

HOME FIRES IN THE LINE OF FIRE

When the Civil War began people in both the United and Confederate states felt they had been attacked by the other side. The bombardment of Fort Sumter gave the North a clear example of an attack being made on them. Responding to that attack was the patriotic motive driving the first wave of enthusiastic recruiting. The South felt itself under attack as early as 1854 when conflict arose in Kansas and the use of violence to end slavery became acceptable to certain parties in the North. The attack of John Brown on the United States arsenal at Harpers Ferry in September 1859, with the intent of beginning a slave rebellion, and the acclaim of Brown as a martyr by some Yankee voices, made the sense of being under attack stronger. For Tennessee the sense of attack became a basic issue when the state voted on secession. In February 1861 the sense of being attacked was restrained by the hope of a peaceful separation between the sections; in June 1861 attack had become a fact since war had begun and the only choice for Tennessee was who to join in attacking whom.

A natural reaction to an attack is to fight back and to punish the attacker. The mention of the dates December 7, 1941, or September 11, 2001, make that point clear. In 1861 public speeches by civic leaders and newspaper editorials, North and South, called for retaliation against the attackers. Thus, the men who went to war in 1861 saw vengeance as a reasonable and proper action against the other side. Because the war was fought in the South this section would feel vengeance wrecked upon it by the armies of the United States. When organized armies met on battlefields luck, numbers, and skill might bring victory but the opportunity for vengeance was limited by the ability of the other army to defend itself. The civilian population was not able to defend itself effectively and the desire for vengeance against the society which had attacked the Union was directed against them. Civilians often took what steps they could to strike back, adopting the measures of irregular guerrilla warfare.

While it is appropriate for students of history to focus on the issues which moved governments to go to war they must not neglect the motives which moved men to go to the conflict. These motives may well be different from those of the governments involved, at least in the beginning of the conflict. In the years 1861-1865, and continuing to 1876, there was much talk of vengeance and punishment. That clearly was the motive of many participants in the Civil War and Tennessee was one location in which that motive could become action. This emphasis on vengeance flies in the face of the popular culture idea that the Civil War was a "gentlemen's war" in which civilians were seldom molested. This emphasis also challenges the veracity of Abraham Lincoln's statement in his Second Inaugural Address which stated that the United States government held "malice toward none." In truth, there was a great deal of malice toward the South in the hearts of many people in the North. This malice began to make itself manifest almost as soon as the first United States soldiers set foot on Southern soil and it continued to make itself known until the last Yankee left at the close of Reconstruction in 1876. The

expression of this malice began to be implemented by enlisted men and low ranking officers in 1861 and 1862, by 1863 it was accepted as official policy endorsed by the White House and the War Department, carried out by all military forces of the United States. This means the economic infrastructure of the South, including homes and farms, were considered valid military targets. Civilian deaths became inevitable. The “home fires” were in “the line of fire.”

There would be some contact between Tennessee civilians and the major combat forces of the United States as campaigns evolved but most Tennesseans would not find themselves near a battlefield or in the path of major troop movements. For the majority of Tennessee residents contact with Union forces was a matter of meeting small units which were sent out foraging or which were posted along railroads as garrisons. Discipline was lax in these small units, especially among foraging parties. These Union troops behind the fighting front were generally under the command of the Provost Marshal General. The documents detailing their actions are not a part of the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* but are a separate collection called *Provost Marshal Records of the United States Army* filed in the National Archives as Record Group 345 and Record Group 416. These records have been sadly neglected by historians. The duties of the Provost troops during the Civil War included seeking out and arresting deserters, enemy spies, and civilians suspected of disloyalty; investigating the theft or misuse of government property; controlling travel in the military zone by issuing passes and monitoring government transportation; maintaining records of persons who gave paroles and who took the Oath of Allegiance. Each army post had a provost officer who, in addition to carrying out these duties, could also convene military commissions to try cases involving violations of military orders, departures from the laws of war, and other offenses which arose under military jurisdiction. Since most of Tennessee was a military zone under martial law, the provost marshal handled all manner of disputes that normally would have gone before a civil court. These cases included disputes over property boundaries, ownership of livestock, fair market value of property, and disturbances of the peace. But the provosts also found themselves dealing with rape, arson, robbery, and murder as well as with the military actions of Confederate cavalry units which were dispersed behind Union lines to raid the railroads and the actions of guerrillas and bushwhackers.

In 1862 the Union Army of the Cumberland moved into Middle Tennessee following the victories of U. S. Grant at Forts Henry and Donelson. The commander of this force, General Don Carlos Buell, was dedicated to restoring the Union, an objective which Lincoln declared to be his primary focus in the early days of the war. The considerate attitude adopted by Buell towards Secessionist Southerners alienated the commander from many of his troops who had come south to punish rebels, whether those rebels wore uniforms or mufti. [1] One Union commander, John Pope, disagreed with the considerate policies of Buell and made that clear in the behavior he allowed his men to pursue. Pope’s dedication to “hard war” policies in West Tennessee won the approval of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and of Abraham Lincoln who brought Pope east to command United States forces in Virginia. In that theater Pope made himself notorious by allowing his men to live off the land, taking hostages, forcing civilians to labor for the

army, and deporting all those who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance, women and children included. This policy continued until Pope was soundly defeated at Second Manassas in the summer of 1862.

The “hard war” policy of the United States, as applied by soldiers and middle-grade officers became clear on May 2, 1862. In separate actions on that day two bodies of Union troops burned the town of Paint Rock in Madison County, Alabama, and sacked the county seat of Limestone County, Athens. Paint Rock was said to be in an area infested by “bushwhackers” while Athens was considered a hot-bed of secessionism. A “bushwhacker” was any pro-Confederate who resisted the Union occupation force and the term was even applied to regularly enrolled, uniformed Confederate soldiers if they infiltrated Yankee lines. Ironically, Limestone County has elected anti-secessionist Nicholas Davis to represent them when Alabama had debated declaring its independence in January 1861.

There were Confederate troops assigned to infiltrate the lines of the United States army and to disrupt Union activity in North Alabama and the southern part of Middle Tennessee. One company of the 4th Alabama Cavalry, commanded by Captain Frank Gurley, attacked a Union column commanded by Brigadier Robert L. McCook while the Yankee troops were scouting in Madison County. McCook had dysentery and was riding in a light wagon. He and his escort became separated from the rest of his command by a few hundred yards and were pounced on by Gurley. In the running skirmish McCook was shot. Since the northern soldiers could not catch the Confederate cavalry they burned all the houses and farm buildings in a five mile radius of the attack. The structures destroyed included the house of Mrs. Jane Word who had provided shelter for the mortally wounded Union general. Some male civilians found in the area were summarily shot, apparently because all Southern males were viewed as potential guerrillas. [2]

Colonel Ivan Turchin commanded the United States troops at Athens. Once his troops had occupied the town Turchin let it be known that he would “close his eyes” for two hours. During the ensuing reign of terror citizens were robbed, houses and stores were looted, and several women were raped. One pregnant woman was abused to the point she suffered a miscarriage and died. Total value of goods looted and destroyed amounted to some \$54,000, a sum equal to several million dollars in today’s currency. Athens was not the first town to suffer depredations at the hands of the Illinois and Indiana troops commanded by Turchin, Bowling Green, Kentucky, had been looted by his men earlier in the war. Turchin faced a court martial which found him guilty of improper conduct, but the decision of the court martial was overturned by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Turchin was soon promoted to brigadier general with the support of Abraham Lincoln. [3]

Union occupied areas of Tennessee were feeling the “hard hand of war” at this same time since the same attitudes and policies were applied there. Successes at Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862 opened the Tennessee River to U. S. control as far up river as Muscle Shoals, Alabama, while the Cumberland provided a highway for Northern forces

to Nashville. The Army of the Tennessee moved slowly up its namesake river with its members committing so many acts of looting and pilfering that the authorities in Washington decided General Ulysses Grant and his army were thoroughly demoralized by their victories. [4] One man who suffered from and retaliated against these Union acts was Jack Hinson. "Old Man" Hinson lived in what is today known as the "Land Between the Lakes," a peninsula between the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers. Two of Hinson's sons were accused of scouting for the Confederate forces still active in the area and the two were summarily shot. "Old Man" Hinson "took to the woods" and began a career as a bushwhacker, sniping at gunboats and supply vessels plying the two nearby rivers. By 1865 the stock of Hinson's rifle carried nearly three dozen notches, one for each victim of his deadly aim.

The Union advance in Middle Tennessee led to the occupation of the village of Wartrace in Bedford County, an area noted for Union sentiment. By the late Spring of 1862, however, the Union citizens of Wartrace had filed a complaint with Union commander Don Carlos Buell stating that numerous robberies had been committed by United States troops, that homes were routinely looted, and that several women, both black and white, had been raped. The instance which touched off the complaint was the attempted gang rape of the wife and daughter of the leading Union citizen of the village, an attempt which was frustrated by the intervention of several male citizens. [5] While these events were transpiring in Middle Tennessee the western part of the state was being harried by the Seventh Kansas commanded by Colonel Charles Jennison. The actions of this unit were characterized by a Union officer as "banditry, brutality, and cold-blooded murder. This regiment, known as the Jayhawks, was more disorderly than the men commanded by Turchin.

In all Union occupied areas of Tennessee one response of the loyal Confederate population was the organization of bands of guerrillas. The pre-war militia system provided a base for the organization of such bands since males in each community had some rudimentary knowledge of military drill and a military organization under local leaders was in place. The absence of a draft at this point in the war let at home able-bodied men who had seen no need to volunteer in 1861 but who now confronted the obvious need to defend their homes and families against an invader who evidenced a thirst for revenge against Secessionists. Soon boats carrying supplies along the rivers were being sniped at whenever the channel brought them close to shore, forage parties were "bushwhacked," marching columns were ambushed, and railroads suffered sabotage. The rural nature of Tennessee gave guerrilla units plenty of room in which to roam while knowledge of the local countryside gave them an advantage in maneuver. Retaliation against civilians by United States forces generally created more guerrillas as those harmed by retaliation sought revenge. When the pro-Union elements of the population became involved a true civil war erupted, leaving bitterness which lasted for decades.

In the autumn of 1862 Braxton Bragg led the major Confederate army in Tennessee through the Cumberland mountains in an invasion of Kentucky. This move forced Union general Buell to withdraw most Union troops north to confront the Confederates. As the

Yankees retreated guerillas bit like gnats. The Union retreat through Lincoln and Rutherford counties saw men lost to guerillas every day. These partisan bands took no prisoners or, if they did, held them only long enough to reach a place where they had time and leisure to kill them. Retaliation from the Northern troops followed as a matter of course. Charles Anderson, a former vice-president of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, recalled that when Buell's troops passed his home at Anderson's Station near Murfreesboro they burned his house, barns, and other outbuildings. The troops had first looted Anderson's home, even taking the portraits of his parents outside and running sabers through the eyes of the figures. Anderson left this destruction behind him and joined the staff of Nathan Bedford Forrest. [6]

On occasion guerillas gathered in large bands and, with the help of regularly organized Confederate troops, engaged in major military action. Adam R. Johnson and T. G. Woodward captured Clarksville, Tennessee, from Union forces and threatened the town of Dover, a major Union supply base. Although unable to hold Clarksville in the face of an advance by troops of the United States, Johnson and Woodward created another troubling situation to be faced by the Union high command. [7] It was at this same time that Ellis Harper made life miserable for Northern forces around the "twin tunnels" on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad near Gallatin, eventually earning for himself the reputation of a fierce opponent of the Yankees and a dauntless guerrilla.

Ellis Harper had enlisted in Company I, 30th Tennessee Infantry, on November 22, 1861. His regiment made up part of the garrison of Fort Donelson when that position surrendered in February 1862. Harper was sent to Camp Butler, Illinois, as a prisoner of war but managed to escape within a short time. On returning to his home in Sumner county he found C. A. Peddicord organizing a company of scouts. This service appealed to Harper and soon he had raised his own group to fight within the organizational structure Peddicord had established. When Peddicord, and many of his men, were captured Harper became the leading partisan commander in the area north of Nashville. His career would last for the duration of the war.

From the Mississippi River in the west to the Tennessee River as it swept across north Alabama to the south, back north into Kentucky the summer and fall of 1862 saw civil life deteriorate as Confederate territory came under United States occupation. The official United States policy of conciliation was being challenged by the actions of the men in the ranks who had frequent contact with recalcitrant Southerners. The desire for vengeance against those who had declared their independence from the Union was reinforced by Confederate battlefield successes which erased much of the gains made by the Union earlier in the year. Devastation of civilian property quickly became widespread and the organization of partisan units increased. General James Negley complained of guerillas around Columbia, Tennessee, while other bands sprang up near Union-occupied Fort Donelson, near Memphis, and in the Jackson Purchase area of western Kentucky. General Grenville Dodge reported from Trenton, Tennessee, that all 900 cavalymen under his command were busy chasing guerillas who "were determined to give us work." [8]

Not all guerrillas were Confederates and the South also had provost forces. In East Tennessee pro-Union guerrillas attempted to burn bridges on the Tennessee and Virginia Railroad. These partisans were apprehended and several were hanged. Throughout the war Confederate provost troops attempted to suppress expressions of Union sympathy and to quell Union-inspired guerrillas. This led to a true civil war which produced its own harsh moments as when Confederate provost troops moved into the Shelton Laurel community in the Great Smoky Mountains and executed a dozen citizens. [9]

Late autumn and early winter of 1862 was relatively quiet in Tennessee, home fires burned peacefully while the major armies maneuvered and fought in Kentucky. When these armies returned to Middle Tennessee to confront each other along the banks of Stones River the holocaust of war again involved the civilian population. As the Union Army of the Cumberland and the Confederate Army of Tennessee fought to a tactical draw at Murfreesboro in the last days of the year Confederate cavalry under Bedford Forrest, John Hunt Morgan, and Earl Van Dorn devastated Union supply lines in west and middle Tennessee and north Mississippi. As a result of these raids the opening months of 1863 saw the major forces remain in place but small units were constantly on the move and civilians were involved in looking for ways to do their part in the war effort. One of these civilians was Mrs. Clara Judd, widow of the Episcopal rector of Winchester, Tennessee. Mrs. Judd's parents lived in Minnesota but her adult children were employed by the Confederate government at Atlanta in the factory which produced army uniforms. Mrs. Judd somehow learned of a projected Confederate cavalry raid and went to Louisville, Kentucky, in advance of the move. In Louisville she purchased a machine which knitted socks and returned to Tennessee with the machine in order to be "captured" by the forthcoming Confederate raid. The knitting machine would then be sent to Atlanta to be copied by machinists working for the Confederate quartermaster department. Mrs. Judd was apprehended by Union authorities and was tried before a Military Commission which sentenced her to imprisonment in Camp Butler, a facility for prisoners of war. She was to remain there for the duration of the war. [10]

The tedium of winter encampment caused a deterioration in discipline in Northern ranks so that foraging parties became more disorderly and deteriorated into robbing expeditions which brought the soldiers some excitement but which wrought increased hardship on civilians, and which caused an increase in guerrilla activity. The inability of Andrew Johnson, the military governor of the state, to establish a functioning civil government, which would act as a rallying point for Unionist sentiment, only exacerbated the situation.

The beginning of the Vicksburg Campaign left West Tennessee to be a secondary theatre of operations while William Rosecrans and the Army of the Cumberland struggled to amass supplies and men before moving against the army of Braxton Bragg. The success of Rosecrans in clearing Middle Tennessee of large bodies of organized Confederates produced the immediate response of resistance by Confederate guerrillas supported by the occasional cavalry raid led by various Southern horsemen.

Foraging by Rosecrans's command was accompanied by the usual acts of violence which had long become routine as small groups of Union soldiers, led by junior officers and sergeants, found opportunity to express their hatred and contempt for Southern civilians. On July 8, 1863, Rosecrans noted that stragglers had been committing acts of robbery, that quartermasters were taking forage improperly, and he reminded his Corps commanders that "disloyalty does not forfeit the rights of humanity." At the same time Chief of Staff James A. Garfield noted "the lawlessness of our soldiers on foraging parties will make bushwhackers faster than any other thing." [11] These words proved to be prophetic.

The permanent presence of the United States army following the successful summer campaigns of 1863 created the opportunity for Tennessee Unionists to enlist in Union army units, and to use this service to settle old scores. One such unit was the 5th Tennessee Cavalry, U. S., sometimes styled the 1st Middle Tennessee Cavalry. As early as August 1863 Brigadier W. C. Whitaker, commanding the 1st Division, Granger's Corps, Army of the Cumberland, commented, "The Tennessee cavalry of Colonel Galbraith, the 5th Tennessee, is giving me excessive trouble, and worrying and plundering throughout the country whenever they go out. They are under no control or discipline at all as far as I can learn. Several instances have come to my attention of their insulting females." [12] In the Nineteenth Century "to insult" meant "to make an attack upon;" the 5th Tennessee had not used contemptuous language toward females, they had committed rape.

Such actions escalated the conflict with the guerrillas. In one small area of Tennessee, over a period of one month five irregulars, William Lemmons, Cyrus Lee Cathey, Jesse B. Neeren, Thomas R. West, and Benjamin West, attached Union supporters and soldiers near the village of Boons Hill a few miles west of Fayetteville on December 14th and 15th, 1863. In this foray Irwin C. McLean, a Unionist citizen, was killed and robbed of \$2,200, a horse, and clothing. On the same day another Union supporter, Samuel J. Wakefield, was killed. Soon after the guerrillas attacked near Shelbyville, killing William White, a citizen, and Grey Hyde, a member of the 5th Tennessee. William Smith, another trooper in the 5th, escaped with his life but lost his horse and weapons. Newcomb Thompson, another Unionist, lost ten mules in the same attack. On January 15, 1864, these same irregulars attacked a Union foraging party consisting of two wagons and a small escort. They drove off the escort, captured and burned the wagons, and made off with the horses. These guerrillas were captured in February and were sentenced to death by a Military Commission. The sentence was duly carried out on June 17, 1864. [13]

Only a few miles away, at the same time, another guerrilla band led by Burton Tolley was assaulting Union forage wagons near the village of Mulberry. On December 26 a foraging party of ten wagons and a guard of seventy men was sent to collect corn. The officer in charge divided the wagons and guards into several parties on reaching his objective in order to speed up the seizure of corn. One of the wagons and four men became separated from the nearest support by a distance of 200 yards. They were pounced on by four guerrillas who made off with the wagon, horses, and captives. On reaching a place safe from pursuit the prisoners were bound, shot, and thrown into Elk

River. One survived and returned to Union headquarters with the story of what had happened. [14] The response of the army was to send a detachment of mounted men to Mulberry but they returned empty-handed, the guerrillas had taken to the woods and hills. Since the guerrillas could not be caught the Union forces took as hostages John Tolley, the father of the guerrilla leader, Thomas Baley, Dr. Philander Whitier, and Newton Whitier, even though none of these men were thought to have had anything to do with the attack. Of course, since John was the father of Burton he was charged with “harboring” a guerrilla.[15] In frustration General George Thomas sent another detachment to Mulberry with instructions to seize \$30,000 worth of property to be used to indemnify the families of the dead Union soldiers. This mission was carried out, though the residents of the community filed a complaint that \$60,000 had actually been taken. [16] In terms of monetary values of the Twenty First Century this means over \$2,400,000 worth of money, livestock, and household goods was removed from a village of only 150 people. This must have left the residents destitute. Such actions led General Alpheus Williams, one of the Union heroes of Gettysburg, now in Tennessee with Slocum’s Corps of the Army of the Potomac, to comment in a letter to his daughter, “The making of fortunes I do not understand. I could have made one here if I had consented to have sold my self-respect and the good name of my children to the third and fourth generation. While somebody makes \$700,000, somebody else loses a corresponding sum.” [17] General Lovell Rousseau wrote in an official report dated December 31, 1863, that “From impressments, legal and illegal, and from thefts, there are very few horses, mules, or oxen left on the farms, and those that are left are almost worthless... Every mounted regiment that goes through the country takes what it pleases of stock, &c. . . Between the loyal and the disloyal no discrimination is made. Unless an order be made preventing future impressments and protecting the farmers little or no crops will be produced.” [18] With the end of the war nowhere in sight Tennessee civilians were already facing famine. The destitution of civilians in towns and cities caused the Union authorities to fear outbreaks of rioting which would require troops being dispatched from the fighting front to put down. This became one motive for setting up relief efforts in many towns which had Yankee garrisons. Such efforts existed in Nashville and other places in Tennessee. [19] However, this control of the population’s daily bread was also a method of controlling behavior and of punishing those suspected of continuing to harbor pro-Confederate sympathies. Shelbyville, Tennessee, was considered to be a “loyal” town, even being known as “Little Boston,” but Lt. Col. P. H. Sturdevant, acting as Provost of the town, found the politics of some of the women to be unacceptable. The Colonel recommended that Mrs. R. W. Wallace, Misses V. and M. Matthews, and Miss Selica Whitthorn be denied access to the commissary and that their rations be stopped. General Slocum, commanding the XII Army Corps which occupied the area at the time agreed with this suggestion and these women were left without food. [20] This incident has many duplicates in the Union Provost Marshal’s Files.

Not all those fighting behind Union lines were irregulars. One of the most effective opponents of Union occupation was John M. Hughes, a major in the 25th Tennessee Infantry. Wounded at Murfreesboro in December 1862 he had been at home recovering from his injuries when the Union advance overran his home territory. Recovering in the late summer of 1863, Hughes organized recruits and other recovered wounded men and

undertook to disrupt Union garrisons in Tennessee and Kentucky. Beginning in the fall of that year Hughes attacked Glasgow, Monticello, and Scottsville, Kentucky, before falling back into Tennessee where he attacked Livingston, defeating the 13th Kentucky Cavalry, U. S. Although Hughes was a regularly commissioned officer in the Confederate forces he was declared an outlaw and was placed under threat of hanging if captured. This did not happen because Hughes and his men defeated all those sent against them, including the 1st Tennessee Cavalry, led by the son of "Parson" Brownlow, and the 5th Tennessee commanded by Colonel Galbraith and Lt. Col. Stokes. By April this successful band of raiders left the mountains of Tennessee to rejoin the Confederate Army of Tennessee at Dalton, Georgia, taking with them 95 new recruits who were fully armed and leaving 3,500 stand of arms in the hands of guerrillas.[21]

One of the Union officers notorious for harshness toward civilians and for killing prisoners was General Eleazer A. Paine. Although a graduate of West Point, Class of 1839, Paine had resigned from the army to practice law and had become active in politics in Illinois. Paine had been commissioned a Brigadier of Volunteers and had commanded at Cairo, Illinois, and had seen combat at New Madrid, Island No. 10, and at Corinth. During his tenure of office at Cairo Paine had gained a reputation as a "hanging officer" when he ordered that for every one of his men killed by guerrillas two Confederate prisoners would be hanged. Because of a degree of sympathy for the South in the Cairo area Paine was also very strict on the civilian population. [22] In the winter of 1863-64, in keeping with the general practice of United States Army officers commanding posts well behind the battle-lines, Paine began a policy of pronounced harshness in an attempt to suppress guerrillas. Following a guerrilla attack which destroyed the bridge across Goose Creek at a point between Hartsville and Carthage a fifteen year-old boy named Lafayette Hughes was arrested on suspicion of being a participant. The soldiers who arrested Hughes killed him before they reached the post stockade at Gallatin. Fleming Sanders, age seventeen, was arrested and confined to the town jail for several weeks before being taken out of town some five miles and summarily shot. No trial had been held. [23]

The Union soldiers under Paine's command had no apparent qualms about their actions. A member of the 129th Illinois wrote to his sister that "We made a number of them bite the dust and we burned a lot of houses and distilleries." [24] A few days later Company G, 129th Illinois, went to the house of a citizen about fifteen miles from Gallatin and arrested a man while he was sitting at dinner with his family. The man was taken into the yard and, in the presence of his wife and children, shot dead. The house was then burned, leaving the widow and three children with nothing. No evidence had been collected against the man but Paine approved the act, saying, "it served the damned son of a bitch right." [25] This attitude of "no mercy" extended to prisoners. General John Hunt Morgan made life miserable for Union commanders in upper Tennessee and Kentucky, so much so that his men became objects of extermination. Just before Christmas 1863 members of the 71st Ohio, part of Paine's command, executed a lieutenant and seven enlisted men of Morgan's command. These men were not accused of any crime but were prisoners of war. [26] Alfred T. Dalton came home from the Confederate army, professing himself ready to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. Before he

could take the oath Paine arrested him at his home and shot him on the spot. The same day another young man, about sixteen years old, was given a drum-head trial in Gallatin and hanged that evening. Only a few days later a Confederate soldier was removed from the post stockade and taken out of town on “a worn out horse.” He was given a five minute head start and then was pursued by Union soldiers on fresh horses until caught whereupon he was shot. Members of Paine’s staff and their wives were included in the party which chased the murdered man. [27] These sadistic actions were not unknown to Paine’s superior officers. General Ulysses Grant, the senior U. S. officer in the western theater, commented that Paine was “entirely unfit to command a post” [28] but no orders were issued restraining his actions or punishing Paine for violating the laws of war. Instead, Paine was transferred to Tullahoma to protect the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, the supply line for Sherman’s move into Georgia. In Tullahoma Paine continued his killing of civilians. Major General Robert Milroy, Paine’s commanding officer, wrote to his wife “General Paine has had about two hundred guerrillas shot since he has been stationed here. It is not often that his men bring in any that they capture, and if they do, and Paine ascertains them to be guerillas beyond a doubt he orders them quietly walked outside the pickets and shot and no report is made of the matter and nothing is said about it. Two of them have been shot that way since I come here. I would not have known anything of it had I not happened on their dead bodies in riding out.” [29] Paine was a personal friend of Abraham Lincoln.

At the same time General Paine was being sent to Tullahoma General Nathan Bedford Forrest was leading his cavalry north from Mississippi in a raid which would reach the banks of the Ohio River at Paducah, Kentucky. In the course of this raid the best-known confrontation between Confederates and United States Provost troops would occur, creating a controversy which echoes in Civil War history to this day. As Forrest completed his incursion into West Tennessee he was informed that the Union troops at Fort Pillow had been engaging in actions which had become routine for the U. S. occupation garrisons but which were disastrous for the civilians who experienced them. It was reported to Forrest that Major William F. Bradford, 13th Tennessee Cavalry, U. S., and his men had been engaging in “robbing people of their horses, mules, beef cattle, beds, plate, wearing apparel, money and every possible movable article of value, besides venting upon the wives and daughters of Southern soldiers the most opprobrious and obscene epithets, with more than one extreme outrage upon the persons of these victims of their hate and lust.” [30] On arrival at the position Forrest found it also occupied by members of the 6th U. S. Colored Heavy Artillery. After spending most of the day of April 12 maneuvering against the fortified position and calling on the garrison to surrender, a demand which was refused more than once, Forrest ordered an assault. The garrison of about 600 suffered about 280 casualties. Immediately Union spokesmen claimed there had been a “massacre” of men who had surrendered, Confederate authorities denied there had been a surrender and that the garrison had continued to try to escape. Some things are seen quite clearly through the clouds of controversy which still surround the event—after two years of vengeful war human life was a cheap commodity in Tennessee; vengeance was a general rule of behavior. [31] It cannot be argued that the Union troops “had it coming” because of their previous actions but putting the affair at Fort Pillow into the context of events which had existed behind the lines since May 1862

challenges the easy explanation that the Confederate troops were motivated solely by racial hostility and anger at neighbors who supported the “other” side. Fort Pillow is best understood as one in a long series of vengeful events in which neither side has the luxury of claiming moral superiority.

As the spring of 1864 progressed the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad became the supply line for Sherman’s move toward Atlanta. Every day ten trains, each comprised of ten box cars loaded with ordinance supplies, left Nashville for Chattanooga. Of course, Confederate guerrillas swarmed toward the railroad. Sherman could feed his troops off the countryside if forced to do so, but the guerrillas knew minie balls did not grow in Georgia. The ordinance supplies were vital to Sherman’s effort. The railroad crossed the Duck, Elk, and Tennessee rivers and passed through a 2,200 foot long tunnel at Cowan. All these locations were heavily guarded and were safe from guerrilla attacks. Creek bridges, culverts, and water tanks were easier targets for irregular troops. In an effort to counter such raids orders were issued forbidding any civilian to live within eight hundred yards of the railroad except in villages and towns garrisoned by the United States army. All houses, farm buildings, fences, trees and brush within this zone were to be burned and anyone found in the cleared area would be shot on sight. Attacks persisted despite these measures. Into this situation came one of the most notorious of the Union provost commanders, Major General Robert H. Milroy.

Robert Milroy, a native of Indiana, was a man frustrated in his desire to be a soldier. He had made an unsuccessful attempt to be admitted to West Point and had been forced to delay his education until age 24 when he enrolled in the Norwich Military University in Vermont. Milroy raised a regiment of troops for service in the war with Mexico but arrived at the front too late to see active service. During the decade of the 1850’s he became an abolitionist and an early political supporter of Abraham Lincoln. In 1861 he raised the first regiment from Indiana and was made its colonel. Assigned to western Virginia, Milroy participated in some of the early Union successes in that area but was promoted beyond his level of competence in early 1862. During the Valley Campaign he was soundly drubbed by “Stonewall” Jackson, earned the scorn of his fellow Union officers at Second Manassas, and was trounced by Richard Ewell at Winchester, Virginia, when the Army of Northern Virginia moved north in the summer of 1863. A court-martial ruled that Milroy had behaved most unwisely at Winchester but he had not disobeyed any orders so he was merely sent to the rear instead of being dismissed from the service. After pulling numerous political strings Milroy was named to command in a rear area and was sent to Tullahoma.

Soon after Milroy took command in Tullahoma a guerrilla named Robert Blackwell, former sheriff of Bedford County, raided the nearby town of Shelbyville. Bottling up the small Union garrison in the fortified railroad depot, Blackwell and his men stripped the town of army property and looted the sutlers doing business with the U. S. forces. In the general area of Shelbyville Blackwell led about 280 men. In an attempt to learn where Blackwell had his lair Milroy sent Eleazar Paine to Fayetteville in Lincoln County on June 15, 1864, to collect information. Paine’s method was to seize hostages and announce that the men would be summarily shot unless citizens provided information

about Blackwell. At 3:00 p. m., his deadline having passed, General Paine took Thomas Massey, William Pickett, Franklin Burroughs, and Dr. J. W. Miller a short distance up the road from the county courthouse and ordered them shot. Dr. Miller was released by a sympathetic lieutenant who recognized Miller as a fellow Mason. John R. Massey rode up to Paine just before the killings took place and volunteered to take the place of his younger brother, Thomas. This offer was accepted and three men, Pickett, Massey, and Burroughs were shot dead and their bodies left lying in the public road. [32] On September 27 Blackwell struck back. With eleven men he entered Shelbyville, surrounded the Union garrison and convinced the Union garrison of 21 men to surrender. The captives were taken south a few miles to Fayetteville and there were divided into two groups. Eleven men who were considered “more respectable” were paroled but ten who were deserters from the Confederate army or who were native Tennesseans, were taken to the top of Wells Hill and killed, their bodies left lying in the public road. To the breast of each man was affixed a note, “Remember Massey.” [33] Unable to apprehend Blackwell and his men Milroy ordered Mrs. Mary A. Blackwell and her two children to be arrested and sent south of Union lines into Georgia.[34] Such acts of exiling were not uncommon and appear frequently in the Provost records.

Along the Nashville and Louisville Railroad guerrillas led by Ellis Harper continued to plague the Union authorities. Like all the guerrillas Harper depended on the support and cooperation of the civilians in the area where he operated. If support was not forthcoming silence was required. Harvey Travelstead of Simpson County, Kentucky, just above the Tennessee state line, informed Union authorities of some of Harper’s movements. Harper and a small band came to the Smyrna Cumberland Presbyterian Church while Travelstead was attending worship, took him out of the church, and killed him. At about the same time Harper went to the home of Hensley Harris near Pilot Knob in Simpson County to impress on Mr. Harris the need for silence. Mrs. Harris was at church when Simpson arrived and Mr. Harris refused to open the door when called on to do so. Harper, or one of his men, fired through the door and the bullet struck Mr. Harris’s son, age three, killing him. Enraged, Harris ran out the door with a gun only to be shot down himself. Harper and his men expressed regret over killing the child but they took potatoes which were cooking on the stove before leaving. The severely wounded Mr. Harris was tended by his slaves until his wife returned from church and would survive to serve in the Kentucky legislature. [35] Near Smithville, Tennessee, another band of guerrillas was making daily life hell for both Union troops and Unionist citizens. Raids on farms, thefts of property, and killings were common in the area with both sides seeking vengeance against the other. In July 1864 the guerrilla leader, H. T. “Pomp” Kiersey, was killed in an ambush. He lacked four months of reaching his seventeenth birthday.

In response to these and similar acts, the Union provost, Brigadier General Stephen G. Burbridge, issued orders that “Whenever an unarmed Union citizen is murdered, four guerrillas will be selected from the prisoners in the hands of the military authorities, and publicly shot to death in the most convenient place near the scene of the outrage.” The *Louisville Journal* of August 25, 1864, reported: *Charles Clary, Lieutenant of the 12th Kentucky Cavalry, who with a detail of ten men, on the morning of the 20th left the city in*

charge of four guerrillas taken from the Military Prison, with orders to proceed to Franklin, Kentucky, and there execute them in retaliation for the murder of Union citizens, reports to Col. Fairleigh that he has returned to Louisville, having faithfully obeyed his orders. He states that he arrived in Franklin at two o'clock P. M. and found Lieutenant Adams there with a detachment of twenty men from the 26th Kentucky Volunteers. Soon after he received a dispatch from headquarters in Louisville, directing him to defer the execution of J. H. Cave until further orders. At 6 o'clock in the evening he ordered the two remaining prisoners, J. Bloom and W. B. McClasson, to prepare to meet their doom. Both refused to make any confessions. McClasson claimed that th was innocent of any crime. Bloom was morose and spoke but little. . . The Lieutenant placed Bloom on one side of the courthouse and McClasson on the other. Both of the doomed men appeared calm and collected. . . The order was given to fire and the report of musketry rang clear and startling upon the air. The two prisoners fell forward, bloody corpses. [36] Bloodthirsty as the actions of Harper had been those of the provost were scarcely less so. Neither of the men executed had been part of Harper's guerrilla band; indeed, J. H. Bloom was a member of Company I, 15th Tennessee Infantry and McClasson was enlisted in Company E, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry. J. H. Cave was a member of Company B, 1st Kentucky Cavalry and was said to have been reprieved because he was a Mason. [37]

A considerable portion of the population of Tennessee was African American. The simple view of the war would hold that this was the group to benefit the most from the conflict since the war would spell the end of slavery. That is clear to us but to the African Americans then alive the war was quite confusing and they reacted to the chaotic conditions in Tennessee in a variety of ways. In Shelbyville Gabriel Maupin left his plantation voluntarily to go south as a refugee, leaving his slaves to care for the property and to support themselves. Another landowner, Dr. Samuel Whitson, tried to drive the slaves from the plantation. Andrew, Abner, and Ben Maupin, presenting themselves as slaves of the absent Gabriel Maupin, laid their case before the local provost officer who sent their appeal on to Department Headquarters in Nashville. A Treasury agent, J. P. Dillon, issued instructions to the provost that "you will also restore to their home the former slaves of said Maupin. But said farm will be leased to them under instructions which will hereafter be given." [38] This result is what one expects to hear given the belief that slavery was the sole cause of the war and that the purpose of the Union army was to abolish slavery. The real story, like the causes of the war, is much more complex. The motives of those who supported the Union were mixed; in Tennessee some slave owners were pro-Union because they understood slavery to be firmly supported by the Constitution; many Union soldiers shared the racial prejudices common to their day and, to them, ending slavery was a means to the end of weakening the Confederacy, not an end in itself. For the Freedmen the sudden transition to freedom presented temptations to which some African Americans yielded and so entered into criminal activity. In May 1865 in Lincoln County a military commission was convened to try Robvert Neaven, listed as "colored", who had gone on a crime spree. Neaven had broken into the smokehouse of John Roach and had taken 16 gallons of whiskey and later he entered the house of Clemy Woodward and took 27 yards of cloth. Found guilty of both charges, Neaven was sent to Tullahoma to be imprisoned. [39] On July 4, 1865, William Bonner,

late of the Confederate cavalry, came to the Provost in Fayetteville to report that his field hands would not work because they considered the day to be a holiday. The provost sent two enlisted soldiers from the garrison to the Bonner farm where they apprehended the leader of the reluctant workers and flogged him. [40] The relationship between the African Americans of Tennessee and the United States Provost would reflect the confusing, chaotic conditions which wracked the society at that time.

The social chaos of the closing months of the war is reflected in the lists of “disloyal” persons turned in to the Provost in every garrison town occupied by the United States army. The bitterness of years of vengeful warfare caused neighbor to turn against neighbor to seek revenge for wrongs real or imagined. Some of these wrongs involved the divided loyalties of Tennesseans for pro-Union sentiment was found across the state, not merely in East Tennessee as the stereotype holds. Some of the wrongs predated the war and reflected disagreements over property boundaries or other civil issues. Sometimes people were labeled “disloyal” simply because they were competitors in the same occupation. In all these cases, the person informing on his neighbors knew that for most Union provosts accusation was enough to have a person judged guilty.

One example of the numerous lists turned in to Provosts was provided by Moses Pittman who lived in Franklin County. In December 1864 Pittman sent to General Robert Milroy a list containing the names 58 of his neighbors, male and female, who Pittman charged with various acts of disloyalty. Milroy made comments on the list in his own handwriting stating that these people should have their farm buildings and houses destroyed and that many of them should be shot on sight. [41] This memorandum became the basis of official action on January 7, 1865, when Milroy issued orders to Captain William H. Lewis, Company A, 42nd Missouri Volunteers, directing him to carry out drastic military action against civilians. The order read:

Sir: You will proceed to the residences of the persons herein named and deal with them in accordance with the following instructions. In all cases where the residences of the persons are ordered to be destroyed you will observe the following previous to setting them on fire. You will first search the houses and premises to see if they have any articles belonging to the U. S. Govt or that are contraband of war, which you will bring away in case any are found. Also all or any of the following articles that may be found belonging to the aforesaid persons.

First All horses, hogs, sheep, cattle, and any other animals or articles of whatever description that may be valuable to the U. S. Govt especially those that are valuable to the Quartermaster, Commissary and Hospital Department.

Second All stoves and stovepipes of whatever description and all kitchen utensils, Queens ware, beds, bedding, knives, forks & etc also all chairs, sofas, sociable lounges and everything of the character of household furniture.

Third All windows, sash, glass, looking glasses, carpets, & etc.

Fourth Every article of household furniture which you do not bring with you must be destroyed or burned with the house.

Fifth All barns, stables, smoke houses, or any other outbuilding of any description whatsoever or any building or article that could possibly be of any benefit or comfort to Rebels or Bushwhackers their friends or any person aiding, abetting, or sympathizing with Rebels, Bushwhackers & etc which could be used for subsistence for man or beast will be destroyed and burned.

Sixth All animals forage or other articles brought in by you will be turned over to Lieut J. W. Raymond AAQm on this Staff to be subject to the order of Maj Genl Milroy to be disposed of as he may think proper, taking a receipt therefore from Lieut Raymond.

Seventh The train accompanying will be subject to your orders, together with all the persons connected with it, whether soldiers or civilians and you will cause any of them who may be guilty of committing depredations upon Loyal citizens or their property to be arrested and you will not yourself suffer those under your Command to commit any trespass, or do any damage to Persons or property except those specified in this order.

Eighth You will burn the houses of the following named persons, take any of the articles named above that they may have, together with all forage and grains belonging to them that you can bring away which may be useful to the U. S. govt for military purposes or otherwise and will give no receipt of any kind whatsoever.

Seven names follow this section of the order.

Ninth The following persons will be shot in addition to suffering in the manner prescribed in paragraph #8.

Four names appear in this section of the order.

Tenth The following persons have committed murder and if caught will be hung to the first tree in front of their door and be allowed to hang there for an indefinite period. You will assure yourself that they are dead before leaving them also if at their residence they will be stripped of everything as per the above instructions and then burned. If Willis Taylor is caught he will be turned over to Moses Pittman and he will be allowed to kill him. [42]

The implications of paragraph #10 are chilling. If a person is hanged with a hangman's noose the fall snaps the third cervical vertebrae and death is instantaneous. The purpose of leaving a person hanging for "an indefinite period" is because they have been hanged with a slip knot, leaving the victim to strangle to death. This slow, agonizing process was being witnessed by the wives and children of the victim since the execution was happening at "the first tree in front of their door." Neither was this the only instance of such vengeance. On February 7, 1865, Milroy issued identical orders listing 18 persons under paragraph eight and 34 persons were ordered executed without trial under paragraph nine. [43] Similar orders are to be found in the area controlled by virtually every Union provost officer throughout Tennessee.

It should be clearly understood that these executions, without trial and without evidence, were carried out by officers and men of the United States army, acting on written orders issued by those in command. Copies of these orders were sent up the line to Departmental Headquarters and were forwarded from there to the War Department in Washington. In Washington these orders were reviewed by the Secretary of War and by the President of the United States, as evidenced by their signatures of endorsement on the papers. No orders ever came back down the chain of command from Washington demanding that these killings of Tennessee civilians cease. Occasional attempts to restrain men such as Milroy, Paine, and Burbridge were weak and ineffective. The policy of targeting for death civilians in Tennessee, and throughout the South, had implicit approval from the highest levels of the United States government. Without extensive further study of the Provost records it cannot be estimated how many civilians in the Confederacy were massacred but the number is large. While the actions of Confederates who engaged in unlawful killings of black Union troops and their officers have long been

the subject of historical discussion the unlawful killings of larger numbers of Southern civilians has been ignored. Yet, the evidence of such killings is recorded by the hand of those who ordered the murders and is preserved in the archives of the government in whose name they served.

For Tennessee, the Civil War was an experience in the exercise of vengeance by each side against the other. For Tennessee, as for all the Confederate states, the opportunities for vengeance lay largely in the hands of the Union supporters. Experiencing vengeance at the hands of the United States Army and pro-Union neighbors reinforced the feelings of being attacked and desiring revenge among Confederate Tennesseans. When they sought vengeance against Yankee occupiers and Unionist neighbors the cycle of vengeance escalated. The result was that the end of the military conflict in 1865 left Tennessee in a state of social chaos. That chaos did not cease when the Confederate armies surrendered. Reconstruction was a continuation of the war-time cycle of vengeance and response. The actions of the Klan, Brownlow's militia, and the Union League should be understood as the final act of that cycle.

“When they came and took away my sons and my husband---and I have never seen any of them since—I knew many of those who did this for they were my neighbors. When they returned to burn the house, leaving me and my daughters with nothing, I knew many of them for they were my neighbors. How can we ever be neighbors again?” This quote was broadcast by National Public Radio in 2003 in an interview with a Kurdish woman living in Iraq. The same words could well have been uttered by many women in Tennessee in the years after the Civil War. Truly, the home fires had been in the line of fire.