* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1868), 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

victory. That same year, representatives J.R. Yates of Conecuh County, James Ard from Coffee, and Henry County's E.E. Tiller were elected to the General Assembly. These men were almost certainly Republicans. Nevertheless, by 1870 former Confederate soldiers such as Jesse M. Carmichael from Dale County, John P. Hubbard from Pike, and William C. Oates from Henry, all Democrats, began to defeat their Republican opponents. White supremacists launched an all-out effort to stamp out Republican voters. In majority-white counties such as those in the Pine Barrens their endeavors were widely successful. As Mark Wetherington has noted, "Reconstruction violated the plain folk's democratic ideal because it 'is not of the people,' meaning that the governed—white male voters—had not consented to Reconstruction. Moreover, its goals violated plain folk notions of race, white supremacy, and polity."¹²

Between 1870 and 1876 the Democratic Party made substantial inroads throughout the region. Butler, Covington, Pike, Coffee, Dale, Henry, and the newly created counties of Crenshaw and Escambia voted solidly Democratic in each of the four gubernatorial races that occurred during that time period. In Conecuh County the votes were almost evenly divided until 1876 when the Democracy took firm control. Thanks to the large contingent of black voters, Barbour County remained largely Republican until 1874 when Democrats swept the county's elections.

That year Eufaula was at the center of the most deadly episode in Alabama's Reconstruction history—an event that cleared the way for the Democratic dominance of the county's politics. In the months leading up to the election Eufaula Democrats organized the White Man's Club, a white supremacist secret society with the goal of pressuring black voters into voting the Democratic ticket in that year's elections. The organization promised good jobs

¹² William Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama: For Thirty Years* (Atlanta: Plantation Publishing Company, 1872); Thomas Owen, *Alabama Official and Statistical Register* (Brown Printing Company, 1915), 132; Mark Wetherington, *Plain Folks Fight*, 268.

to those who pledged their support and threatened the jobs of those who would not. As the election approached rumors of violence circulated widely. Elias M. Keils, Eufaula's Republican city court judge, warned U.S. officials that whites were stockpiling firearms in anticipation of a fight. He requested troops, but the twenty or so soldiers that responded were specifically instructed to stay away from the polls. On election day hundreds of African American voters showed up in large groups to vote. An argument concerning the eligibility of one of the young black voters quickly turned to violence when a white man named William Dowdy stabbed Republican Milas Lawrence. Shots rang out as people scattered in all directions. Within minutes at least six African American men lay dead or mortally wounded with dozens more injured, including twelve whites. A few miles away in the heavily black Spring Hill district, white Democrats burned more than 700 ballots. In the end, the violence in Eufaula and the destruction of ballots in Spring Hill guaranteed a Democratic sweep of the county.¹³

In the Pine Barrens, the elections of 1874 and 1876 sealed the fate of the Republican Party. By carrying the banner of white supremacy the Democratic Party united white voters in the region against African Americans, thus helping to usher in the period known historically as Redemption, a time in which conservative Democrats regained complete control of Alabama's political system. Revengeful whites then disfranchised black voters, dismantled the state's Reconstruction government, and instituted a repressive socioeconomic system known as Jim Crow.

¹³ Harry P. Owens, "The Eufaula Riot of 1874," *Alabama Review* 16 (July 1963): 224–37; Blake Wilhelm, "Election Riots of 1874," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, accessed June 24, 2014, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2484>.

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