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Life in an Occupied City: Women in Winchester, Virginia During the Civil War

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History at Virginia Commonwealth University

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Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank many people. First I am grateful to my thesis committee, Dr. Ted Tunnell, Dr. Sarah Meacham, Dr. Warren Hofstra, and Dr. Timothy Thurber for their guidance, which has been instrumental in the completion of this project. Dr. Thurber, in particular, deserves thanks for serving as a committee member on such short notice. Likewise, I would like to thank my mentoring professor Dr. Sascha Auberbach for his flexibility and understanding concerning my time limitations. I would also like to acknowledge Rebecca Ebert, archivist at the Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives in Winchester, Virginia, whose diligence in finding answers to my questions has helped me to give voice to the amazing women of Winchester.

I would like to thank my parents Robert and Barbara Hallgren and Charles and Margaret Ping for their continuous love and moral support. Finally, I owe special thanks to my husband, Jeremy, for always believing in me. Without his tireless editing, infinite patience, and unending devotion this project could never have been completed.

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Abstract

LIFE IIN AN OCCUPIED CITY: WOMEN IN WINCHESTER DURING THE CIVIL WAR

By Laura J. Ping, M.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2007

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This thesis examines the homefront experience of middle class, white women living in Winchester, Virginia during the Civil War. The experience of women in Winchester was unique because of Winchester's proximity to both the Union and Confederate capitals. Although the majority of Winchester's women were Confederate supporters a significant minority of the population remained loyal to the Union. Winchester citizens' divided status was further complicated by numerous occupations of the town by both armies. This thesis argues that in order to cope with wartime hardships women's concepts of patriotism changed as homefront morale waned. While early in the war women's patriotism reflected their support of the military, as the war progressed women began defining themselves as either Unionists or Confederates in order to maintain a sense of self. These wartime identities centered on the legitimacy of a particular cause and the vilification of the "enemy" thereby creating a clear line between good and evil to help women cope with the death and destruction of war. Winchester's various wartime occupations, however, undermined women's emotional justifications for war as contact with soldiers humanized the enemy and skewed the battle lines.

Introduction: A Perspective on Winchester Women's History

On May 25, 1862 Laura Lee woke at daybreak to the sounds of cannons echoing throughout the streets of Winchester, Virginia. Lee and her family had anticipated a battle, because Union cavalry and infantry had spent the previous night marching the streets of Winchester. Yet the confirmation that Winchester would be filled with the sights and sounds of death horrified Lee. Cannonading signified that the battle was much nearer to the town than she had originally anticipated. Frightened, Lee did not get out of bed immediately. She lay there, silently tortured by the dread that her loved ones might be dying on the nearby battlefield.¹

In another Winchester home Julia Chase lay in bed listening to the battle rage around the town. She and her family had gone to bed early the night before, but the noises made by the Union Cavalry as they moved supplies and wagons down the street had prevented anyone from sleeping. Around six that morning soldiers came flooding into Winchester. The Confederate Army had forced the Union troops to retreat into the town. The battle erupted into a street brawl as the defeated Union Army was chased out of Winchester. Civilians poured into the streets to witness the gory event, one man went so far as to shoot Federal soldiers as they retreated.²

At the Lee home, Laura and her family joined neighbors in front of their homes and watched the ghastly scene as the wounded, some who were “dreadfully mangled with blood streaming,” were carried down the street on the way to the hospital. The fortunate were transported by ambulances, but those who were not so lucky were carried on

¹ Michael G. Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided: The Civil War Diaries of Julia Chase and Laura Lee*, (Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2002), 38-41 (L. Lee Diary).

² *Ibid.*, 38-41 (Chase Diary).

crossed guns or aided by fellow soldiers. Nearby one woman offered food to the famished men as they passed in front of her home.³

As the Lee family stood aghast at the images passing before their door, Julia Chase and her family fled their home. Nearby warehouses, including one that contained munitions, had been set on fire. Fearing that their home too would burn if the fires spread, the Chases grabbed the family silver and all the money in the house and darted into the street. Not knowing where to go, they ran through Winchester searching for somewhere to take cover from the bullets that were flying in all directions. Rushing down the street towards the hotel, the Chase family was abruptly stopped by the Confederate Army which was “running pell mell with their horrid yells...the guns and shell firing in every direction.” Terrified, the family turned and ran the opposite direction, finally finding shelter at the home of Mr. Knott.⁴

This battle, the First Battle of Winchester, resulted in a Confederate victory and the occupation of the town by the Army of Northern Virginia until June 1, 1862. Although Laura Lee and Julia Chases’ experiences during this battle were both horrific, their interpretations of the episode were contradictory. Laura Lee, a staunch supporter of secession and the southern cause reflected, “That Sunday was a wonderful, day, one to be remembered to the end of our lives.” Forgotten were the bloody men dying in the streets and the terror that she had felt earlier that morning. Instead, Lee saw the Battle of Winchester as a “deliverance from so many dangers.” Her beloved Confederate Army

³ Ibid., 38-41 (L. Lee Diary).

⁴ Ibid., 38-41 (Chase Diary).

had pushed the Union Army from the town thereby, according to Lee, affording its residents protection.⁵

Julia Chase, an adamant Unionist, saw the First Battle of Winchester and Confederate occupation of the town differently. “We are afraid to hear a step, or the bell ring, & keep the door and gate fastened all the time & shall while the army is here.” To Chase the “residents in town have become demons almost,” and she feared the actions they would take against her family for their northern loyalties. For Julia Chase, the Confederate Army offered no semblance of protection, and she longed for the day when the Union Army would retake possession of Winchester.⁶

Julia Chase and Laura Lee’s descriptions of the First Battle of Winchester exemplify that despite their opposing political views, the accounts of Unionist and Confederate women mirrored each other. Despite their loyalties to different flags, Winchester’s women were united through their wartime experiences, although they continued to view one another with hostility. Throughout the South, life on the homefront was made difficult by the absence of men and supply shortages, but in Winchester continuous military occupation and divided loyalties complicated these struggles.

As the war progressed, however, women’s concept of identity was made difficult by their waning patriotism. By 1863 neither Julia Chase nor Laura Lee was able to voice complete relief at the sight of her army. Although women fervently remained loyal to one side or the other, they had learned that the armies were unable to protect them from destitution. Their willingness to sacrifice in the name of the military had become uncertain. Instead women focused their priorities on supplying food and other necessities

⁵ Ibid., 38-41 (L. Lee Diary).

⁶ Ibid., 38-41 (Chase Diary).

for their families. Without the protection of men, Winchester's women took on new roles as providers and protectors of their homes.

Still, the voices of Winchester women suggest that in order to cope with the psychological effects of war brought on by continuous military occupation, rampant death, and changing race relations, they clung to their identities as either Unionists or Confederates. While this contradicts the assertion that by the later stages of the war women were less patriotic, diaries and correspondence describe changing definitions of patriotism. Early in the war women's patriotism reflected their support of the military, but as the war progressed women began defining themselves as either Unionists or Confederates in order to maintain a sense of self. These wartime identities centered on the legitimacy of a particular cause and the vilification of the "enemy" thereby creating a clear line between good and evil to help women cope with the death and destruction of war. Winchester's various wartime occupations, however, undermined women's emotional justifications for war as contact with soldiers humanized the enemy and skewed the battle lines.

Winchester has been overlooked among southern women's histories. During and immediately following the Civil War, southern novelists glorified the sacrifices made by women. Works such as those of Augusta Jane Evans celebrated the sacrifices of women during wartime, in particular women's ability to be "useful" by sacrificing loved ones to the battlefield. Similar works, such as those of Ellen Glasgow, developed melodramatic plots peppered with "malevolent villains, wicked turncoats, and sterling heroes." These works, although fictional, glorified women as nurturers and saints who selflessly stepped away from their womanly places to aid their country and their men. By glorifying the

roles of women these authors directory contributed to the ideology of the Lost Cause, which would dominate southern memory of the war in the late 1800's.⁷

The Lost Cause suggested that despite its defeat, the southern cause had been a virtuous one. Narratives of the Lost Cause attempted to rationalize the South's role in starting the Civil War. Based on the assumption that African-Americans were inferior to white southerners, these fabrications used paternalism to create an image of happy slaves, loving masters, and a tranquil society that was destroyed by the aggression of northern abolitionists. Historian C. Vann Woodward argues that southern writers used these images to diminish societal guilt over slavery while at the same time justifying segregation. Postwar southern histories used similar images by depicting the South as a victim of Yankee aggression and Confederate women as heroines and saviors. Images of women's selfless giving to the wounded and the sick in the face of the enemy provided a stark contrast to demonic images of Union generals like William Sherman, Robert Milroy, and Philip Sheridan.⁸

Images of women as victims of the Civil War were perpetuated by wartime diaries and memoirs which began to appear immediately after the war. Southern women's remembrances of the war are invaluable for their accounts of race and gender relations and general life during the war, and their biases are equally important for the insight they give into the southern mindset during the Civil War. These diaries, most famously the account of Mary Boykin Chestnut, describe life during the Civil War as a

⁷ The Lost Cause Ideology dominated Postbellum literature at the turn of the twentieth century by claiming that the Confederate Cause had been noble, its women martyrs, and its leaders chivalrous. This literary movement also claimed that the South had been defeated in the Civil War by the North's superior numbers rather than their advanced military. Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," *Journal of American History* (March 1990), 1217-1218; Amy Thompson McCandless, "The Postbellum Novel," in *The History of Southern Women's Literature.* ed. Carolyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.), 141-146.

⁸ C. Vann Woodward, "The Anti Slavery Myth," *American Scholar*, (Spring, 1962), 312.

complex social network and exemplify women's changing viewpoints of war as their entries go from hopeful to distraught. Yet many of these diaries, specifically Chestnut's work, were revised after the war in preparation for publication and used rhetoric that glorified the southern cause and Antebellum way of life.⁹

Works such as Chestnut's diary set the precedent for female writers in the years following the Civil War. Historian Jane Turner Censer has noted that Postbellum women's writings often focused on the North and northerners. The poverty of many southern cities following the war made northern cities fascinating. Yet there was another set of female writers, which Censer calls "memorialists," who refused to let go of the idea that northerners were wicked. Among the most famous of these memorialist authors is Winchester's Mary Tucker Magill.¹⁰

An educator, Magill was one of the few women to write about wartime Winchester immediately after the war. Her 1870 novel, *Women, or Chronicles of the Late War* cemented Winchester's place in the literature of the Lost Cause. Magill, who founded a boarding school in Winchester, presented her work as historical fiction based on her experiences in the town during the war. This work, although valuable for Magill's evident personal experiences, vilified Union soldiers, in particular the generals in charge of Winchester during periods of occupation. In this way, Magill's novel reflects diaries kept by Winchester women. Similar to the writings of her wartime neighbors, Magill

⁹ Walter Sullivan, "Civil War Diaries and Memoirs." in *The History of Southern Women's Literature.* ed. Carolyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.), 109-118; Elizabeth Muhlenfeld, "Mary Chestnut, *The History of Southern Women's Literature.*" ed. Carolyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.), 119-122.

¹⁰ Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 246-247.

slandered Union generals such as General Robert Milroy, who commanded Winchester in 1863, for their harsh treatment of Confederate residents.¹¹

Mary Tucker Magill's thinly veiled commentary on wartime Winchester gave readers their first glimpse into what life had been like in the Shenandoah Valley during the war. Magill's work vilified Union soldiers while making martyrs out of Winchester women. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the importance of this work was overshadowed by accounts of soldiers' experiences as the Lost Cause moved away from the sacrifices of women and began to focus on masculine history.

Although Civil War works based on southern women's experience found some popularity at the turn of the nineteenth century, they were unable to compete with the popularity of masculine-based histories. In the 1880's and 1890's literature depicting the Civil War shifted from feminized accounts to masculine ones. Historian Alice Fahs argues that this shift in popularity can be traced to the growth of groups such as the Grand Army of the Republic, which sought to reclaim the military experience of the war. The commonality of military experiences between the North and the South was advocated in literature to reconcile the country to what Theodore Roosevelt referred to as a wartime "brotherhood." Masculine rhetoric emphasized the valor of both Union and Confederate soldiers, and by the end of the nineteenth century, woman's histories had all but been forgotten as stories of soldiers and their heroism began to dominate history and literature.¹²

¹¹ Mary Tucker Magill, *Women, or Chronicles of the Late War* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1871), 203-215.

¹² Alice Fahs, "The Feminized Civil War: Gender, Northern Popular Literature, and the Memory of War, 1861-1900," *The Journal of American History* 85 (March 1999), 1464-1465.

Renewed interest in the military experience of the Civil War undermined images of women's wartime contributions as portrayed by Augusta Jane Evans and Mary Tucker Magill. Instead women were portrayed as domineering mothers and fretting sisters. One of the most popular of these masculine Civil War stories was William Taylor Adams, who wrote under the pen name Oliver Optic. In 1888 Adams began writing Civil-War stories for boys. These stories, while popular, worked to remove women from Civil War history altogether. Throughout his stories, Adams presented women as overprotective and fussy maternal figures. Gone were the mothers of the Lost Cause two decades earlier whose support had inspired their sons to enlist in war and whose loving touches had nursed war wounds.¹³

Although women continued to appear in some histories, works such as Adams' muted their contributions. Those books that did include women as their main subjects fell victim to crude generalizations and wartime mythology. In the best cases these histories depicted only women's roles as caregivers and teachers and overlooked daily experiences. Yet historian Jane E. Schultz has noted in her study on Civil War nursing that late nineteenth century histories ignored the presence of female nurses, insisting instead that women's participation in the war had been strictly secondary to that of men in arms.¹⁴

Among early twentieth century histories to depict women is Matthew Page's Andrews 1920 work *Women of the South in War Times*. Unlike earlier histories, which

¹³ Alice Fahs, "Remembering the Civil War in Children's Literature of the 1880's and 1890's." in *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, eds. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 84.

¹⁴ Fahs, "Remembering the Civil War in Children's Literature of the 1880's and 1890's," 84; Jane E. Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1-3.

generalized the homefront experience, Andrews formatted this book as a compilation of biographical sketches, interviews, and diary entries. His goal was to present women's struggles not as efforts to protect slavery, as he claimed many other historians had, but as an effort to preserve the Union. According to Andrews, "What man physically endures in the shock of battles is endured many fold in the minds and thoughts of the women left at home. The compensatory exhilaration of conflict is not vouchsafed to women. In the wounds and death of loved ones, she suffers agonies that the soldier knows but indirectly." Andrews' book attempted to reincorporate women into Civil War history by using their own words. The work was undermined, however, by Andrews's depiction of women's wartime efforts, not as survival techniques or methods of political assertion, but as demonstrations of exemplary methods for running a household with few resources.¹⁵

Andrews' work perpetuated the belief that women's wartime struggles were motivated by their need to sacrifice for their men. It was not until 1936, when Francis Butler Simkins and James Welch Patton published *Women of the Confederacy* that an objective, scholarly study of Civil War women emerged. The majority of early twentieth century Civil War histories overlooked the contributions of women. Winchester women's experiences had also disappeared from the history books in favor of discussions concerning the town's military importance. Simkins and Patton's work differed from these earlier histories by including discussions of both the homefront and the fighting front and arguing that in order to understand the Confederacy one must understand the homefront experience. The authors examined a broad range of issues affecting women including morale, economic hardship, health care, Federal occupation, and the bitterness

¹⁵ Matthew Page Andrews, *Women of the South in War Times* (Baltimore: The Norman, Remington Co, 1924), 3-24.

of defeat. Simkins and Patton argued that women's patriotism contributed as much to Confederate victories as the soldiers who fought the battles. Similarly when women's loyalty to the Confederacy faltered in the face of death and poverty, their loss of morale directly contributed to the Confederacy's defeat. Simkins and Patton paid special attention to southern women's reactions to Union occupation, including how events in Winchester led to southern women exerting themselves through acts of anger.¹⁶

Simkins and Patton's pioneering book gave voice to southern women whose experiences had been overlooked for more than fifty years. Despite their utilization of unpublished manuscripts, Civil War historians continued to neglect the homefront. In 1952 Mary Elizabeth Massey published *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, the first work to be devoted solely to supply shortages in the South during the war. *Ersatz in the Confederacy* was valuable for its insight into how women dealt with these shortages but did little to directly address women's experiences. Another decade and a half passed before Massey, in 1966, published her second work, *Bonnet Brigades* (later republished under the title *Women in the Civil War*). *Bonnet Brigades* approached women's wartime experiences from the perspectives of both northern and southern women. Massey argued that despite regional differences women in both the North and the South reacted to wartime struggles similarly. According to Massey, the wartime roles that women were forced to take on, such as nurses, teachers, and farmers, led directly to the politicization of American women. Following the war many women refused to return to the home and instead began to campaign for increased education and the right to work outside of the

¹⁶ Francis Butler Simkins and James Welch Patton, *The Women of the Confederacy* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Incorporated, 1936, 1977) vii, 52-58.

home. Massey asserted that these movements were direct effects of the Civil War's influence on women.¹⁷

The 1970s witnessed the birth of the new social history, and Civil War women finally began to receive the attention they deserved. Studies emerged focusing on plantation mistresses, widows, female spies, female teachers and slave women. Among the most important contemporary scholars of women is Drew Gilpin Faust. In her 1996 book, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, Faust focused on upper-class women of the slaveholding class. Contrary to romantic tradition, her controversial findings suggest that these elite women contributed significantly to Confederate defeat by remaining tradition bound. They refused to participate in the popular "homespun revolution," regarding it as beneath their dignity. They shunned nursing because it was unladylike and forced them to associate with lower class whites, both men and women. Even more important, in the Confederate "crisis of gender" they failed as plantation slave masters, because they were reluctant to exercise the brute force that maintenance of the slave regime required. As the war dragged on they became increasingly frustrated with their slaves and with the cause itself.¹⁸

Faust's work refocused the study of women's history. Yet despite the broadening of scholarly approaches to the homefront, historians continued to focus on the entire South rather than on specific regions. In his 1990 article, "Getting the 'Real War' into the Books," historian Donald E. Sutherland addressed the lack of "local histories" in academia. According to Sutherland, national studies overlook individuals while state

¹⁷ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952); Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 242-367.

¹⁸ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 5.

wide studies often focus on political history rather than the daily experiences of the people. Regional studies, however, allow historians to comprehend the full depth of diversity during the Civil War¹⁹

While the study of women's Civil War experiences has escalated into its own field, Winchester has continued to be overlooked. Contemporary women's historians often mention Winchester and quote from the diaries of Winchester women, but few scholars have focused on Winchester itself. Those historians who have dealt with Winchester have focused on its military significance. The struggles of the people living in Winchester have been overshadowed by larger than life historical figures such as General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. The exception to this is Shelia R. Phipps' 2004 biography of Winchester's Mary Greenhow Lee, *Genteel Rebel*.

Phipps' work brought Civil War Winchester to life in ways that no previous historian had, through the eyes of one of its residents. Although Phipps dealt specifically with Mary Greenhow Lee, she painted a vivid picture of life in Winchester during the Civil War, including descriptions of the social network that the Lee family belonged to. Phipps book worked to humanize the women of Winchester by analyzing their emotions. She theorized that Mary Greenhow Lee's wartime attitude was not as dour as it sounded on the pages of her diary. Phipps noted that Lee, herself, revealed that she often did her writing at the end of the day when she had been pushed to her brink.²⁰

Genteel Rebel broke ground by being the first historical work to approach Winchester solely from the viewpoint of the women in the town. As a biography,

¹⁹ Daniel E. Sutherland, "Getting the 'Real War' into the Books," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 98 (1990): 201.

²⁰ Shelia R. Phipps, *Genteel Rebel: the Life of Mary Greenhow Lee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 5-11.

however, Phipps' book neglects the perspectives of other women in the town. In particular Phipps neglects the experiences of Unionist women.

In focusing on Winchester this thesis seeks to neither confirm nor refute the arguments made by Phipps, Faust, and other historians. In part this is because Winchester itself defies categorization. Winchester was both a Union and Confederate city. In the city and the surrounding communities—unlike central Virginia and the Deep South-- there was no distinct boundary between homefront and fighting front. While Winchester women doubtless shared many experiences with their peers in the Confederate heartland, much of their war experience was unique.

In examining Winchester's Civil War homefront this thesis will focus on the manuscripts of several women. Julia Chase and Harriet (Harriet) Hollingsworth Griffith were both Union supporters. The remaining diaries and letters, written by Mary Greenhow Lee, Laura Lee, Portia Baldwin Baker, Ann Cary Randolph Jones, Kate Sperry, Cornelia McDonald, Margaretta (Gettie) Miller, Mary Tucker Magill and Emma Riely, are written from the perspectives of Confederate supporters, or "Secesh" as Unionists called them. These women, both Unionist and Confederate, were all from prosperous families and some owned slaves. Their prosperity afforded them wartime advantages denied less prosperous families, for example the ability to pay for inflated goods.

Four chapters examine the experiences of the aforementioned women. The first discusses women's gender roles in the Antebellum South and how these roles meshed with secession politics. Women in Virginia were increasingly active in politics, therefore women constantly adjusted their ideals of "womanhood" to match the changing

expectations of southern society. These changing expectations combined with Winchester's reliance on northern markets led to divided loyalties within the town. The second chapter discusses wartime shortages and their effect on both Unionist and Confederate women's morale. Although the entire South suffered from material shortages, I argue that in Winchester shortages were complicated by occupation thereby creating an unconscious bond between opposing women as their focuses moved away from supporting the war efforts to the struggle to survive. The third and fourth chapters both focus on Winchester's military occupations. Specifically the third chapter addresses identity as it relates to material symbols of patriotism and changing race relation. The fourth chapter analyzes the changing mentality of warfare as women struggled with the humanization of their enemies and the subsequent disillusionment with war. In all, the diaries of Winchester's women present a complex story of struggle as they dealt with starvation, death, and changes to the structure of southern society. While women's identities remained their most important asset for survival, these diaries show that Winchester's women were not simply Unionists or Confederates, but rather southern women struggling to survive.

Chapter 1: Women's Politicization and Winchester's Division

In June 1861 Harriet Griffith, a Winchester resident lamented “Our loved and honored America, this our beautiful country, is now in arms. Brother warring against brother, and what for. Methinks ‘tis hard to tell. The sister states that have loved one another as one family are now in arms against each other. My heart is sad, very sad, this morning.” Griffith’s emotional declaration exemplifies her torn loyalties, but her plight was not unique among Winchester women who watched as secession split their community as well as the country. Throughout the 1850s Virginia women became increasingly politicized, contradicting the antebellum concept that women’s societal duties ended at charitable contributions. Slavery’s movement to the forefront of political debates pulled women into a realm of political participation they had not previously entered. By suggesting it was a feminine duty to correct any societal problems created by slavery, women were also pulled into the larger debates surrounding secession. For Winchester women, politicization meant adjusting to the changing degrees of feminine sacrifice needed as war approached. As a region that depended very little on slavery, secession forced Winchester women to choose between keeping their southern identities by supporting secession, or ostracizing themselves from their friends and neighbors by supporting the North and the economic stability of the Shenandoah Valley.²¹

Winchester, Virginia is located in the Shenandoah Valley one hundred miles from Baltimore, seventy miles from Washington D.C., and one hundred forty miles from Richmond. Historically, Winchester was settled by Germans, Quakers, Dutch, Scotch

²¹ Harriet Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 WFCMS. (Harriet Hollingsworth Griffith Collection. Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives Room. Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society. Winchester, VA U.S.A.), 3.

Irish, Welsh, and English settlers, many of whom had made their way from as far north as New York before settling in Winchester. As a major producer of cattle and wheat, Winchester was instrumental in developing the Shenandoah Valley's flour industry. Its prosperity was furthered by the Winchester and Potomac Railroad, a division of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at Harpers Ferry. The B and O railway system became fully operational in 1836, linking the upper Valley and creating a cheaper, more efficient means of transporting goods to Baltimore, Maryland and Alexandria, Virginia. Less than a decade later the Valley Turnpike was constructed, which allowed for easier and safer road travel from Winchester to Staunton. Like the railroad system, the turnpike linked all of the major towns in the upper Valley, increasing Winchester's significance as a trade center.²²

In antebellum Winchester, residents associated themselves traditionally and economically with the Northern states. These allegiances strengthened as secession gained support throughout the South. Winchester's northern leanings were rooted in its reliance on northern markets, but in the origins of many of its residents. The 1850 census indicates that well into the nineteenth century, a substantial number of Winchester heads of household listed their birthplaces as Maryland, Pennsylvania, or New Jersey. Even many Winchester residents whose connections to the North were generations removed, continued to have dual identities as both Northerners and Virginians. Harriet Griffith's father, Aaron, held such ideals. Although the family had immigrated to the Shenandoah

²² Robert D. Mitchell, "The Settlement Fabric of the Shenandoah Valley, 1790-1860: Pattern, Process, and Structure." in *After the Backcountry: Rural Life in the Great Valley of Virginia, 1800-1900*, ed. Kenneth E. Koons and Warren G. Hofstra (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 38; Warren G. Hofstra and Robert Mitchell, "Town and Country in Backcountry Virginia: Winchester and the Shenandoah Valley, 1730-1800," *The Journal of Southern History*, 59 (November, 1993), 621; Mitchell, "The Settlement Fabric of the Shenandoah Valley," 46-47.

Valley in the mid eighteenth century, Aaron Griffith refused to acknowledge Virginia's secession, claiming that he was a "staunch Union" man.²³

The Griffiths held their northern roots close, but Aaron Griffith's heated reaction to secession most likely was based on his ownership of numerous mills. Unlike the Deep South, the Valley of Virginia was not dependant on the large plantation system. While the total slave population in Virginia was nearly 40% in 1860, slavery by comparison was limited in Winchester. Winchester's 1860 population numbered 4,400 people: 3,000 whites, 708 slaves, 655 free blacks. Only 2% of the white population owned slaves. Although some families owned as many as thirty slaves, the average slave-owner in Frederick County owned only five. Griffith, who did not own slaves, was loyal to the North for financial reasons.²⁴

Winchester's small slave population is explained by its agriculture. Areas of Virginia which were densely populated with slaves were major producers of tobacco. Tobacco production was demanding and required year-round attention. Wheat, the major crop of the Valley was far less labor intensive. This is not to say the people of the Valley were abolitionists or that the free black population in Winchester was not employed in the mills and during harvest, but rather that agricultural production did not rely on enslaved labor. Yet slavery was something that was neither criticized nor justified by the people of Winchester. They accepted it and the accompanying racial inequality as practical.

²³ James V. Hutton, Jr., *The Federal Census of 1850 for Frederick County, Virginia, including the city of Winchester and a listing of slave-owners for 1860* (Athens, GA: Iberian Publishers, 1987), 244-328; Griffith Diary, undated biographical information, 1179 WFCBS, Griffith Collection, a-e.

²⁴ Margaretta Barton Colt, *Defend the Valley: A Shenandoah Family in the Civil War* (New York: Orion Books, 1994), 5-6; Harry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie Publishers, 1934), 12-16; Hutton, Jr. *The Federal Census of 1850 for Frederick County, Virginia*, 244-328.

Although the majority of the Valley's residents not slave-owners, the people of Winchester were also not abolitionists, and they accepted slavery.²⁵

Winchester residents' stances on slavery presented many contradictions. Even though few slaves populated the town, slavery wielded the same power in antebellum Winchester as it did in the rest of the South. Those residents who owned slaves controlled the politics and the courts. The slave-owning elite saw themselves as politically allied with the cotton states because of common interests in slavery, and used their local influence to sway men's votes in favor of pro-slavery legislation. Yet the majority of Winchester's residents did not support the pro-slavery politics of the Deep South. They allowed slave-owners to run local politics, but as the crisis over secession became more heated Winchester residents, in particular Winchester women, began to openly oppose the "slave power."²⁶

The roots of women's opposition to slavery did not begin with secession. Rather white women in the Valley had a history of political activism, which directly lead to their political awareness during the secession crisis. More importantly for Winchester, women's participation in politics influenced their decisions to remain loyal to the Union or side with the Confederacy at the onset of the war.

Virginia women's early political participation coincided with nineteenth century concept of gender. This philosophy revolved around the belief that, in accordance with

²⁵ Jean M. West, "Tobacco and Slavery: The Vile Weed," Slavery in America Educational Outreach Website, http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_tobacco_slavery.htm (accessed September 2006); Michael G. Mahon, *The Shenandoah Valley 1861-1865: The Destruction of the Granary of the Confederacy* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1999), 6.

²⁶ The Slave Power is a term used to describe the political power of the slaveholding class in the Deep South. Michael J. Gorman, "Our Politicians Have Enslaved Us," in *After the Backcountry: Rural Life in the Great Valley of Virginia*, eds. Kenneth E. Koons and Warren G. Hofstra (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 274-277; Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 138.

the virtue of their sex, women were best suited for humanitarian work. The resulting benevolent and charitable foundations allowed women to voice their political beliefs, but through outlets that were appropriate to their femininity such as anti-liquor societies, orphan asylums, and poor relief. But as slavery emerged as a burning issue in American politics, women's organizations raised their voices in protest to the "peculiar institution."²⁷

Historian Stephanie McCurry has argued that the subordination of women and African American enslavement were linked in antebellum politics in the metaphor of the domestic sphere. To southern men, women's inferior status demonstrated that "social and political inequality were natural." Conditions in society and women's subordination thus indirectly justified the inequality of blacks. By speaking against slavery, McCurry believes, women were also protesting their own societal positions. With the rise of female abolitionism in the North "women's nature and appropriate social role became, perhaps as never before, a matter of political concern." Moreover, Northern women's increased political participation contributed to the nineteenth century ideal that women held moral and religious responsibilities to the nation. As regional tensions escalated between the North and the South, the idea also spread that the crisis was a result of "male immorality." Northern reformers argued that the condition of American society was directly linked to women's inability to participate in politics.²⁸

Reform societies never gained momentum in the South as they did in the North, but the idea that slavery was a shared evil was not lost on southern women. Throughout

²⁷ Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 10-11.

²⁸ Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina" *The Journal of American History*, 78 (March 1992), 1251-1252; Barbara Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels: The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*. (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 127-130.

the 1820's southern women participated in the activities of the American Colonization Society (ACS), which sought to manumit and emigrate slaves to Africa. Throughout Virginia politicians and religious groups alike supported the mission of the ACS and its sister branch, the Virginia Colonization Society (VCS), received funding from the Virginia General Assembly. The implication that sending blacks to Africa would result in the spread of Christianity encouraged women's participation in colonization activities as mission work. By 1830, however, the ACS had been condemned by pro-slavery politicians, and leaders of the VCS reevaluated their mission to focus on the colonization of free blacks rather than the manumission of slaves.²⁹

Following the Nat Turner Rebellion in 1831, some women in Augusta and Fluvanna counties and the City of Fredericksburg drafted petitions to expel slavery from the state. Although these women did not specifically support the ACS, they used their femininity to argue that slavery was a social evil needing remedying and were embraced by colonization societies. Specifically the Augusta County petition claimed that, although it was outside the boundaries of their gender to participate in politics, the dangers that slavery presented to society compelled them to exercise their voices. Ironically, the Augusta County women did not follow the trend of the Fluvanna and Fredericksburg petitioners and claim that their appeal against slavery was a moral reform, which would have kept it within the appropriate realm of political participation for women as charitable work. Rather the women of the Valley demanded that they be given a political voice because "slavery was no longer simply a domestic issue, a local one, or a religious one. It was now the subject of national controversy, and demanded a political

²⁹ Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 43-51.

remedy.” Yet the Augusta County women were not abolitionists. They appealed to the government, not out of dislike for slavery, but out of fear of slave revolts like Turner’s.³⁰

Because the majority of Winchester women did not start keeping diaries until after the war had begun, it is uncertain what their views on slavery and the Turner crisis were. The petitions issued by the women from Fluvanna County and the City of Fredericksburg in combination with the Augusta County petition suggest, however, that throughout Virginia women were trying to “politicize domestic life.” By using their roles as mothers, Christians, and patriots women appealed to the legislature on that grounds that slavery was a social ill. If women were to fulfill their duties to maintain peaceful domestic atmospheres, petitioners argued, it was necessary that slavery’s threat to this setting be acknowledged. These petitions demonstrate that throughout the 1830s women’s societal responsibilities were moving beyond charitable work. Although feminine political roles continued to be directly related to their virtue, by the 1850s a small but significant sect of southern nationalists supported the idea that women act as sectional mediators.³¹

Disunion sentiment had been gaining momentum for nearly three decades by the late 1850’s. Abolition movements were more aggressive, and slaveholders worried that their interests were neither represented nor protected by the federal government. The intensifying conflict surrounding slavery created an increased outlet for women’s political participation. Rather than advocate that women’s political opinions be limited to benevolent work, the political climate mandated that it was women’s job to promote “sectional harmony” because of their “superior patriotism.” When John Brown took over

³⁰ Ibid., 48-51,138.

³¹ Ibid., 48-51.

the Federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1859 in an attempt to start a slave revolt, southern concern turned to fury and any suggestion by southern nationalists that women act as mediators was undermined. Brown's raid conjured up painful memories of Nat Turner's slave insurrection, and slave-owners feared that it would inspire more violence. Virginia's most fervent advocate for secession, Edmund Ruffin, reasoned that Brown's attack proved without a doubt that the entire North had become the enemy of both the South and slavery.³²

Increased southern nationalism inspired by Brown's raid changed women's political roles in Virginia. Rather than promote patience in accordance with their virtue, secession advocates claimed that women were truer southerners than men and thus had a duty to defend the South against the North.³³ Newspapers throughout the state encouraged this revisionist feminine philosophy, claiming Brown's raid was a necessary evil required to make people realize the danger of the "Black Republican" Party. In the Valley one newspaper reported that the violence at Harper's Ferry was "the beginning of the storm" and should be curbed before anything worse happened. People who previously had not made politics a priority were suddenly paying attention. Amanda Virginia Edmonds, from Fauquier County, wrote, "I would see the fire kindled and those who did it singed and burnt until the last drop of blood was dried within them and every bone smouldered [sic] to ashes." An elderly Augusta County man noted in his diary that following John Brown's Raid he began to follow politics and, feeling it his duty, voted for only the second time in his life in the 1860 Presidential election. The *Winchester Republican* denounced Brown's raid as "the wickedest outrage against the sovereignty of

³² William Kaufman Scarborough, *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, v.1 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 354

³³Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 138.

Virginia.” Still, despite widespread cries of outrage, the Valley did not promote secession as a logical reaction to Brown’s Raid.³⁴

In the Upper South, condemnation of John Brown and support of disunion were separate issues. In the Tidewater, Piedmont and Southwestern portions of Virginia, where the slave population was dense, the economic interests of the region were more closely linked with those of the cotton states. These areas felt that if the Deep South seceded it would be Virginia’s obligation to withdraw from the Union as well. In Northern Virginia, particularly the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah Valley where slavery was sparse, secession was not an accepted option. Like the rest of Virginia, Valley residents felt inherently linked with the South through common culture. Yet economically, the Valley saw its interests linked with northern markets. Much of the upper South saw no economic benefits in joining an independent South. In particular, the agriculturally based Valley feared losing markets. By 1860, 90% of the Valley’s farmers cultivated wheat. In Frederick County wheat production was almost universal among farmers. Wheat provided Winchester with an economic stability that was uncommon in the antebellum South, and the North was the main market for the Valley’s wheat, tobacco, and livestock yields. Valley residents feared that if a southern confederacy was formed, local politics would be ignored in favor of larger goals in the cotton states. Although the Harper’s Ferry incident festered northern resentment in the Valley, the people were not blind to the

³⁴ Staunton (VA) *Republican Vindicator*, October 21, 1859, *The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities at War* <http://Valley.vcdh.virginia.edu> (accessed May 25, 2006); Amanda Virginia Edmonds Diary, November 11, 1859, E605.E32 C5 (General Collection, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA); Francis McFarland Diary, Nov. 2, 1860, (McFarland Family Papers. *The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities at War*. <http://Valley.vcdh.virginia.edu> (accessed May 30, 2006); Winchester (VA) *Winchester Republican*, Oct. 21, 1859 (Stewart Bell Jr. Archives Room, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, Winchester, VA U.S.A.).

fact that secession would economically benefit the Deep South where slavery was more prevalent, leaving the non-plantation South to fend for itself.³⁵

To further complicate things, the Valley had developed a two party political system. Unlike the cotton south, which overwhelmingly favored Democratic politics, the Valley's loyalties were split between the Democrats and Whigs. Elizabeth Varon, author of *We Mean to be Counted: White Woman and Politics in Antebellum, Virginia*, has shown that although they could not vote women were actively recruited by both the Democratic and Whig parties in hopes that they would influence their men at the polls. This was particularly important during the 1860 presidential election because of the blatant political divisions throughout the South. The Deep South allied itself with the Democrats while the Upper South supported old Whigs. Traditionally the Shenandoah Valley favored the Democratic Party, but historian Daniel Crofts has observed a link between the Whig party and Unionism in the Valley. The connection was exemplified by fervent support in Winchester of the Constitutional Unionist presidential nominee John Bell. Early in November 1860, the Unionist *Winchester Republican* predicted that if Breckinridge carried the South the country would go to war. Bell, on the other hand, would be able to "stem the torrent of disunion."³⁶

In Winchester, Bell carried the town while John Breckinridge, the southern Democratic nominee, won Frederick County with 57% of the vote. Overall in Virginia Bell received nearly 45% of Virginia's popular votes, beating Breckinridge by less than

³⁵ Daniel W. Crofts *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South unionists in the secession crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 106; Kenneth E. Koons, "The Staple of Our Country": Wheat in the Regional Farm Economy of the nineteenth century Valley of Virginia," in *After the Backcountry: Rural Life in the Great Valley of Virginia, 1800-1900*, ed. Kenneth E. Koons and Warren G. Hofstra (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press: 2000), 6-7; Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861*, 85-86, 206, Map V; Hofstra and Mitchell, "Town and Country in Backcountry Virginia," 621-637, Gorman, "Our Politicians Have Enslaved Us, 275; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 106.

³⁶ Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 74-76; *Winchester Republican*, Nov. 2, 1860.

200 ballots. For many southerners the 1860 presidential election was a decisive factor in the war. Winchester resident Robert Barton remembered that despite the fact that he and his father were both “an old line Whig and a Unionist,” he gave his vote to Breckinridge because he felt that Bell’s party “offered no protection to the South from the oppression of the Abolitionists.”³⁷

In the Deep South Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln’s name did not appear on ballots because of his party’s association with abolition. In Virginia, Lincoln received only 1% of the vote, and in Frederick County he received a single ballot. When Lincoln won the presidency despite his lack of southern support, the South was shocked. Southern advocates for secession saw Lincoln’s election as proof that the South’s political influence was waning. In Winchester the *Republican* reported that the worst fears of Virginia and every other southern state had been realized. Still, the newspaper asked: “shall this Union be dissolved? Or shall it be preserved?” Even the *Winchester Virginian*, which adamantly supported southern nationalism, condemned secession and claimed anyone who accused Virginia of promoting disunion was a “slanderer.”³⁸

While historian Elizabeth Varon has noted that there is no clear indication of women’s political opinions during the 1860 election because convention sessions were closed to women, diaries and letters suggest that few women supported the Republican Party. Women flocked to hear Whig and Democratic politicians speak and in Winchester

³⁷ Gorman, “Our Politicians Have Enslaved Us,” 283; *Civil War Book of Lists*. Compiled by the editors of Combined Books. (New Jersey: Castle Books, 2004), 201-202; Colt, *Defend the Valley*, 48;” *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*, “United States Presidential Election, 1860,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election_1860#Results_by_state, (accessed January 2, 2007).

³⁸ Colt, *Defend the Valley*, 8, Gorman, “Our Politicians have enslaved us,” 282-283; Winchester (VA) *Winchester Virginian*, January 30, 1861 (Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, Winchester, VA U.S.A.); Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, “United States Presidential Election 1860.”

one newspaper bragged that one thousand ladies had attended a local Breckenridge meeting. Although Virginia's officially supported sectional compromise, the pressure to secede following Lincoln's election grew as South Carolina, then Mississippi, withdrew from the Union. Slave owners throughout the South felt that outsiders were trying to undermine their way of life and take away their livelihood. Many women felt their loyalties torn, as they struggled to choose between their identities as Americans and their sense of what it meant to be southern. Maria Carrington from Charlotte County, Virginia wrote that she felt Lincoln was a fine speaker, but that Virginia's loyalties should be allied with the southern states. According to Carrington, "we are one in interest and feeling." The question of disunion was not as clear to others as it was to Carrington. Virginia's solution to the secession crisis was to organize a secession convention, which legislators hoped would delay the need for action.³⁹

The Virginia secession convention convened on February 13, 1861 amidst wild rumors and political hostility. Unionist and Moderate delegates, led by Winchester's Robert Y. Conrad, advocated for a North/South compromise while their rivals, the secessionists, appealed to southern nationalism by claiming that immediate secession was Virginia's only logical choice. After three months, the delegates were still unable to agree on the best course of action. Their discussions became mute, however, when South Carolina fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. In response to Fort Sumter, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to defend the Union. The Virginia delegates were indignant at the appeal to arm themselves against the lower South and sentiments

³⁹ Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, 149-150; William Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum, Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 213; Maria Louisa Dabney Carrington correspondence, March 20, 1861, Mss1 Sa878a (Saunders Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA).

immediately turned from compromise to secession. On April 17 the Virginia Convention voted eighty-eight to fifty-five to secede from the Union.⁴⁰

Despite their inability to vote, Virginia women were not excluded from the heated debates over disunion. Lucy Bagby of Richmond remembered that in 1861 she had been “heart and soul for states rights” and attended the secession convention almost every day. Other women, however, were less enthusiastic and struggled to resign themselves to their new political positions as ardent southern supporters while still maintaining the gentility of a lady. For many women, the excitement inspired by Virginia’s secession debates was soon swallowed by fear of war. Mildred Lynch of Augusta County scorned the United States for spurring Virginia’s “sacrifice of interest” and asking to raise troops against their “Southern brothers.” Yet as quickly as she had condemned the North, Gibson also condemned the war, calling it “the direst most wicked war ever waged.” Amanda Virginia Edmonds, who had earlier damned the North for John Brown’s raid, was so distraught over the idea of war that she could not stop crying. Overcome, Edmonds lamented that the war was a judgment for the “villany” [sic] of the American people. In her diary she wrote, “Oh! What a gloomy, a shadowy future awaits us. ‘Tis but the wickedness of the land that hurts us.”⁴¹

Although the majority of Winchester diarists did not begin writing until after the war had begun, the impassioned writings of women throughout the state suggest that throughout Virginia the majority of women shared uncertainties about war. In addition,

⁴⁰ Robert Y. Conrad letters to Elizabeth Conrad, April 20,21,1861, Mss1 C7637 a 234-264 (Holmes Conrad Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA); Hutton Jr. *The Federal Census of 1850 for Frederick County, Virginia.*; James I. Robertson, Jr. “Virginia State Convention of 1861” in *Virginia at War, 1861*, eds. William C. Davis and James I. Robertson, Jr. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 15.

⁴¹ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 12-13, Mildred Gibson Lynch Diary, April 20, 1861, Mss5:1 L9895:1 (Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA);Edmonds Diary, April 23, 1862.

increased female participation in politics throughout the Valley during the 1850's suggests that disunion was at the forefront of Winchester women's concerns during the winter and spring of 1861. Of the few accounts from Winchester before the outbreak of the war, the memoir of Cornelia McDonald sheds some light on the condition of Winchester. McDonald remembered that during the months leading up to the secession convention no one spoke of anything but disunion. Her account is reinforced by articles in the *Winchester Republican*, which beseeched its readers to consider the consequences of secession for the people of Virginia "who have everything to lose and nothing to gain by this ceaseless agitation." According to the *Republican*, because the Valley was "situated on the border, property will not only deteriorate in value, in the event of a civil war, but human life will at no time be secure."⁴² This prediction would later become startlingly accurate with Winchester's numerous military occupations.

As April 1861 progressed, Virginia prepared itself for war. The Richmond convention voted to fund an army even though they had not officially joined the Confederacy. Richmonders viewed secession with enthusiasm and openly celebrated in the streets. Robert Y. Conrad, one of Winchester's delegates to the secession convention, described the April 20 scene to his wife: "Last night we had a proud illumination of this city with a long and brilliant procession through the streets, in honor of the secession of Virginia." Disheartened by what he saw as Virginians' "folly," Conrad was slightly encouraged when a man near him commented that "it would be much more appropriate if they were rejoicing for peace instead of war." The man's words did not reflect majority

⁴² Cornelia Peake McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War: A Diary, with Reminiscences of the War, from March 1862*, ed. Minrose C. Gwin (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 246; *Winchester Republican*, Nov. 23, 1860.

opinion, however, and on May 23 Virginia residents formally ratified the convention's decision to secede.⁴³

In Winchester following Virginia's secession, the *Winchester Republican*, which had ceaselessly criticized secession, abruptly changed its tone. The newspaper denounced the United States, even though slightly more than a month earlier it had praised Lincoln's stance on slavery and compared it to that of Madison, Webster, Jackson, Clay and Buchanan. Despite the town's minimal slave population, politicians declared slavery the link between the Valley and the South. This relationship, based on "kinship, culture, and ideology," made it Winchester's duty to follow Virginia into secession. The *Republican* begged Winchester residents to place their loyalties with state rather than country, claiming that Virginia had done everything in its power to find a peaceful solution and the Union had rejected these efforts. The stars and stripes, the *Republican* argued, had become something to be ashamed of.⁴⁴

Virginia's secession was formally announced in Winchester with the chimes of church bells. Confederate flags appeared overnight, although a week earlier they had been forbidden. Residents gave dinner parties in honor of southern politicians who left Washington, D.C., to return home to seceded states. Winchester resident Cornelia McDonald remembered that "There was no dearth of excitement at any time in Winchester."⁴⁵ The town's surge of Confederate patriotism, however, concealed the political divide within the white community.

⁴³ Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861*, 204-208; Robert Y. Conrad to Elizabeth Conrad, April 21, April 30, 1861, Conrad Papers.

⁴⁴ *Winchester Republican*, March 8, 1861, April 19, 1861, April 26, 1861, Gorman, "Our Politicians have Enslaved Us," 283.

⁴⁵ McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 246-250.

Winchester residents proved through their acceptance of secession that, despite their initial uncertainties, Winchester's loyalty was bound to Virginia. By asking them to turn on their fellow southerners, President Lincoln asked the people of Winchester to compromise their identities as southerners, which the town's majority refused to do. At the same time, a significant minority were unwilling to compromise their Union ties. Others were torn between loyalty state and opposition to secession. As the excitement of war overtook the town, the communal divide deepened. Many residents, who had been unsure about secession, became caught up in wartime enthusiasm. The Union Hotel's sign was modified removing the U and the N, making it the Ion Hotel. Wartime zeal grew as the first Virginia volunteers made their way into Winchester.

The first troops passed through Winchester on April 18, 1861, only one day after the convention voted to secede. Although Virginia had not technically joined the Confederacy, the convention had voted to fund an army, and troops immediately headed for the Federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. The presence of soldiers and general excitement over secession infected Winchester with fever. Cornelia McDonald noted that "everyone seemed to be fanatic, bereft of their sober senses." Yet even the cynical McDonald felt that there was something intoxicating about secession. In her memoir she wrote the Confederate flag:

seemed a promise of glory and greatness, and of triumph over those who would deprive us of our right to do as we pleased with our own. Ah! I did not know then what a portentous sight it was, I only thought of the attempted coercion of our Free State and country, and felt that no sacrifice was too great to ensure their defeat. I knew that blood must be shed, but the trial would be soon over, and we would be forever free.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid., 252-254.

The idea of a Southern Confederacy promised independence from what many southerners had begun to view as Yankee tyranny.

The majority of Winchester residents' abrupt change in attitude towards secession can only be explained through their concept of self and their desires to defend their homes. Although the town had previously opposed regional violence, Virginia's decision to secede had placed Winchester in a precarious position. Located in between the new Confederate capital at Richmond and the Federal Capital at Washington, D.C., it was inevitable that the town would be invaded by Union troops. James Marshall, a delegate to the 1861 secession convention, predicted that the threat of an invading army "would be the only thing which would unite the people of the Valley."⁴⁷ Many residents justified secession by claiming that Virginia had taken every measure necessary to prevent war. Frederick County resident, Ann Jones told her enlisted son, "I have a great pleasure in believing that War is forced upon the South, that the proceedings of the North were unbearable & that the stand we take is right & I truly believe we shall be successful."⁴⁸ In this way, the people of Winchester justified Virginia's actions. Unlike the Deep South, they argued, Virginia was pushed into secession. Contrary to Marshall's prediction, however, Winchester did not unite in disunion.

Even after Winchester had become a battlefield, certain Winchester residents remained loyal to the Union. These families such as the Griffiths and the Chases felt that their identities were inseparable from the North and that Confederate sympathizers had

⁴⁷ Edward H. Phillips, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War: The Impact of War Upon the Civilian Population and Upon Civil Institutions* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1958), 44.

⁴⁸ Ann Cary Randolph Jones to her relatives in Florida, June 10, 1861, 451 Thl (Ann Cary Randolph Jones Papers, Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives Room, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society).

not only betrayed their country but the Constitution as well. On July 4, 1861 Julia Chase lamented that there were:

But few rejoicings in this state, or any other of the Southern States, in regard to this day, which has been observed for so long a time—when Independence was declared by our forefathers. Into what a sad condition our beloved country has fallen—God have mercy on us, and defend us from our enemies. This will be the worst of wars probably that has ever taken place in the world—and oh what hard fighting there will be. One party trying to suppress rebellion—the other, as they think and say, defending their rights.⁴⁹

Other residents opposed the war because it interfered with their livelihoods. For farming families the idea of sending men off for months or years threatened their way of life and their very survival. Winchester diarists noted that the farmers in the Winchester area had all been drafted and pulled away from their crops in the middle of harvesting. Many members of the militia deserted drills to return to their fields, “thinking probably their wheat was of more consequence to them than the fighting.” Anna Wayland’s husband harbored such resentments. As a Unionist he did not believe in the Confederate cause, but when he was drafted he had no choice but to fight, leaving his wife and small children at home to manage the family farm alone. After several months of struggling to run the farm while keeping his commitments to the army, Mr. Wayland’s father-in-law bought him a military replacement.⁵⁰

Not all families were as lucky as the Waylands in being able to afford a substitute, and although many men willingly enlisted in the army, by the end of the war soldiers from the Valley had gained a reputation for desertion. Some of them, as in the case of

⁴⁹ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 2 (Chase Diary).

⁵⁰ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 2 (Chase Diary); Anna Kagey Wayland Diary, June 7, 8, 1861, Aug. 6-27, 1861, (John Walter Wayland Papers, Steward Bell, Jr. Archives Room, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, Winchester, VA U.S.A.).

Anna Wayland's husband, were forced to enlist and later deserted out of Union loyalty. Others, however, found themselves unable to commit to the Confederate cause if it meant leaving their fields to rot and their families to starve.⁵¹

Yet despite the burdens brought on by war, many women initially found war to be a welcome distraction from tedious routines. Sewing societies presented an opportunity for socializing, and women were proud to see their men defending the South's rights. Although many southern women initially condemned war, patriotism justified war as a fight between good and evil and women threw themselves into wartime production to "help ease the burdens of their defenders." Women joined aid societies to help with sewing and nursing, and "homespun societies" encouraged home industry. As early as 1860 Augusta County's *Republican Vindicator* had urged women to participate in the homespun movement, claiming that it was the duty of southern women to boycott northern goods and produce their own homespun clothing.⁵²

Sewing societies became key social events and served as entertainment for elite young girls. Emma Riely was fourteen years old when the war began and fondly remembered the homespun movement. In particular, Riely was fond of the gold buttons and lace, which became fashionable articles decorating homemade dresses. Fashion was not the only new amusement for young girls; Riely also recounted the presence of soldiers in Winchester. For eighteen-year-old Kate Sperry, July 1861 was one of the most exciting times of the war, because soldiers began to pass through Winchester with frequency. Although these young women did not share the same burdens as older women,

⁵¹ Gorman, "Our Politicians Have Enslaved Us," 283.

⁵² Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 55; *Republican Vindicator*, January 13, 1860; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 46.

their girlish remembrances of early summer 1861 show that the war had not yet presented Winchester residents with the hardships that would mark diary entries by the same girls later in the war.⁵³

With men enlisting fervently, many women felt it was their duty to supply clothing. In their spare time they sewed Confederate flags to show support. Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, an upper class Winchester refugee from Alexandria, commended women's efforts, writing that "it rejoices my heart to see how much everybody is willing to do for the poor fellows. The ladies think no effort, however self sacrificing, is too great to be made for the soldiers. Nice food for the sick is constantly being prepared by old and young. Those who are very sick are taken to the private houses, and the best chambers in town are occupied by them."⁵⁴ Women's roles became increasingly important as the summer of 1861 progressed and commitment to the war increased.

Traditionally motherhood played an essential role in women's place in society, and war increased the importance of this responsibility by suggesting that women encourage their men to enlist. Few southerners realized the "dark destinations" they were sending their loved ones to by encouraging them to enlist and naively assumed that the war would be over in a few months. Therefore participating in the war while it lasted became central to men's honor and it was a woman's charge to keep her sons from experiencing the shame of shirking the army. Believing firmly that God was on the

⁵³ Kate S. Sperry Diary, July 13, 1861, Accession 28532 (Personal papers collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA)

⁵⁴Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, "Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War, 1861" in *Virginia at War, 1861*, eds. William C. Davis and James I. Robertson, Jr. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 177.

South's side, women confidently sent their sons, husbands, and brothers into battle.⁵⁵

One woman in the Valley bragged that she was thrilled to send her son to war and thanked God for her good fortune in having a son to send. Another Valley woman praised the southern cause, brazenly writing, "Who can be against us when God is for us?"⁵⁶

Secession placed many Winchester residents in a situation where they had to choose between their loyalty to the United States and their economic welfare, or their identities as southerners. Women's roles in this conflict were particularly trying because of their shifting concepts of womanhood. Previously their political roles had been limited to charitable causes, but now they were expected to embody the patriotism of all southerners and willingly give up their sons, brothers, and husbands to war. Secession split Winchester's people into Confederates and Unionists, making the town a microcosm of the country. Women were left to recreate their ideas of self in association with their new political roles and their duties to the war. Initially the war was high adventure and great fun; and such notions would carry Winchester through the summer of 1861, but romanticizing conditions would not protect women from the hardships that would overtake the town. War exhausted the resources of the fertile Valley and women's lives of comfort vanished. Regional differences continued to divide Winchester's women, as they began to wage their own war for survival on the homefront.

⁵⁵ Leann Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender" in *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 37; Rubins; *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy*, 37.

⁵⁶ Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 86-87; *Winchester Virginian*, May 8, 1861, as quoted by Drew Gilpin Faust in *Mothers of Invention*, 14; Lynch Diary, Aug. 20, 1861.

Chapter 2: The Struggle to Survive

For Winchester, the first year of the war brought hardships minor in comparison to what would come later. Although luxuries were scarce, the 1861 wheat and corn crops were bountiful and no one went hungry. By the spring of 1862, however, the effects of the naval blockade and the loss of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had made conditions in Winchester tense. Stores carried few supplies and luxury items such as sugar, salt, and coffee were nearly unobtainable. To complicate things, the Northern army's invasion of Winchester in March 1862 further stretched already scarce resources. For the next three years Winchester would be continuously occupied by either the Confederate or Union armies. Material shortages became a pretext used by both invading armies to confiscate civilian goods as well as punish those who were considered "disloyal." These dismal conditions festered hatred for soldiers that transcended the color of their uniform. Although women largely remained loyal to one side or another, their views changed. Patriotism, which had been an important aspect of the homefront early in the war, began to wane as women saw all soldiers as a threat to their own survival. They directed their efforts not to the war effort, but to providing for their families. These events linked Winchester women through common experiences, but also increased the town's division as women looked to blame the supporters of the other side—be it Union or Confederate—for their hardships.⁵⁷

The presence of General Joseph E. Johnston's troops outside of Winchester in April 1861 immediately provoked contrary responses from Confederate and Unionist

⁵⁷ Michael Mahon, "Shenandoah Valley of Virginia" in *Virginia at War, 1861*, eds. William C. Davis and James I. Robertson, Jr. for Virginia Center for Civil War Studies (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 135-137; Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, 6-7.

women. Confederate supporters were eager to help southern soldiers, and the men met with endless supplies of homemade goods, particularly socks. Union supporters, however, saw the Confederate troops stationed near their town as further proof of the dismal state of the country. While Winchester's Confederate diarists busily sewed flags to show their support, Unionist diarists wrote fretfully of steadily inflating prices. By May 1861 over four thousand men from the Shenandoah Valley had volunteered for the Confederate army. Many people assumed that the war would be short lived, at most a few weeks, and Confederate men were eager to participate before peace was restored. Women were equally aware that history was being made and generously gave everything they could to support the army. War, they understood, would result in inconveniences, but it was speculated that these would be minor. As the first year of the war melted into the second and then the third, however, it became painfully obvious that the war would be neither short nor painless. Supplies became scarce throughout the South, leading in the most dramatic case, to bread riots in Richmond and in Mobile, Alabama. In Winchester, women's concerns gradually shifted from the war to their own poverty as shortages and military occupation robbed families of necessities.⁵⁸

As in the rest of the South, Winchester heralded the war throughout 1861 for many reasons. The initial stages resulted in increased prosperity for Winchester. Between April 1861 and March 1862 agriculture and industry in the Shenandoah Valley boomed. The presences of both the northern and southern armies, resulted in large purchases of food and clothing. Area farmers were able to sell wagons and horses to

⁵⁸ Michael G. Mahon, *The Shenandoah Valley, 1861-1865: The Destruction of the Granary of the Confederacy* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999), 21.

passing armies and artisans found eager buyers for their wares. In particular, cobblers and blacksmiths prospered by supplying infantry units and their horses with vital footwear.⁵⁹

Throughout the first year of the war only moderate burdens were imposed on civilians, affecting mostly women's fashions. Although the war caused prices to rise, in fall 1861 inflation remained very moderate. As the war continued, though, naval blockade caused shortages of salt, molasses, coffee, pepper, saffron, as well as elaborate hats or hoops to become limited. Women embraced inconveniences as an element of their patriotic duties to sacrifice their own comforts to support men's battlefield struggles. Newspapers, magazines, and special wartime cookbooks were adapted to inspire women's sacrifices. Patriotic authors encouraged women to find alternative methods for everyday cooking needs, including preserving meat through smoking rather than salting and using a rye-based coffee mixture called "Confederate coffee."⁶⁰

Hybrid coffee mixtures made from rye, toasted corn, chestnuts, or sweet potatoes became a staple of the wartime South and served as a daily indication of women's proud sacrifices. Women adopted homespun in place of store-bought cloth. They brought long forgotten looms down from attics and encouraged one another to "freshen" up their old clothes by sewing piping along the bottoms of skirts to hide signs of wear. Newspapers applauded women for their devotion to the Confederate cause. The *Staunton Spectator* encouraged the homespun movement, claiming that southern women demonstrated their capabilities as seamstresses by creating clothing that any "lover of the South would wish

⁵⁹ Phillips, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War*, 108, 326-220.

⁶⁰ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Plain people of the Confederacy* (Columbia, South Carolina, 2000, 1943), 36-38; *Confederate Receipt Book: A Compilation of Over One Hundred Receipts, Adapted to the Times* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1863, 1960), 24; Emma Cassandra Riely Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War by Emma Cassandra Riely Macon and Reuben Conway Macon, adjutant, Thirteenth Virginia Infantry, Ewell's Division, Stonewall Jackson's Corps, C.S.A., 1861-1865, written 1896* (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1911), 32.

to wear." Although sewing had been a customary activity for young girls and women before the war, the homespun movement promoted renewed interest in domestic activities.⁶¹

War became a social event for young women, and although girls lamented not being able to buy hoops or other fashionable articles, it became a challenge to create new and interesting trends. Propaganda encouraged these behaviors, promoting substitutions in fashion as an attempt to distract women from wartime hardships and keep their morale up. One Winchester girl wrote that her favorite wartime decoration for hats was popcorn. Popcorn could also be strung around one's neck in place of pearls. This decoration was popular because it was not only decorative, it could be eaten. As sewing and aid societies thrived, however, other forms of entertainment vanished leaving Winchester girls lonely and bored.⁶²

By July 1861 the monotony of war had taken its toll on Winchester society. Although the rhetoric of the heroic "Confederate woman" continued to promote devotion to the war, Confederate Kate Sperry and her friend Jo were appalled to find that social activities such as visiting friends and neighbors were no longer considered acceptable. Following the first Battle of Manassas, families became preoccupied with mourning for lost loved ones, struggling to control rampant illnesses, and managing dwindling supplies. Social propriety deemed entertainments not directly related to the war inappropriate, and Sperry and Jo noticed that even attendance at weekly prayer meetings

⁶¹ *Confederate Receipt Book*, 35-36; Wiley, *The Plain People of the Confederacy*, 50; Staunton (VA) *Staunton Spectator*, December 16, 1862, Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities at War, http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/xml_docs/Valley_news/html/topics.html. (Assessed May 28, 2006).

⁶² Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 27.

had waned. Confused by the community's indifference to socializing, Sperry marveled than "war appears to have a more demoralizing effect that we would suppose."⁶³

Kate Sperry would not have to wait long for other forms of amusement to come her way. War may have slowed social events, but it presented other excitements. Sperry and Jo celebrated the presence of soldiers from all over the South who were stationed in the town during the early summer 1861. The girls were thrilled to have young men from as far away as Alabama stationed in Winchester. The soldiers begged the girls to write letters to them while they were away, and Sperry and Jo took these requests to heart. They became acquaintances with a string of young men with whom they corresponded. Sperry even exchanged gifts with some of them, writing passionately in her diary that she had fallen in love "as much so as a person already in love with another man could be."⁶⁴

Women's differing interpretations of the early stages of war reflected age and conflicting regional loyalties. Unlike Kate Sperry, whose youth and familial status shielded her from the initial hardships of the war, Unionist Julia Chase was older and saw no reason to glorify the war or the soldiers. Rather, she saw the Confederate troops as a burden and worried that if they wintered in Winchester they would drain the resources of the town. As summer 1861 progressed Chase pondered, "if this state of things continues, I don't know what will become of us." Unionist Harriet Griffith also did not share the optimistic wartime view of Confederate women. Although she was nearly the same age as Kate Sperry, Griffith was not enamored with the visiting soldiers and recorded that she often cried herself to sleep thinking of the hopeful young men who had left home overwhelmed with the importance of their duty. Their patriotism, Griffith knew, would

⁶³ Sperry Diary, July 18-21, 8-9, Accession 28532, Personal Papers Collection.

⁶⁴ Ibid., July 13, 1861.

kill many of these men. She was equally disgusted by the women who threw handkerchiefs, flowers and flags to the soldiers as they marched through town.⁶⁵

Many women found themselves caught up in the excitement of the war. Propaganda encouraged women's participation in homefront support of the war, and initially, giving up luxuries to aid the war effort seemed like a realistic request. The rhetoric of sacrifice that surrounded femininity created a mentality that it was women's duty to give or they would be turning their backs on their men.

This mentality was undermined the first battle of the war. Suddenly war did not seem exciting nor noble as women were confronted first hand with what war really meant. The First Battle of Manassas, in July 1861, dashed Winchester women's romantic notions of war. The inexperienced residents of Winchester prepared to greet the victorious southern troops with cheers and rejoicings, but when the soldiers returned to Winchester they were not celebrating. Wagons full of maimed and dead men rolled into town, carting the wounded to the hospitals and dropping the dead at their families' doors. Suddenly the carnage of battle replaced the romance of war. In addition, severe material shortages make life increasingly difficult. While prices had remained manageable throughout the first summer of the war by late 1861 many poor families were "suffering for food." The prices of salt, sugar, and pepper had become outrageous, and many Winchester residents began to wonder if they would be able to afford food and wood for the winter.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 4. (Chase Diary); Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 6-7.

⁶⁶ Roger U. Delauter, *Winchester in the Civil War*. (Lynchburg, Virginia: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1992), 12-16; Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 6.

Women's fears that they would not be able to survive a Winchester winter with dwindling supplies directly threatened the role of noble sacrifice that had been created for them by Confederate propaganda. Feminine roles in the Confederacy differed from those of men, because, unlike soldiers, women were not conscripted into contributing to the war effort. Rather, women had to be "enlisted by persuasion," and the media answered this need by creating images of the sacrificing southern woman. The subsequent articles, perpetuated by authors and newspapers of the time, depicted women's actions as "heroic self-sacrifice" and depicted feminine contributions as "indispensable to the moral, political, and military triumph" of Confederate men. Yet for many women in the South, such ideas were based on an image of womanhood that did not exist. Sacrifice of luxuries in the name of the army was easy as long as people on the homefront were not suffering, but it was much harder to muster support when civilians were going hungry. By 1861 the ideal of the self sacrificing female had been undermined by severe shortages, and Winchester's women had begun to reevaluate their wartime priorities.⁶⁷

Winchester's sudden plunge from a prosperous agricultural town into one desperate for supplies can be explained by looking at the South as a whole. Although the blockade had little affected southern states in the first year of the war, by 1862 it was becoming painfully obvious that the southern economy was more dependant on northern supplies than politicians wanted to admit. The South's few large factories could not produce enough to meet the demands of its twelve million people. The loss of the B & O Railroad also contributed to supply shortages. Previously the railroad and its connection, the Winchester and Potomac Railroad, had supplied markets throughout the South.

⁶⁷ Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," 1201.

Without the railroad large producing areas such as the Shenandoah Valley were unable to transport goods to the Deep South.

The Shenandoah Valley's agricultural affluence fed Winchester through the first year of the war. Similarly, the presence of Confederate soldiers created a market for Winchester mills. Woolen mill owner Aaron Griffith's factory could barely keep up with demand; Griffith's daughter commented that her father "would run two sets of hands night and day if he had them." In 1862, however, crops yields in the region were less than half what they had in 1861. In part this is because the Confederate draft claimed the Valley's the majority of the agricultural labor force leaving only old men, women, and children to tend the fields. The few crops produced went to feed the Confederate Army, and much of the rest were stolen by soldiers. By the end of 1862, the combined loss of the Valley's railroads and the burden of supplying soldiers had drained the Valley's resources to the point that Winchester was forced to appeal to Norfolk and Richmond for food. The request, however, was denied.⁶⁸

Residents' generosity to soldiers further increased Winchester's burdens. Unionists and Confederates alike provided for area soldiers. Unionist Harriet Griffith's family continuously invited soldiers to dinner, while Mary Greenhow Lee provided shoes, clothing, and food for the men. Although these women and their families had the means to provide for soldiers, many of the poorer rural families did not. Patriotism, however, inspired people to give so generously early in the war that when shortages became serious people did not have enough to supply their own families. Most people were forced to exist on coffee, tea, salt and sugar, but soon these supplies were also

⁶⁸ Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 14-15; Mahon, *The Shenandoah Valley, 1861-1865*, xii, 49-64; Phipps, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War*, 334-336.

scarce. What little food they had people tried to preserve, but as salt supplies dwindled and it became impossible to preserve perishable goods food shortages reached crisis.⁶⁹

Women unsuccessfully attempted to find substitutes for salt, most popularly wood ashes or residue from boiled brine. Eventually shortages became so severe that women resorted to scraping the dirt from smokehouse floors, but soon this resource was also depleted. By 1862 Virginia was so desperate for salt that Governor Letcher declared it illegal to export salt from the state. While the Confederate government had taken responsibility for providing salt to the army, it left the responsibility of civilians' supplies to the state governments.⁷⁰

The government's solution to salt shortages was to become salt manufacturers and vendors by selling salt directly to residents rather than attempting to ration it. Although this method was by no means efficient, Anna Wayland of Shenandoah County recorded that when one purchased salt from the government it was sold at a fair price. In the fall of 1863, Wayland's father bought salt for ten dollars per pound from a speculator. One month later, Wayland's father had purchased salt for ten cent per pound. This gross example of speculation substantiates the Confederate Government's concerns regarding this practice. Despite government attempts to solve the salt problem, however, the Confederacy was never able to locate enough salt to supply both the army and its residents nor was it able to develop a suitable substitution, and hoarding and speculation continued.⁷¹

⁶⁹Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection ,22; Phipps, *Genteel Rebel*, 166-168; Massey, *Ersatz of the Confederacy*, 60-63; Ella Lonn, *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy* (New York: W. Neal, 1933), 78-82; Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 86.

⁷⁰ Lonn, *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy*, 16-18, 78-82; Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 86.

⁷¹ Lonn, *Salt As a Factor in the Confederacy*, 90-110; Wayland Diary, Oct. 31, 1863, Nov. 30 1863 26 WFCHS , John Walter Wayland Papers.

Salt shortages led to meat shortages throughout the South. By 1863, butcher shops no longer carried meat, and what meat and vegetables the South did have went to the army for soldiers' rations. Families relied on fish and fowl and their own gardens for food, but even gardens were complicated by seed shortages and starving soldiers.⁷²

As food shortages mounted people's resentments over impressments grew and their generosity to soldiers waned. By 1862 the Army of Northern Virginia was still able to get full rations of bacon, which was substituted for beef and flour, but these provisions would not be available for the duration of the war. The Army of Northern Virginia would not see full rations of salt, sugar, coffee, or soap for most of the war. Without full rations or civilian hand-outs to rely on, soldiers were forced to steal from gardens and pantries to feed themselves.

One of the most poignant examples of how theft affected Winchester families, is the case of Cornelia McDonald. Left alone with nine children while her husband served in the Confederate army, McDonald was horrified on Christmas Eve 1862 to see two Union cavalymen taking the Christmas turkey down from the tree in the yard where it was waiting to be cooked. Infuriated, McDonald remembered, "I had spent six dollars, and sent a man miles on horseback to get it rather than have nothing good and pleasant for our Christmas dinner." McDonald demanded that the men return her turkey, but they laughed at her, claiming her bird was contraband. Almost hysterical, McDonald managed to force the men to return her bird but was no sooner back in her kitchen than her slave woman noticed that more soldiers had moved into the McDonald's orchard. Rushing outside to try to stop the pilfering of her homestead, McDonald was again summoned by her slave. This time soldiers had made their way into the kitchen and were

⁷² Massey, *Ersatz of the Confederacy*, 60-61.

taking the Christmas cakes that McDonald had spent the morning making for her children.⁷³

The assault on Cornelia McDonald's property was not an uncommon occurrence. In their shared diary, eight year old John Magill Steele and his ten year old sister Sarah recorded that the "ugly Yankees" had been caught taking onions from the family garden. Although both the McDonalds and the Steele's were Confederate supporters and the thefts had been committed by Union soldiers, both armies were guilty of stealing from civilians. As wartime hardships increased and soldiers began to desert their armies, women's property and supplies became susceptible to theft regardless of whom they sided with.⁷⁴

The need to hide food and other goods to prevent pilfering was a blow to Winchester women's morale. Women assumed that they would be protected by soldiers, but the realization that the army was not concerned with homefront conditions caused women's patriotism to shift. Although they continued to associate themselves as either Unionists or Confederates, women realized that it was their responsibility to defend their homes from invaders and thieves. Those women with the means to do so began to hoard goods. In August 1862, Mary Greenhow Lee bought two hundred pounds of sugar, and in March 1863 she bought one hundred herrings, twenty-five pounds of molasses, eight hams, as well as supplies of coffee and soap, all hidden throughout the house. Julia Chase recorded that shop owners in town had advanced all of their goods, and those residents who had not been fortunate enough to purchase goods early would suffer from other

⁷³Ludwell Lee Montague, "Sustenance of the Army of the Valley," *Military Affairs* 12, no.4 (1948), 226-231; McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 101-102.

⁷⁴Diary of John Magill Steele and Sarah Eliza Steele in *Diaries, Letters, and Recollections of the War Between the States* (vol. III Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society Papers, Winchester, VA U.S.A., 1955), 71.

people's hoarding. Knowing of this panic, shop keepers speculated goods. They bought scarce items such as meat or spices and sold them at exorbitant prices to civilians who had no choice but to pay the asking price. In fall 1861 Julia Chase noted that matches, which before the war had cost sixty two cents for a book, now cost six dollars. One man paid one hundred thirty dollars for a sack of pepper, which before the war would have cost ten or twelve dollars.⁷⁵

While shortages undermined the morale of all Winchester women they also served to create a distinct wartime identity. The festering hostilities between Winchester Unionists and Confederates became more pronounced as women validated their cause by demonizing the opposition. Mary Greenhow Lee openly scorned Robert Conrad, who had gained a reputation as a Union sympathizer during Virginia's secession convention, by refusing to acknowledge his presence. Conrad only made his way back into Mrs. Lee's favor after a known Unionist greeted him in the street and he put his hands into his pockets rather than shake hands with the man. In particular when it came to shortages Winchester women turned this hostility against one another.⁷⁶

The Secession Crisis had made women's political distinctions glaringly obvious, and these hostilities continued well into the war. For example, Unionist Julia Chase resented Confederate claims that the Union Army was guilty of theft. According to Chase, the Confederate Army was just as guilty of stealing as the northern army. In fact, southern guerillas had stolen a sack of salt and twenty sheep from a man in the Winchester area only the previous night. In addition, it was known that whenever any

⁷⁵ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided* 8, 14 (Chase Diary), 82 (L. Lee Diary); Mary Greenhow Lee diary, July 24, 1862, 1182 Wfchs (Mrs. Hugh Lee diary, Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives, Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society, Winchester, VA, U.S.A.) hereafter cited M.G. Lee Diary.

⁷⁶ M.G. Lee Diary, March 21, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

citizen tried to take butter to the soldiers in the hospital, it was confiscated. Angered by what she saw as unfair treatment, Chase wrote there was “such a marked difference in regard to the two parties. One, the Unionists, see nothing but misery and starvation before them, the other, an abundance of everything that money can procure.”⁷⁷

Chase’s claim that Unionists were starving while Confederates exercised gluttony suggests that although no records indicate violence among civilians, there was noticeable hostility between Unionists and Confederates. Women watched each other hoping to catch neighbors with opposing loyalties committing some crime that could be reported. Women also resented implications that during times of occupation, armies gave their female supporters special treatment while punishing opposing women. These jealousies fueled Winchester’s divisions, and although the majority of Confederate and Unionist women’s experiences mirrored one another, they remained hostile. Winchester’s military presence further aggravated the town’s divisions as women tried to protect themselves and their families through blatant attempts to manipulate their occupiers.

When General Nathaniel Banks and the Union army first occupied Winchester in the spring of 1862, many frightened southern supporters removed their Confederate flags and replaced them with United States flags. So many families proclaimed their Unionist support, however, that northern generals grew suspicious and doubted there were any true Unionists in Winchester. For the most part, Union soldiers confiscated supplies from Confederates and Unionists alike, leaving loyal residents feeling betrayed. Julia Chase’s bitter disappointment following Banks’ occupation of Winchester demonstrated her hope that Unionist families such as her own would be rewarded for their loyalty. Instead

⁷⁷ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 111,139 (Chase Diary).

Federal soldiers treated the Chases as harshly as the “Secesh” whom they so greatly resented.⁷⁸

The occupation of Winchester by both the Union and the Confederate armies put greater strain on the town’s shortages of food, fuel, and clothing and further undermined women’s military patriotism. Circumstances became so dismal that it was impossible to procure enough wood. In October 1862 Julia Chase noted that wood had become so scarce that fifty-one dead soldiers were lying unburied in the graveyard because the townspeople could not procure enough wood to build coffins. Cornelia McDonald was horrified in May 1862 as the Union cavalry marching past her home stopped long enough to rip the ornamental railing from her fence for firewood. Union soldiers stole not only the rest of Mrs. McDonald’s fence, they took her winter supply of wood.⁷⁹

With wood almost impossible to obtain, Winchester residents relied on their winter clothes to provide warmth. When these became too tattered to wear, however, material shortages reached a crisis. Among the direst clothing shortages were shoes. Many cobblers had been employed by the army, leaving those on the homefront to fend for themselves. The scarcity of leather created shoe shortages, and since all available cattle had been impressed to feed the Confederate Army, amateur cobblers were known to collect dead horses from battle sites so their skins could be used to make leather. Dog skins were also used in lieu of leather, but substitutions did not increase the availability of footwear for most southern people. In 1863 Cornelia McDonald begged a cobbler to make shoes for her children, even though she had no money. The cobbler was sympathetic to Mrs. McDonald’s plight, and he agreed to let her pay for the shoes after

⁷⁸ Ibid., 44 (Chase Diary).

⁷⁹ McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War*, 43.

the war. Not everyone was as fortunate as Cornelia McDonald to find a cobbler who would supply her with shoes on credit, and many women were forced to make homemade shoes from wood, cloth, paper, carpet, or even knit them. These substitutions did little to shield feet from the cold snows of winter. Those people who were either not able to pay the extreme prices that many cobblers were asking for shoes or find an alternative, went barefoot.⁸⁰

Mary Tucker Magill recorded that women's shoes became so worn out that they limited women's ability to travel to Winchester hospitals. In desperation Magill wrote General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson a letter asking that an army cobbler be sent to Winchester to make the women shoes. Although Magill worried that her letter may have been bold, she felt that women "in pursuing their walks among the sick and suffering, in relieving the wants of the destitute, [were] as truly the soldiers of the South as the men" and their needs deserved the same attention.⁸¹

Magill's assertion that the needs of the homefront were equally important as those of the battlefield exemplifies women's resentment towards the military. While neither Union nor Confederate women had turned their backs on their armies they questioned whether their sacrifices were worthwhile. With soldiers literally in people's back yards taking from their gardens and children without decent clothes to wear, women were forced to find ways to validate their struggles. For many women the vilification of the "enemy" enabled them to justify that their cause was right and the opposition's was wrong, especially when shortages became so severe that women resorted to theft themselves.

⁸⁰ Massey, *Ersatz of the Confederacy*, 81-83.

⁸¹ McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 180; Mary Tucker Magill, *Women, or Chronicles of the Late War* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1871), vii-viii.; Wiley, *The Plain People of the Confederacy*, 53-54.

In May 1862, when General Banks' army retreated from Winchester, it left clothing, blankets, and wagons full of supplies meant for sutlers' stores littered in the roads from Strasburg to Martinsburg and Winchester to Charlestown. A few days later when the Confederate Army also evacuated Winchester, they failed to destroy all of the supplies, leaving behind such valuable commodities as sugar, cheese, and crackers. Winchester residents took advantage of the disregarded items to stock their cupboards. Similarly in September 1862, when the Federal army fled Winchester they failed to destroy their supplies, leaving the warehouses fully stocked. Again the people of Winchester took advantage of the situation to gather clothing and food. When the Confederate Army occupied Winchester immediately after the Federal Army's retreat, the provost marshal ordered people to return the goods that were taken or have their homes searched. When people refused to submit to the provost marshal's request, Confederate soldiers searched homes for Federal goods, targeting African Americans and poor whites who had been given flour, blankets, and clothing by the Union Army.⁸²

The people's refusal to turn the Union supplies over to the Confederate army demonstrates Winchester's change in morale and the people's desperation for supplies. Rather than support the army or turn over the stolen goods, Confederate and Union supporters alike challenged the Confederate army to search their property. Winchester's distress over shortages peaked in early January 1863 when Brig. Gen. Robert Milroy took command of Winchester. Although his control lasted less than six months, Milroy's reign was the most despised Union occupation of the war. For Winchester women who had been looking for a villain to blame their hardships on, the general proved a perfect

⁸² Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 106 (Chase Diary); Phipps, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War*, 337.

target. This is not to say that Milroy was a victim. On the contrary, the general proved unsympathetic to the Winchester women or their plights and adopted a policy that war should be fought on the homefront as well as the battlefield thereby declaring war on Winchester's residents.

Before Milroy arrived, he sent a portion of his command into Winchester. On Christmas Day, 1862 Milroy's soldiers began searching homes for bacon, arms, and liquor. General Milroy ordered Winchester residents to produce two thousand pounds of bacon by the time the rest of Milroy's unit arrived on New Year's Day. In order to procure the food, the soldiers broke into cellars and pantries, stealing everything they could get their hands on and stripping Winchester's people of their winter provisions.⁸³

Milroy's most significant contribution to the starvation that was ravishing Winchester, however, was his enforcement of the Oath of Loyalty to the United States. This oath mandated that residents renounce association with the Confederate States of America before they were allowed to buy supplies or leave the city. Although the oath protected the Union army from Confederate spies, Milroy and other Union generals used the oath as a manipulation tactic to demoralize Confederate people through enforced loyalty. Under Milroy's command, Winchester stores were filled with everything from practical goods to frivolous ones such as oranges, but only "loyal" residents could buy there. The Union army, in other words, used hunger to enforce loyalty. Despite their fear of starvation, many Winchester women refused to take the oath. Laura Lee wrote in her diary that she believed "Gen. Milroy is trying to starve us into loyalty." Thirteen year old Gettie Miller showed similar contempt. She wrote: "I think these Yankees might let the

⁸³ Jonathan A. Noyalas, "*My Will is Absolute Law*" *General Robert H. Milroy and Winchester, Virginia*, (Master's Thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 2003), 20-25; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 74-75 (L. Lee Diary).

residents have some goods brought up but they think they can starve us out but we will manage to scrape up something if it is nothing but dry bread.”⁸⁴

The oath further prevented Winchester citizens from obtaining supplies from other areas such as Maryland by restricting traveling passes to loyal residents only. Although some women attempted to either enter or leave Winchester without a pass, the experience became an ordeal and required extreme presence of mind to avoid being forced to take the oath. When Confederate Emma Riely tried to reenter Winchester in 1862 following a trip to Luray, Virginia, she and her traveling companion were refused entrance into the town because they had not taken the oath of loyalty. Because Riely was only fourteen-years-old she was exempt from the restrictions of the oath, but her friend was twenty-one-years old and had no choice but to take the oath if she wanted to go home. Riely remembered, “poor Fannie broke down and just boho-hooded in the most heart-broken style. I felt so sorry for her that I began to beg her to do what I had all along vowed I would not do, but I did not see how she would do otherwise, for we had not prepared or dreamed of such a condition of affairs.”

Gen. Milroy’s reputation as a demon was intensified by his depletion of Winchester’s scarce wood supply. By the time that Milroy’s forces took over Winchester the wood supply had already been exhausted. According to Laura Lee, Milroy’s forces “do not have wood from the country, but tear down the few fences that were left, and the outhouses and wooden buildings around town. They have torn the [Winchester]

⁸⁴ Sperry Diary, March 13, 1863, Accession 28532, Personal Papers Collection; Margaretta Miller Diary, March 26, 1863, 301 WFCHS, (Godfrey Miller Family Papers, Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, Winchester, VA U.S.A.)

Academy to pieces, and are now destroying the Market House. There seems to be no hope of relief from our dismay.”⁸⁵

Without food, clothing, or fuel, Winchester women found themselves in dire circumstances. Even those who had money did not always have the opportunity to buy anything. In April 1862 Mary Greenhow Lee wrote: “This incessant struggle to get enough to keep us from starving is one of the hardest trials, I have had yet; I have money but there is nothing to buy.” Inflation made Confederate money almost worthless. By the winter exchange of 1865, twelve hundred Confederate dollars equaled one dollar in gold. Inflation coupled with scarcity of goods allowed speculators to charge whatever they wanted for goods. Emma Riely remembered, “People used to have a basket to carry their money to market in but it bought so little they could carry their provisions home in their pockets.” Riely also recounted that a military coat sold for six hundred and fifty dollars. This price was ridiculous, but without adequate amounts of fuel or wood Winchester people were given the choice of taking the oath of loyalty or freezing.⁸⁶

To the strong “Secesh” women of Winchester, the oath required them to give something they could not bear to part with, their identities. By trying to coerce them into pledging unquestionable loyalty to the Union, General Milroy was asking Winchester women to renounce not only their loved ones, but their concepts of self as well. Passionate Confederate supporters refused to relent to Milroy’s manipulative tactics, which increased his demonic image. Mary Greenhow Lee, in particular, refused to accept aid of any kind from northern soldiers. In March 1862 it became known that Yankee

⁸⁵ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 64, 75 (L. Lee Diary).

⁸⁶ M.G. Lee Diary, April 29, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; “Confederate Inflation Chart,” Civil War Centennial Committee Official Publications number 13, (Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA); Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 85.

soldiers were trying to sell goods such as coffee to residents. When they stooped at her door, however, Lee refused to compromise her patriotism by purchasing goods from Yankees, causing the northern soldiers to comment, “Secesh lives here.”⁸⁷

Mary Greenhow Lee’s stubborn refusal to accept aid from northern soldiers demonstrates her vilification of the enemy, but was a luxury that most Winchester women could ill afford. Although Cornelia McDonald often went out of her way to insult Union Soldiers, on several occasions she compromised her strong hatred for Yankees in order to provide for her nine children. McDonald, however, never accepted assistance from the Union army directly nor did she purchase northern goods in daylight. On one occasion McDonald bought a quarter of beef from a local woman who took the oath because her husband refused, and she wanted access to markets. According to the woman, “it was the only way they could get the means of living.” Cornelia McDonald was luckier than many of Winchester’s residents, because she had arranged to have one of her fields sown with wheat despite her husband’s absence. This wheat provided the McDonalds with ten barrels of flour, enough to feed the family for a year and more than enough for Mrs. McDonald to use as leverage when trading for other necessities. Those who were not lucky enough to have procured flour were forced to pay prices that reached as high as six hundred dollars per barrel in 1864.⁸⁸

Despite Mrs. McDonald’s foresight in securing flour for her family, she lacked supplies of other goods. The solution to this plight lay with the northern soldiers camped near her home. According to McDonald, she made an arrangement with one of the Yankee men. He would come to her home in the very early hours of the morning

⁸⁷ M.G. Lee Diary, March 16, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

⁸⁸ McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War*, 118; Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 85.

carrying a black camp kettle and a bundle. The kettle contained sugar and coffee and the bundle contained bacon, a longed-for luxury since McDonald and her children survived mostly on bread. In return McDonald would give the man flour.⁸⁹ This trade system exemplifies the extent of wartime hardships and the humanization of Yankees. While McDonald desperately hated the Union soldiers who continuously camped around her home, she was able to put aside her hatred so that her children could eat, and in the process learned to trust the Yankee soldier who supplied her.

McDonald's arrangement with the Union soldier also shows that Milroy's insistence that residents take the oath in order to obtain goods was not foolproof. According to Laura Lee, although sutlers faced heavy penalties for selling goods to Confederate supporters, they refused no one business. Her sister-in-law, Mary Greenhow Lee, continued to hoard goods regardless of Milroy's restrictions on southern women.⁹⁰ Still, small kindnesses from soldiers and Unionist shopkeepers did not diminish political divisions within the town, nor did they discourage Confederate women from condemning Unionists. Likewise, Unionist Julia Chase felt no sympathy for Confederate women and resented their implication that northern supporters were somehow responsible for southern hardships. Chase was disgusted by Confederate women's taunting of Union supporters and northern troops, saying that the women of Winchester had become "demonical." Chase's suggested solution to the mockery was that the offending women be made examples of; a resolution she felt would have a "salutary effect." Although Chase offers no suggestions as to the appropriate punishment for Confederate women, her bitterness shows that she had begun to associate Confederates with evil. In October

⁸⁹ McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 122-123.

⁹⁰ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 82 (L. Lee Diary).

1862 Chase was infuriated to hear that fellow Unionist Aaron Griffith had been arrested and his property confiscated. Desperate for vindication she wrote, “The Secessionists will only have to suffer when the Federals have possession of Winchester.”⁹¹

The perennial occupation of Winchester by one side or the other made life difficult for everyone. Although both armies gave women some favors for their loyalties, all women were forced to scrounge for supplies, causing both Unionist and Confederate women to harbor contempt for both armies. In fall 1863 Julia Chase recounted that the man who ran the stage from Winchester to Martinsburg had been captured by the Confederate army. Chase attributed his arrest to the southern army’s desire to close the stageline because the army knew that “we are dependant on the dreadful Yankees for supplies.” The situation was made more difficult by both armies’ liberal confiscation of personal property. Soldiers from both sides took whatever possessions or supplies they wanted with little regard for the families they were depriving.⁹²

The hardships suffered from shortages contributed to women’s already waning morale. In winter 1865, Emma Riely noted that Winchester had fallen into “a kind of Rip Van Winkle sleep.” Socializing of any kind had been forgotten as poverty and death overwhelmed families. Parlors were in disarray and even church societies, “the great gossip centers,” had not met since the war began. Kate Sperry’s 1861 concern that socializing had become unfashionable belonged to a different society and a pre-war life. Entertaining was a frivolous concern when many women were in continuous mourning for family members.⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid., 40-41, 65 (Chase Diary).

⁹² Ibid., 40-41, 112 (Chase Diary).

⁹³ Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 117.

The mortality rate of southern soldiers was three times as high as those in the North, meaning that almost no family in the South was spared losing a loved one. Additionally many families suffered so many losses that they were not given sufficient time to recover in between deaths. These high death rates plunged many women not only deeper into despair but deeper into poverty. With only women and old men to work the fields crops rotted in the fields. Women with small children suffered the most because they could neither rely on sons to do the work nor leave their children to harvest the crops themselves. Without money from agriculture, many women had no income. Those whose families lived nearby could rely on the aid of cousins and siblings with men at home for financial support. By 1863, however, nearly all men had been drafted into the Confederate Army, and many families with sufficient resources had depleted them by helping less fortunate family members. Desperately, many women pleaded with the Confederate government to discharge their men. The government received so many requests for discharges, however, that it would have been impossible to honor many of them military duties without crippling the Confederate Army. In *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*, George Rable points to women's desperation to have their men discharged as one of the contradictory actions that allows historians to claim that women "both sustained and undermined the war effort." During the secession crisis women had encouraged men to enlist with fervent patriotism, but destitution from the war likewise led them to beg for men's discharge or temporary leave.⁹⁴

As early as 1862 women whose early wartime writings had been hopeful become depressed and bitter. Portia Baldwin Baker bemoaned, "I wish I did not think so much of

⁹⁴ Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice" 1201; George Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 89-90.

a little self denial.” A deeply religious woman, Baker’s despair shows that the novelty of war had been replaced by the reality of the accompanying hardships. Shortages left many Winchester residents cold and hungry. Worse than the bitterness of want, however, was the knowledge that any resources they did gain would be threatened by occupying armies.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Portia Baldwin Baker Diary, December 28, 1862, 1178 Wfchs mmf (Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, Winchester, VA U.S.A.).

Ch. 3: Winchester's Southern Identity: Patriotism and Race Relations

Beginning in March 1862, when Federal troops commanded by General Banks entered Winchester, the town would be continuously occupied by one army or another until April 1865. Some local historians of Frederick County have estimated that throughout the course of the war, Winchester changed hands over 70 times. This estimation includes instances of cavalry raids which did not result in new occupation. A more reliable assessment of Winchester's numerous occupations is suggested by Margaretta Barton Colt, author of the book *Defend the Valley*. Colt estimates that Winchester changed hands thirteen times throughout the entirety of the war, seven of which were Federal occupations.⁹⁶ Colt's reduced estimation of Winchester's occupations does not degrade the fear and struggles suffered by the town's residents, who felt that their lives and property were continuously threatened by either the occupying armies or by raiders. The hardships presented by Winchester's frequent occupations, including attacks on women's patriotism and changing race relations, threatened women's identities and created a need to assert independence over invaders. Rather than give into their fear, both Unionist and Confederate women refused to compromise their wartime identities and fought back by displaying images of patriotism and resisting changing race relations.

As General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's army withdrew from Winchester in March 1862 to be replaced a few days later by the Federal army under General Banks, hostilities among the divided residents of Winchester became more heated. Before Banks' occupation of Winchester, Confederate women had not hesitated to provide

⁹⁶ Colt, *Defend the Valley*, 9-10.

Jackson's army with the names of their neighbors who openly identified themselves as Unionists. This action subsequently led to the arrest of many Union men, among them, Julia Chase's father. Chase had suspected that her father would be arrested, writing that the "Secesh" had the names of one hundred fifty Unionists. When her father was seized she confessed, "how indignant I felt towards the whole town. To take an old man lying sick on the sofa is outrageous." Chase was not the only Union supporter who remained bitter that the Confederates in town had so easily turned their neighbors over to the Confederate Army. A few weeks later, when the Federal Army marched into Winchester, Unionists immediately organized a petition to free the arrested Union men, remaining unsympathetic to the plights of Winchester Confederates who were now suffering at the hands of the northern army.⁹⁷

Unionists' blatant celebrations over Federal occupation infuriated Laura Lee, who angrily recorded that when the army marched into town "people who had always been known here as disloyal" threw United States flag from windows and waved handkerchiefs. For Union women of Winchester the United States flag represented security. Unionist Julia Chase welcomed Federal occupation of Winchester, finding comfort in the "glorious flag is waving over our town." Similarly, Harriet Griffith wrote that she and her family were so excited by Federal occupation that they became crazed. So much so that after hanging their United States flag outside of their house, they were overcome with excitement and unable to work for several days.⁹⁸

Hanging flags outside of their homes was a way for women to blatantly defy Winchester's military invasions. Making flags to support one's cause had become

⁹⁷ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 21-25 (Chase Diary).

⁹⁸ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 22-23 (L. Lee Diary) 22-23 (Chase Diary); Griffith diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 76.

fashionable in Winchester among Confederate and Unionist women, but occupying soldiers and their commanders openly resented women's acts of defiance and sought to undermine their loyalties by confiscating flags. Among the most sought after "Secesh" flags were that of Mary Greenhow Lee.⁹⁹

Mary Greenhow Lee's secession flag would become infamous. Only one day after the 1862 Federal occupation Mrs. Lee was summoned to her door by two soldiers who demanded that she turn over her flag. Lee admitted that she had possessed a flag at one point, but had sent it to "a place of safety." Not to be deterred, the soldiers insisted that they search the house but were again refused by Lee. Mary's sister-in-law, Laura, recounted the house was searched that evening and the next day. After the Lee's third refusal to let soldiers search for the flag the men gave up, announcing that "they had never been treated with such scorn as by the Winchester ladies."¹⁰⁰

For her part, Mary Greenhow Lee was encouraged by her confrontation with Federal soldiers, saying that "I was glad to find how brave we were; I was very indignant, but not a bit frightened." Encounters such as these became routine in the Lee household throughout the war. As late as 1864, Mary Greenhow Lee and her household were still fighting to keep their flag from being confiscated. Together, with her sisters-in-law and her nieces, Lee went to extreme measures. At one point, she hid the flag under one of her niece's skirts. For staunch Confederates such as the Lee women, the idea of giving up their flag was the same as allowing Federal forces a victory in their own home.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ John Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 27.

¹⁰⁰ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 25 (L. Lee Diary).

¹⁰¹ M.G. Lee Diary, March 14, 1862, February 9, 1864, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, (L. Lee Diary), 23-25.

Harriet Griffith went to similar measures to prevent her homemade United States flag from being taken. As a Unionist, Harriet's flag was not under scrutiny during the long periods of Federal occupation, but she knew that her actions were watched by Confederate supporters in town. To avoid suspicion Griffith made her flag from ribbons which she bought one at a time to make her task less obvious. Despite her shrewd attempts at subtly, Confederate soldiers searched her home three times looking for the flag, although it was never confiscated.¹⁰²

Women whose flags were taken were not physically punished, but according to Griffith, when Confederate soldiers found a Union flag they dragged it through the muddy streets of Winchester on their boots to symbolize the trampling of the Union Army. The vehemence in which Winchester women defended their flags exemplified the power struggle going on within the town. By taking a physical piece of women's patriotism and destroying it, occupying armies asserted their authority within the town. By hiding the flags, however, women waged their own battles on their own terms. These flags not only represented women's specific causes, but pieces of their identities as well.

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Although Cornelia McDonald did not choose to hang a Confederate flag outside of her home, in April, 1862 she was outraged when she returned home one day to find a Union flag hanging over her front door, and Yankee soldiers camped in her orchard. When McDonald inquired as to their purpose, soldiers informed that her house had been taken by Col. Candée of the 5th Connecticut Infantry as headquarters. McDonald protested to the Colonel that her children were ill, but he gently replied that the Union presence would serve as protection for the McDonald family, and since he only wished to

¹⁰² Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 28.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 28.

occupy one room of the house Mrs. McDonald would be minimally inconvenienced. McDonald remembered, “I saw the wisdom of submitting, but could not accept the flag without a protest; so I ventured to say, ‘You will confer a favor on me Col. Candée if you will have that flag removed from the front door if you must remain, as while it is there, I shall be obliged to enter at the back of the house.’” The Col. granted McDonald’s request by removing the flag from above her door but it remained in her yard.¹⁰⁴

Cornelia McDonald’s confrontation with the Union Army over the placement of their flag further exemplifies the struggles between Winchester women and Union soldiers. Women refused to walk underneath the opposing flags that were hung throughout town. Kate Sperry noted that when she refused to walk under the United States flag hanging in the center of Winchester, Yankee soldiers cursed her. Angered, Sperry noted that the “fiends” had no right to call themselves soldiers. Soldier, she felt, was a term of honor and should be reserved only for southern men. A few days later Sperry was on her way to the Confederate hospital when she noticed that the Union soldiers had hung a new United States flag in town. This flag was so large that it hung across the street, presumably giving women no choice but to walk underneath it. Not to be outdone, Sperry took backstreets in order to avoid the flag completely.¹⁰⁵

Winchester women’s passionate defense of their flags gives insight into how they viewed life on the homefront. In *The Confederate Battle Flag: America’s Most Embattled Emblem*, historian John Coski discusses the significance of the Confederate flag to soldiers. According to Coski, “Regardless of what prompted southern states to secede or who fired the first shots, the subsequent war of secession cast southern armies

¹⁰⁴ McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Sperry Diary, March 18-20, 1862, Accession 28532, Personal papers collection.

in the role of defending their states against military invasion by Federal forces—forces that inflicted incalculable damage on people and property. The soldier’s battle flag thus symbolized defense of home and resistance to invasion.” Because of the importance battle flags had to both the success of the army and the morale of the men, it was heroic to capture the enemy’s flag. Likewise the loss of a unit’s flag was catastrophic. Therefore, the persistent searching for flags among Winchester women suggests that soldiers sought to inflict humiliation on the homefront as well as the battlefield.¹⁰⁶

As an occupied town with close proximity to several important battles Winchester became a combat zone. Women’s defense of their flags mirrored the need to protect their homes. In 1862, a frustrated Mary Greenhow Lee wrote, “Our bonny red flag shall yet wave over us, for they shall never have it as long as I live.” The security of women’s flags also influenced morale. As long as women could keep their flags safe and away from the opposing army they could believe in success. Even if their army lost on the battlefield, small victories over the enemy at home allowed women to believe their cause would prevail. These feelings transcended regional loyalties, and although they considered one another to be the enemy, both Unionist and Confederate women identified themselves with their flags.¹⁰⁷

As hostilities between Winchester women and occupying soldiers grew, confrontations became more aggressive. During one search of Cornelia McDonald’s house, soldiers attempted to find “treasonous papers.” Infuriated by the imposition on her family and home, McDonald taunted the men by handing them a petticoat and her daughter’s doll to search. McDonald’s blatant contempt for Union soldiers was not

¹⁰⁶ Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 20-35.

¹⁰⁷ M.G. Lee Diary, March 14, 1862, 1182 WFCHS, Lee Collection.

without reason. Because of her husband's position as a colonel in the Confederate army, the McDonalds were targets. Rather than simply search the house, soldiers rummaged through Mrs. McDonald's drawers and read notes out loud so they could mock the content. These deliberate attempts to humiliate the McDonald family created scorn for soldiers. Even the children vocalized their contempt for the Union army. In one instance three-year-old Donald was sitting on his family's porch watching Union soldiers march by the house. One man placed his hand on Donald's head as he passed and asked how the child was doing. Without flinching Donald ordered the man to remove his hand, saying simply, "You are a Yankee."¹⁰⁸

Although the McDonald children's rage towards northern soldiers was not unfounded, their youth did not exempt them from the cruelties inflicted by Federal soldiers. Harry McDonald, one of the older McDonald sons, was often the brunt of Federal attacks. In April 1862 Union soldiers beat and kicked fourteen-year-old Harry McDonald, for admitting that he was a secessionist. Having witnessed the event, Cornelia McDonald and Mary Magill pulled a soldier from another unit aside and vented their feelings over Harry's treatment. The women were so venomous in their complaints that Mary Greenhow Lee wrote, "I have never known 'till lately how brave women, with right on their side, can make villains quail and tremble." McDonald's defense of her son did little to eliminate the scrutiny of her family, however, and less than a year later Harry was again targeted when someone threw a snow ball at a Federal officer. Turning on the

¹⁰⁸M.G. Lee Diary, March 17, 1862, 1182 WFCHS, Lee Collection.; McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 23-25, 30.

group of boys behind him, the officer singled out Harry and ordered that he drop the snow ball he was holding. When Harry refused he was arrested.¹⁰⁹

Cornelia McDonald's defiance of Union soldiers became part of her routine. Her house was searched so frequently that when an elderly northern man invited himself to inspect her home and property, McDonald feared no retributions from the man's anger when she ordered him to leave. In her memoir McDonald remembered, "I defied him, knowing perfectly well that he dared not enter the house without authority and a search by authorized parties I did not dread as I was used to them and prepared for them. So I enjoyed his rage and his discomfiture and saw him walk away."¹¹⁰

Confederate Winchester women's acts of rebellion escalated beyond defense of their homes to exhibitions made to infuriate Union soldiers. In 1862 women adopted a fashion that they called "Jeff Davis bonnets." These calico and gingham bonnets were adopted because of their cheap durability, but Confederate women's use of them as articles of Confederate devotion offended the Federal soldiers who occupied Winchester, so the bonnets were outlawed. Unionist Julia Chase was relieved at the restrictions on fashion, claiming that Confederate women "put on many airs and frowns and sneers and try in every way to put down the Union people. They are certainly very bold and impudent." From Laura Lee's perspective, however, outlawing the bonnets was persecution against Confederate women. According to Lee, the bonnets "were adopted for their cheapness and for their defense against staring soldiers, but they resent it and say they are intended as an insult by imitating them. We do not care how we dress while they are here!" Similarly when General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson died of complications

¹⁰⁹ M.G. Lee Diary, April 23, 1862, 1182 WFCHS, Lee Collection.; McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 132; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 32 (L. Lee Diary).

¹¹⁰ McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 57.

from wounds and pneumonia in 1863, Mary Greenhow Lee instigated a movement to grieve openly for the fallen general. Fashioning a mourning rosette with the head of Washington in the center Lee wore her badge proudly throughout town, although her nieces feared that she would be arrested. Even thirteen-year-old Gettie Miller did her part to exhibit her staunch patriotism to the Confederate cause by growing “secesh” flowers in the arrangement red, white, red.¹¹¹

The majority of accounts from Winchester women come from Confederate supporters who emphasized their conflicts with Union soldiers, but Confederate soldiers were also guilty of destruction in the Valley. Confederate soldier Robert T. Barton of Winchester wrote in his memoir that his duty was to place the public need above those of private residents; in other words he took from civilians as needed for the greater good of the army. Many residents resisted Confederate impressments of materials and goods from their homesteads and in such cases the supplies were taken forcefully. Winchester residents viewed the Confederate presence so begrudgingly that Winchester resident Robert Y. Conrad notified both General Jackson and General Imboden of the behaviors of their soldiers. With the immense numbers of ill soldiers in Winchester hospitals and more soldiers quartering within the town, the military drained Winchester’s already exhausted supplies. Confederate deserters complicated civilian struggles by ambushing travelers.¹¹²

Unionists suffered the most dramatic altercations with Confederate soldiers. As a vocal Unionist, the Confederate army targeted Aaron Griffith’s family. Griffith’s

¹¹¹ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, (L. Lee Diary), 35; M.G. Lee Diary, May 25, 1863, 1182 WFCHS, Lee Collection; Miller Diary, April 25, 1863, 301 WFCHS, Miller Family Papers.

¹¹² Colt, *Defend the Valley*, 216, Robert Y. Conrad to J.D. Imboden March 20, 1863, Robert Y. Conrad to General T.J. Jackson, September 15, 1862, Mss1 C7637, Conrad Papers.

daughter, Harriet, lived in constant fear that the family was being watched and noted in her diary that they must be very careful to keep their disparaging opinions against the Confederacy private or they would be arrested. Harriet's father was arrested numerous times despite Harriet's attempts at secrecy. When Griffith was arrested in October 1863 his horses and one of his daughters were also taken. Julia Chase worried that Griffith's property would also be confiscated. During another incident, Confederate soldiers broke down the door of Aaron Griffith's house, burst in and held a gun to one of his daughter's heads. The girl's sister managed to slip away unseen and began ringing a bell in her chamber window furiously to notify the neighbors. Although the Griffiths managed to escape the situation physically unharmed, the incident appears in numerous diarists' accounts of 1864.¹¹³

Julia Chase suffered many of the same fears as the Griffith daughters because her father was also an avid Unionist. After the arrest of her father, Chase avidly waited for news that the Federal Army was approaching in hopes of having news of him. Charles Chase was put into a prison camp in Richmond after his first arrest in 1862. He reported that as a prisoner he had been deprived for days of fire for warmth after he returned home. As his health slowly deteriorated, Julia Chase became increasingly angry at the Confederacy. When her father died in 1864, Julia Chase blamed his death on the imprisonment. Throughout the war Julia Chase continuously recorded the names of friends and neighbors who had been arrested and her hatred for the Confederacy grew. After her father's first arrest Winchester men organized a petition for the release of the captured Unionists. Dr. Robert Baldwin, a respected physician in town, refused to sign

¹¹³ Harriet Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 14 ; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 65, 129-130 (Chase Diary).

the petition because the two men who approached him with it were Unionists. Upon hearing of Baldwin's refusal to sign his name for her father's freedom, Chase wrote that the Unionist men's arrests had caused Confederate supporters to rejoice. She was horrified to hear of the treatment of Union soldiers in Confederate prison camps and angrily recorded that out of every one hundred soldiers in the camps, forty died from exposure and starvation. These conditions, Chase mocked, were examples of the famed southern chivalry.¹¹⁴

Although she never manifested her contempt for Confederate soldiers in her actions, Julia Chase's hatred for southern soldiers is apparent throughout her diary. Chase similarly voiced dislike for her Confederate contemporaries and their blatant displays of southern loyalty. Julia Chase makes no mention of sewing flags or wearing clothing that would indicate her northern sympathies. This does not, however, indicate that Unionist women kept their loyalties to themselves. On the contrary, Harriet Griffith ended her efforts to keep her family's loyalties a secret when she fell in love with a Federal captain who served under General Sheridan. The majority of Winchester women—Unionist and Confederate—did not shirk from exhibiting emotional and physical signs of their patriotism through flags and clothing. These material displays illustrated women's need to create wartime identities based on their patriotism.¹¹⁵

Although early in the war, women's patriotism revolved around the successes and failures of the military, by the later years of the war Winchester's loyalties had changed. For the South, nationalism was the element that held the Confederacy together. Although

¹¹⁴ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 25, 30, 32, 116, 132 (Chase Diary); John Peyton Clark Diary, March 19, 1862, 424 Wfchs (Louisa M. Crawford Collection, Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives Room, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society).

¹¹⁵ Laurel A. Choate, undated biographical note in Harriet Griffith Diary, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 102.

many historians have argued that southern nationalism was born from antebellum slavery, historian Shelia Phipps asserts that southern nationalism was born with secession.

According to Phipps, “The historic construction of a ‘nation’ arises from the assumption that loyalty to it replaces all others. The transformation into a nation, however, requires a central loyalty, eliminating other objects of patriotism and filling the void with new symbols that evoke a patriotic response.” The Confederate States of America were created as a reaction to the impending war; therefore, southern patriotism was directly related to wartime morale. Although the new nation had a fully functioning government, legislation alone could not sustain the country. It was important that a sense of southern unity develop. Even before the war southern newspapers emphasized Virginia’s place in American history, claiming that as the home of famed patriot George Washington it was Virginia’s responsibility to restore the Union to its “former glory.”¹¹⁶

As southern morale deteriorated in the face of death, destruction, and famine so did faith in the Confederate Cause, creating a need for a new type of patriotism. In 1862 one woman recorded that she felt as though she were losing her mind because she could focus on nothing but the “dreadful idea” that Winchester was surrounded by northern soldiers. In order to cope with war, women created a new sense of patriotism which centered on their identities as either Unionists or Confederates, but also their duties to protect their homes. Winchester women’s war had become about something more than supporting an army. Rather than wilt, both Unionists and Confederates saw occupation as a moralistic feud and sought retribution for their losses through humiliation of the enemy. By hiding their flags or wearing “forbidden” items of clothing, women were able to reclaim control over their lives. Following her public display of a mourning rosette for

¹¹⁶ Phipps, *Genteel Rebel*, 100-106, Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 11-14.

the death of General Thomas “Stonewall,” Jackson Mary Greenhow Lee noted her insurmountable pleasure at outwitting the Northern soldiers. Lee’s behavior suggests that women associated with their cause through material symbols, and were able to maintain their identities and rationalize their behavior.¹¹⁷

Although many Winchester women viewed occupation as a struggle between good and evil, historian Margaretta Barton Colt has calculated that during the four years of war, the Confederacy occupied Winchester for 39% of the time the Union for 41% the remaining time being periods when Winchester was between military lines. This means that although the Federal army controlled Winchester for much longer periods later in the war, both armies were guilty for the town’s destruction. This fact suggests that although they hated one another, Unionists and Confederates were unconsciously united by their wartime experiences. Women’s bond were further strengthened by the fact that although they opposed the Confederacy, many Unionist women continued to consider themselves southerners. Because Winchester constantly changed hands, it is erroneous to separate Confederate and Union women into distinct categories of Northern supporters and Southern supporters. Such categorization oversimplifies Winchester society. Unionist and Confederate women voiced complaints about the treatment of civilians at the hands of both armies. For example, all Winchester women saw changing racial relations as a challenge their southern identities.¹¹⁸

To understand the racial contradictions of wartime Winchester, one must realize that while Virginia was initially against disunion, slavery was the unifying force that eventually led to secession. For white southerners, slavery was necessary to maintain

¹¹⁷ M.G. Lee Diary, March 16, 1862, May 28, 1863, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

¹¹⁸ Colt, *Defend the Valley*, 409.

“racial control” and provided key elements to their identity. The definition of liberty for white southerners was the right to own slaves. From this perspective, it was not within the power of the United States government to regulate slavery in any way. Therefore, when the Republican Party won the 1860 Presidential election the racial alliance among white southerners dictated that the offended states secede. Subsequently, Virginia withdrew from the Union thereby splitting the loyalties of Winchester residents. While Winchester did not rely heavily on slavery and did not support the Slave Power, the residents of the town did not split specifically over the issue of slavery and were horrified by the Union Army’s disruption of race relations. Even staunch Unionists found the empowermentments that Federal occupation provided for African Americans unacceptable.¹¹⁹

Throughout the South during the Civil War, one of the ways in which life on the homefront was most compromised was through slave flights. Encouraged by the presence of Federal troops, many slaves slipped away from the homes of their owners in pursuit of Union Armies and freedom. Although for many Federal officers the Civil War was not initially about slavery, such was not the perspective of enslaved peoples. For slaves the Civil War was a fight for their freedom and they did not hesitate to take advantage of the chaos in southern society.

In the most dramatic cases hundreds of slaves, constituting entire plantations, fled at once. In Winchester, however, the effect was less dramatic. In March 1862 Mary and Laura Lee were troubled when their slave Hugh went missing after leaving the Lee home in search of work in Winchester. The Lees solved the mystery of Hugh’s disappearance when they heard that he had been sighted leaving town with a passing Union regiment. Two days later the Lees awoke to find that their slave Evan was one of several enslaved

¹¹⁹ Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 25.

men who had fled with General Banks' troops. Although they were not surprised by Evan's flight, the two women were disappointed by what they saw as his lack of gratitude. Evan was not alone in his flight, however, and soon the Lees were in danger of losing their remaining household servants. Frightened by the nearby fighting, the Lees' slaves Emily and Betty both wanted to flee the town for safety. Laura Lee managed to convince Emily that she was safer in town, but with Betty more force was needed. As the slave woman packed her clothing, Laura took them from her and "locked them up" to make sure that if her slave ran away, she would not lose the clothing as well.¹²⁰

Despite the temptation to flee, many enslaved people found that escape was not necessary as long as the Federal Army occupied the town. The life of escaped slaves was tedious and frightening and, if they were caught, a runaway faced not only the potential of severe punishments from their masters, but the possibility of being sold into the Deep South. Slaves in occupied areas such as Winchester soon learned that fleeing was not necessary because Union soldiers were willing to protect them from angry masters. More importantly, slaves learned that "when the Yankees were about and when military lines separated them from the Confederacy, that they could not be sold into the [Deep South], and could not be impressed for labor with the Confederate army."¹²¹

Slaves would also complain of harsh treatment. Godfrey Miller's slave, Uncle Allen, for example went to the provost marshal claiming he had been beaten and deprived of food and clothing by his master. As punishment for his neglect of Uncle Allen, the provost ruled that Miller must pay Uncle Allen for his labor to compensate his lack of necessities. Although the outcome of this confrontation is unclear, Miller's daughter

¹²⁰ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 74-75; M.G. Lee Diary, March 21, 1862, June 13, 1863, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 26, (L. Lee Diary).

¹²¹ Phillips, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War*, 277-178.

Gettie recorded in her diary that since her father had no money the Confederacy “saved him from paying” Uncle Allen. The story of Uncle Allen, however, demonstrates the ways in which occupation empowered slaves and threatened racial order in the South.¹²²

Regardless of the stability that occupation produced for African Americans, the Federal Army did not initially make it a policy to protect slaves. For the majority of the Federal Army, the Civil War at first was not about slavery but rather a war against “conspirators who had seized control over state governments.” Federal policy was so far removed from abolition that when General Robert Patterson first entered the Valley in June 1861 he issued an order that all fugitive slaves would be arrested until their masters could claim them. It was not until their defeat at the first Battle of Manassas that the Federal government’s policies on slavery began to change. The South’s dependence on slavery was becoming increasingly obvious throughout the summer of 1861, and it gradually dawned on the North that the labor of the millions of blacks in the South was a strong military asset. The Federal Army’s defeat at Manassas crushed northern assurance that the war would be easily won. In addition, Federals had expected to find more Unionist support in the South. When this support did not materialize, however, northern officials realized that they needed a new strategy. By attacking slavery the Federal Army figured they would be striking at the heart of the South.¹²³

In August 1861 Congress passed the First Confiscation Act. Based on an order made by Union General Benjamin Butler, the First Confiscation Act declared that the slave property of southerners was to be considered contraband of war and could be taken by soldiers without reprimand. The legal right to remove slaves from their master’s

¹²² Miller Diary, June 26, 1863, 301 WFCHS, Miller Family papers.

¹²³ Phillips, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War*, 271-273.

homes gave Union soldiers leverage over southern residents on the homefront and gave soldiers who were embittered at having to leave their homes an outlet for their anger. Many northern soldiers saw confiscation of slaves as a method for stripping the South of its labor force. In addition, those soldiers who held abolitionist sympathies felt that it was their duty to liberate the enslaved population of the South. In 1863 an order was issued in the Valley that all African Americans were to be taken from loyal as well as disloyal southerners, “to tend horses, do duty, or act as guides.” The confiscation of slaves, in theory, was meant to bring farming to a stop and increase citizen’s hardships. Soldiers increased hostilities between the rich and the poor by convincing the poor that their wealthy neighbors were to blame for their poverty, not the Federal Army.¹²⁴

For Winchester residents, the threat that the Federal Army posed to their slave and livelihoods was not as dire as in the cotton areas of the Deep South. Yet by challenging slavery and creating class conflict, the Federal army attacked something more precious than labor, the identities of Winchester’s people. The majority of Valley residents, even many who had abolitionist sympathies, adhered to the widespread belief that blacks were inferior to whites. This belief was a unifying force among white southerners but by empowering blacks with the promise of freedom, the Union army suggested that African Americans were, in fact, equal members of society. In addition by creating class tension, the Federal army further disrupted the unifying racial force between rich and poor whites. There is no evidence, however, that the Federal Army’s attempts at creating class tensions erupted into violence in Winchester as it did in Richmond, where tensions

¹²⁴ Phillips, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War*, 148; *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Cornell University, <http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/browse.monographs/waro.html>, vol. 25 Ch. 37, Part III, 526, herein cited as *Official Records*.

escalated into bread riots in 1863. The confiscation of slaves merely led to increased resentment for the Union army.¹²⁵

Legally slaves were southern property and confiscation, regardless of its legitimacy to the Federal Government, was stealing to Winchester residents. Having already experienced the pillaging of every type of eatable and fuel resource in their homes, Winchester residents had little patience for the theft of their servants as well. One resident voiced distress over “negro stealing” when he saw a wagon full of African American women, children, and old men being driven past his house on their way to the provost marshal.¹²⁶

The presence of Union soldiers caused many enslaved people to push the boundaries of socially accepted behavior between whites and blacks. Schoolteacher John Peyton Clark voiced annoyances at African Americans’ behavior, saying that “large numbers of negros have left their homes within the past week, and the sentiment among them is universal that they are perfectly free and they seem to have gone so far as to demand wages from their masters upon the condition of their remaining to work for them.” Winchester residents feared that the slaves’ bold actions were the result of a conspiracy instigated by the Federal army to create dissent among the slaves.¹²⁷

Laura Lee voiced similar frustration as Clark did at the newfound belligerence of her servants saying that servants had become “saucy” and “were hard to bear.” Mary Greenhow Lee supported her sister-in-law’s complaint that the slaves had become “surly” but unlike Laura, Mary Greenhow Lee did her best to use slaves’ newfound empowerment to her advantage. With the Union army so frequently near, an abundance

¹²⁵ Phillips, *The Lower Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War*, 266.

¹²⁶ Clark Diary, Aug 18, 1862, 424 Wfchs, Crawford Collection.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Monday June 10, 1862.

of free black residents had made temporary homes in Winchester, and the Lee's soon found themselves overrun with these men loitering around their homestead hoping to get the attention of the Lee's female slaves. Not one to be taken advantage of, Mary Greenhow Lee made an agreement with the men that they were welcome to spend their days at her home in exchange for their labor.¹²⁸

Mary Greenhow Lee's acceptance of free black men on the condition that they work for her suggests that the war had done nothing to alter Mrs. Lee's interpretation of slaves' roles within society nor had occupation altered her concept of freedom. Yet Winchester's changing race relations revealed that women's concerns over slavery were not simply focused on labor. Although Mary Greenhow Lee's diary does not conceal her belief that African Americans were her subordinates, she was not callused towards her slaves. In one instance Lee recorded having to scold her slave Emily, but felt it was appropriate to note that the lecture had not been cruel. Emily proved to be a challenge for the Lee sisters to handle because of her frequent threats to run away. Unlike Laura Lee, however, Mary Greenhow Lee never tried to force her slaves to stay with her, saying that if Emily chose to leave she "would not raise [a] finger to prevent it," even though she also voiced disgust at having to do "servant's work."¹²⁹

Cornelia McDonald shared similar sympathies with her slaves as did Mary Greenhow Lee. In March 1862, when she learned that General Jackson was going to evacuate Winchester, Mrs. McDonald took the advice of a friend and made arrangements to send her slave Manuel with Jackson's army, so he would not have the opportunity to escape and join the Union forces. Although Manuel had originally agreed to follow

¹²⁸ Laura Lee, as quoted by Shelia Phipps, *Genteel Rebel*, 149, 151.

¹²⁹ M.G. Lee Diary, July 22, 1863, Aug. 17 1863, July 16, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

Jackson's army, when it was time for him to leave Manuel was nowhere to be found. In May Manuel's wife Catherine and their children also disappeared. Although the entire family was later returned to McDonald, she felt responsibility for their condition. Manuel, who was recovered first, had been working as a teamster for the Federal army, but had fled again when he heard of the return of Jackson's army. Hiding for days under a haystack, Manuel was "emaciated almost to a skeleton" by the time that he was found. McDonald confronted her slave but became racked with guilt when the man burst into tears, confessing that he would not have run except for his fear that if Jackson's soldiers took him he would never see his family again. Catherine was equally repentant when she was recovered and claimed that she would never have left but for rumors of the cruelty of Jackson's soldiers towards African Americans.¹³⁰

McDonald's feelings that she was to blame for her Manuel and Catherine's hardships exemplified women's complex relationships with their slaves. Although McDonald admitted in her memoir that she "had never in my heart thought slavery was right," she also did not question her husband's ownership of slaves. McDonald's concern, however, was that the Federal army was encouraging slaves to flee yet doing nothing to provide for them. In 1864 Lee's slave Sarah reported to her mistress that a Union soldier in the street had tried to convince her that she was free despite Sarah's arguments that she was not. Although General Milroy had tried to implement the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, many enslaved people did not realize their freedom until after the war. Lee's depiction of the scene, however, suggests that Sarah's insistence that she belonged to Mrs. Lee was not based on ignorance. Historian Shelia Phipps suggests that Sarah's confession of the incident may have been an attempt to either prove her loyalty to

¹³⁰ McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 64-65.

her owner or to soothe Mary Greenhow Lee's worries. Regardless of Sarah's motivations, her confession to Mary Greenhow Lee gives insight into the internal power struggle over slavery.¹³¹

Winchester women's identities were wrapped up in their roles as slave-owners and although both Mary Greenhow Lee and Cornelia McDonald expressed exasperation at their increased work loads following slave flights, they felt a motherly responsibility towards their servants. These women resented Federal soldiers' presence because they felt slaves were being encouraged by soldiers to flee. Southern women commonly insisted that Union soldiers were responsible for their slaves' disappearances. This assumption was a convenient way for Confederate women to relieve themselves of the guilty knowledge that slavery benefited only slaveholders, not the slaves. Although the Union army's presence in the Valley served as a catalyst for slave flights, the majority of Federal soldiers were not interested in encouraging slave runaways as most southerners feared.¹³²

While Federal soldiers did not explicitly encourage slave flights, African Americans were empowered by the presence of the northern army and used the threat of flight to assert authority over white southerners. Yet the Union army was also responsible for spreading terrible rumors about the Confederate army's treatment of slaves. In May 1862 slaves fled Winchester in large numbers after Federal soldiers spread a rumor that "Stonewall" Jackson, as he advanced through the Valley, was murdering all African Americans in his path and cutting their children's throats. In other cases, however, soldiers superficially created an atmosphere of social acceptance for

¹³¹ Ibid., 246-247.

¹³² Victoria Ott, *When the Flower Blooms in Winter: Young Women Coming of Age in the Confederacy*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services), 162.

African Americans by taking actions such as inviting them to walk on the sidewalks accompanied by white soldiers. Although there was an abolitionist presence in the town, Union soldiers' contradictory actions towards African Americans suggests two things. First, racial policy changed with each Federal commander that inhabited Winchester; and second, the Union Army had no desire to free the slaves for their own good. Rather, the Federal army hoped that by freeing slaves and stripping the South of its workforce would cripple the Confederacy.¹³³

Winchester women's emotional reaction to their slaves' disappearances illustrates that even though slavery was sparser in the Valley than in other areas of the South, some white women had developed a dependence on slavery. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust points out that "in our day of automated housework and prepared foods, it is easy to forget how much skill nineteenth century housekeeping required. Many slave mistresses lacked this basic competence, having left to their slaves' responsibility for execution of a wide range of essential domestic tasks." Cornelia McDonald suffered such inconveniences following the loss of her slaves. Frustrated, McDonald recorded doing the menial tasks usually done by servants. Life became more difficult and McDonald found it increasingly hard to be patient with her children. In particular, McDonald struggled with washing the clothes. There were no washerwomen available, and her only remaining slave, Aunt Winnie, was elderly and too ill to work. McDonald and her children brought an old washing machine from the cellar and the boys took turns turning the machine and rubbing the clothes in the machine. The experience was a waste, however, because after spending hours washing the clothing, the wristbands were still

¹³³ Mahon, ed., ed., *Winchester Divided*, 36-37 (L. Lee Diary).

dirty and the McDonalds' hands were so skinned from washing that repeating the effort was out of the question.¹³⁴

Winchester women's already frayed nerves were further irritated by friendly relations between African Americans and Federal soldiers. These relationships served to increase the hostility that Winchester women already held for both groups. By ignoring racial boundaries, northern soldiers succeeded in attacking southern identity and unraveling Winchester society. Kate Sperry noted in 1864 that "on Sunday a Regiment of Yankee niggers came in Winchester recruiting—they conscripted all the able-bodied nigs they could find—white officers of course. They behaved dreadfully and ordered ladies and gents off the street." Even those women who held maternal affection for their slaves were offended. Cornelia McDonald and her friends were appalled to hear of General Milroy's treatment of black women. White women frequently approached the general in his office to ask for favors; in particular the coveted passes to leave the city in search of supplies. The general's preferential treatment of black women, however, increased white women's resentment for the already despised general.¹³⁵

Race relations were further disturbed by Federal generals' liberal treatments of slaves. One Winchester man recorded scathingly that an African American woman announced on the street that General Banks "was a nice gentleman, he told her goodbye [sic] so 'sweet' and kissed her when he left." Another resident was infuriated when she looked her window and saw two Union officers walking down the street with two black women. Julia Chase voiced similar discontent for General Banks' practices saying that he "ought to be strung up" for his blatant abolitionist support. Although she was a

¹³⁴ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 77; McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 84-85, 154.

¹³⁵ Sperry Diary, April 7, 1864, Accession 28532, Personal Papers Collection; McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 63-65, 121-122.

Unionist, Julia Chase did not pretend to support abolitionist philosophies. In April 1864 when a black regiment of Federal soldiers passed through Winchester, a rumor was spread that their objective was to “conscript all the able bodied Negroes/men in the county.” Chase mused, “I don’t know how we are to get along, shall have no one to do anything for us in the way of cutting wood, tilling the ground, &c. We shall expect most anything after this.” Laura Lee matched Chase’s disgust saying that the black soldiers were a “most revolting spectacle.”¹³⁶

Winchester women’s ardent reactions to changing race relations were not uncommon in the South during the Civil War. Throughout the Confederacy slaveowning women fought to keep their slaves as a way of maintaining the lifestyles that they had enjoyed before the war. Julia Chase’s fear that there would be no one to perform menial tasks mirrored Mary Greenhow Lee’s complaint that she hated tedious chores. As a key element to defining the South’s sense of identity, the Civil War’s threat to slavery upset the balance of society. Even in Winchester where the economy was not based completely on slavery, the Federal Army’s challenges to the racial hierarchy infuriated residents. As a whole, however, slavery was only one aspect of Winchester’s wartime dislocation as the continuous presence of occupying soldiers and their impositions on women extended into every aspect of life. ¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Clark Diary, April 10, 1862, 424 Wfchs, Crawford Collection, Sperry Diary, April 6, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Personal Papers; Mahon, ed., ed., *Winchester Divided*, 39-40, 138-139 (Chase Diary).

¹³⁷ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 74-77.

Ch. 4 Coping with the Enemy: Humanization and Religion

Winchester's military occupation strained every aspect of women's lives. In the last three years of the war, Winchester changed hands nearly once a month. This continuous cycle of change kept both the Unionist and Confederate women constantly on guard. Although each set was relieved when their army controlled Winchester, the constant movements of armies created instability, leaving women in a state of perpetual anxiety. These conditions tested women's morale in ways that had seemed unimaginable in 1861. Forced housing of soldiers under martial law, along with an influx of sick and wounded, forced women to find methods of coping or buckle under the pressure. Many women turned to religion in order to survive. While many women found strength in Christianity, their faith was complicated through nursing and quartering soldiers, which resulted in the humanization of the enemy.

Early in the war women used the belief that southern secession was the will of God to fuel their faith in the Confederate army. Although death and shortages immediately proved that war was not romantic, hardships were interpreted as a test of Christian faith and endurance. Mattilla Harrison noted: "our men are very brave. The Cause must make them so." Women interpreted war as a struggle ordained by God and reflected nineteenth century ideas that a man's role was to protect his home and family. Yet military occupation soon skewed gender roles as women were required to exert their own bravery while continuing to fulfill their expected roles as nurturers.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Clark Co. Historical Association, Proceedings of the Clark County Historical Association, Vol.22: the Civil War Diary of Miss Matella Cary Page Harrison of Clark Co., VA, 1835-1898, (indexed in Vol. 23), 21.

Women's roles as mothers also dictated that they serve as caretakers. Throughout the war scarlet fever epidemics plagued Winchester, giving many women little choice but to nurse their loved ones. In 1861 Emma Riely's whole family was stricken with the epidemic leaving her younger sister, her niece, two servants, and her mother all dead. The illness was so severe that the people of Winchester avoided the Riely's home. The family was left in the care of an aunt who was not only in charge of nursing the sick, but taking care of the remaining children as well. With their family devastated by death, the Riely's had a hard time convincing the minister to venture to their home. A man with several young children, he feared transmitting the disease into his home.¹³⁹

Winchester's illnesses escalated with increasing numbers of soldiers stationed in the town. Winchester became a breeding ground for disease and by January 17, 1862 estimates claimed that there were over fifteen hundred sick soldiers in town. Julia Chase noted that the entire town had become a hospital, and the scarlet fever epidemic had become so severe that nineteen people in Winchester died in less than twenty four hours.¹⁴⁰

Conditions in Winchester grew steadily worse as medical supplies became impossible to obtain, and the military monopolized the majority of supplies which were available. During General Milroy's command in 1863, conditions became even more severe with his insistence that supplies be sold only to those people who had taken the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. In May, Laura Lee wrote, "The sickness here continues to a terrible extent, thought as yet there have been very few deaths. We cannot get proper medicines, and what we do get is by stealth as Hartman's store is closed, and

¹³⁹ Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Delauter, *Winchester in the Civil War*, 17-18, Mahon, ed., ed., *Winchester Divided*, 16 (Chase Diary).

he is forbidden to see but he manages to slip out whatever he has that people want. Nobody will risk their lives by using the medicines from the other druggists.” Emma Riely’s aunt took a different approach and instead of smuggling medicine from druggists, appealed to General Milroy for a pass to Baltimore. Although he was regarded as a tyrant and his command of Winchester as a “reign of terror,” Milroy had become fond of Emma Riely’s family and awarded her aunt the pass. Riely’s aunt returned with morphine and quinine sewed into her muff.¹⁴¹

Contact with ill and wounded soldiers gave women the opportunity to use religion as a method to cope with the death that surrounded them. Women “ministered” to men and read the Bible to them, which in turn helped women to fulfill their feminine roles as nurturers and contributors to the Confederate cause. When General Jackson’s command skirmished with Federal forces in March 1862, doctors in Winchester hurriedly prepared hospitals in anticipation of the wounded that would be arriving shortly. Bandage shortages presented particular difficulties, and doctors were forced to wander through Winchester begging for these valuable supplies. Confederate women proved their nurturing dispositions by sacrificing their own clothing and cloth to make the bandages, but it is likely that despite these efforts, the demand continued to be higher than the supply. These trials were the basis for Confederate strength.¹⁴²

Women equated with faith in the Confederacy with faith in God, and to deny one was to turn one’s back on the other. Women’s dedication to nursing provided an opportunity to prove their devotion to the cause, but assisting professional nurses and doctors required a strong stomach and even stronger fortitude. Memoirs and diaries from

¹⁴¹ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 89 (L. Lee Diary); Riely, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 74-76.

¹⁴² Simkins and Patton, *The Women of the Confederacy*, 37; Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 61; M.G. Lee diary, March 11, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

professional nurses during the Civil War often voiced frustration at civilian women who balked at the tasks of a nurse. Although nursing enabled women to voice their patriotism and participate in the Confederate “fight,” wartime hospitals were different than the ideal. Many women turned their backs on nursing, unable to handle the gore inflicted by battle. In addition, Winchester’s hospitals held a reputation for being “very much neglected and leaving sick and wounded soldiers suffering very much in consequence.” Thirteen-year-old Gettie Miller confirmed this rumor, saying that there were so many wounded men in town that it felt like everyone was missing an arm or a leg. “I pity them so,” Miller wrote. “I know they are not half taken care of. I wish war would stop.”¹⁴³

Cornelia McDonald’s stomach for nursing turned sour following the First Battle of Kernstown when she was asked by one surgeon to wash the face of a southern captain who had been shot in the side of the face. Both of the man’s eyes and the bridge of his nose were gone, but miraculously he was still alive. McDonald struggled to tell the doctor that she would wash the wound, but the scene was too gruesome for her and she stumbled away. As she moved towards the door, McDonald brushed against a pile of amputated limbs. Horrified, McDonald leaned against the wall to keep from fainting.¹⁴⁴

Despite its horrors, nursing became an important aspect of many Winchester women’s wartime identities. One observer noted,

¹⁴³ Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 55; Elizabeth Comstock, “Journey to Winchester, 1864,” 12 Thl (Ben Ritter Collection, Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, Winchester, VA U.S.A.); Miller Diary, July 7, 1863, 301 WFCMS, Miller Family papers.

¹⁴⁴ McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War*, 38.

I understand that Winchester used to be a most agreeable little town and its society extremely pleasant. Many of its houses are now destroyed or converted into hospitals; the rest look miserable and dilapidated. Its female population (for the able-bodied males are all absent in the army) are familiar with the bloody realities of war. As many as 5,000 wounded have been accommodated here at one time. All the ladies are accustomed to the bursting of shells and the sight of fighting, and all are turned into hospital nurses or cooks.¹⁴⁵

Hospital visits were part of daily routines and women went out of their way to bring food and other luxuries to the soldiers. Harriet Griffith made cushions for the men and became so attached to one man that when he died she clipped a lock of his hair to send it to his mother along with a letter. When General Sheridan forced Emma Riely's family to board soldiers in 1864, Riely took it upon herself to steal from the soldiers' personal supplies. The men kept brandy, lemons, sugar and crackers in a chest as well as a barrel of ale in the cellar. When the soldiers were at their headquarters, Riely would take supplies from the soldiers' stash and give them to the wounded Confederates that she was nursing. Likewise, Kate Sperry and her friend Jo made daily treks to the hospitals, taking mush, milk and whatever food they could get their hands on. Captain Robert E. Park of the 12th Alabama Infantry noted in 1864 that the women of Winchester were "ministering angels, so incessant are they in their attentions." Homefront generosity eased soldiers' burdens, but also provided comfort for those women who anxiously waited to hear from loved ones.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ J.L. Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States: April-June 1863* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1863, 1984), 235.

¹⁴⁶ Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 82,91; Robert E. Park Sept. 27-29, 1864 in *No Soap, No Pay, Diarrhea, Dysentery & Desertion: A Composite Diary of the Last 16 Months of the Confederacy from 1864 to 1865 as seen by the soldiers, farmers, clerks, nurses, sailors, farm girls, merchants, nuns, surgeons, chaplains, and wives*, Jeff Toalson, ed. (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2006), 222.

Among the women who catered to the needs of hospitalized soldiers, Mary Greenhow Lee was one of the most enthusiastic. Providing soldiers with material goods and care became one of her wartime passions. Lee hoarded shoes, blankets, food and whatever else she thought Confederate soldiers might need. In this way, Lee was able to take on the “role of a combatant” and silently wage her own war against the Union army. Lee’s actions illustrate one of the main reasons that the Union army used loyalties to restrict goods in Winchester. The Federal government had hoped that by regulating the purchase of goods, not only would morale suffer, but residents would be forced to pledge their loyalty to the Union. Lee’s actions were in direct defiance of the martial law governing Winchester, a fact which she took great pleasure in.¹⁴⁷

Nursing presented Lee with a means to distribute the supplies that she so carefully hoarded, but it also allowed her a glimpse into a side of war that she had not previously seen. Unlike the exploits concerning her flag, during which Lee’s writings give the distinctive impression she enjoyed the power play, nursing had a darker side. Although she had no children of her own, Lee had helped to raise two of her nephews, Bob and Lewis Burwell, both of whom enlisted in the Confederate army. In her wartime diary Lee continuously fretted for the well being of the two men. She particularly worried over Lewis who possessed a “reckless bravery” which Lee felt “might lead him into unnecessary danger.” Because of her relationship with her nephews, nursing was not simply a feminine duty to Mary Greenhow Lee, but an opportunity to care for young boys who were far from home and suffering. Lee affectionately referred to these soldiers as “my men.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Phipps, *Genteel Rebel*, 168-169.

¹⁴⁸ M.G. Lee, May 16, 1864, April 16, 1863, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

At the start of the Civil War, nursing was considered an inappropriate task for women. Antebellum southern society considered hospitals to be lower class institutions because they were unclean and the care questionable. Anyone with any sense of propriety, regardless of financial means, hired a physician rather than brave a hospital. Unlike modern day facilities, antebellum hospitals could not offer any services that a local doctor could not offer a person within the comfort of their home. In addition hospitals were poorly furnished with few beds, no ventilation systems, and no morgues. Therefore those hospitals that did exist were breeding grounds for germs. Only those citizens who “[were] unfortunate enough to be stricken with the plague or become victim of an accident while away from home” were hospitalized.¹⁴⁹

The Civil War’s high numbers of wounded and sick soldiers changed both the conditions within hospitals and society’s views of them through necessity. Because of the stigma attached to hospitals, most antebellum nursing had taken place in the home by female family members. This type of care was not an option during warfare, however, because of both the high numbers of men needing medical attention and the fact that the majority of soldiers were too far from home to benefit from the care of loved ones. With this increased reliance on hospitals the need for nurses also increased. It was widely assumed throughout the South that women were naturally conditioned for nursing because of their roles as mothers and caregivers to their families. Yet when it came to wartime nursing, many critics felt that nursing soldiers would be an immodest position for women because of the necessity of examining the male form. Battle soon proved this expectation unrealistic and although male nurses attended to more serious injuries,

¹⁴⁹ Rebecca Barbour Calcutt, *Richmond’s Wartime Hospitals* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2005), 13-14.

women often dressed wounds and tended to the sick. Winchester was the location of three major battles, two more being fought in Frederick County, and numerous skirmishes all of which resulted in extreme numbers of wounded pouring into the town, sometimes flooding in such quantities that the wounded were left in the street. With most men enlisted and the wounded being brought into Winchester faster than they could be tended, nursing became an essential wartime position for women.¹⁵⁰

While nursing remained a new task for women it perpetuated the belief that they were benevolent and merciful creatures, and by caring for “sick, wounded, and dying soldiers, they also nurtured conventional ideas about their own place and character.” In Winchester Confederate women’s kindness to southern soldiers was in part motivated by the need to show their hatred for northern soldiers. Confederate women diligently cared for southern soldiers while ignoring Union men. Diaries suggest that early in the war Confederate and Union soldiers’ hospitals were separate, which allowed women to avoid the illness and death that also haunted Federal Hospitals. As an avid southern supporter, Lee was among the most prominent of Winchester women who refused to aid the Union wounded although she was by no means in the minority. Wartime tensions were so high that one doctor openly refused to attend the Union wounded, claiming that he would not help to prepare men to fight against the Confederacy and his friends. As the numbers of wounded and ill soldiers pouring into Winchester escalated, however, it became necessary that men be put into whichever hospital was nearest, thereby negating segregated hospitals. Unionist Julia Chase angrily criticized Winchester’s overall care of

¹⁵⁰ Massey, *Women and the Civil War*, 43, Philips, *Genteel Rebel* 164, Magill, *Women, or Chronicles of the Late War*, vii.

the sick, claiming that Confederate soldiers occupied all of the beds in the hospitals while Union men had to lie on the floor.¹⁵¹

The First Battle of Kernstown in 1862 united Winchester through its brutality. This battle stands out among Winchester diarists' accounts of the war as one of the bloodiest battles in Frederick County. In reality, the battle was a decisive Union victory with 590 Federal casualties out of a force of 8,500 versus 718 Confederate casualties out of 3,000 men. These statistics do not indicate, however, the number of soldiers wounded in the battle. According to first-person accounts, Winchester hospitals were filled to capacity with wounded soldiers, the majority being from the Union army. Mary Greenhow Lee described the horrific scene in her diary: "what we have seen in our Hospitals before, is a pleasant sight, compared to what I have witnessed in these two days. The dead, the dying, the raving maniac, and agonising [sic] suffering, in its most revolting forms were before us; our men and the Yankees, all mixed up together in the same rooms." Winchester women flocked to the hospitals to search for loved ones, bring food, and administer whatever comfort they could, but soon the tedious picking through wounded men in search of Confederates became too heart wrenching.¹⁵² Saddened by the mass of debilitated soldiers Mary Greenhow Lee wrote, "I have found myself down on the floor, by the Yankees, feeding them; you remember how I always said, I would not go to their hospital, but I never thought of our men being in them, not could I give to one sufferer and pass another by in silence." Kate Sperry voiced the same guilt as Mary

¹⁵¹ Rable, *Civil Wars*, 120-123; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 160, (Chase Diary).

¹⁵² National Park Service, CWSA Battlefield Summaries, <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/abpp/Battles/va101.htm>, February 25, 2007.; Clark Diary, March 24, 1862, 424 Wfchs, Crawford Collection.

Greenhow Lee, writing that although she hated Yankees, she could not stand to see them suffer.¹⁵³

Cornelia McDonald recorded that following the first Battle of Kernstown, there were so many wounded pouring into Winchester that the courthouse, banks, and churches all became hospitals. McDonald was horrified when she approached the courthouse and saw the dead strewn across the porch. Some of the men had papers pinned to their jackets to identify them, and they all had their faces covered. What struck McDonald most were their idle hands, the only parts of their bodies exposed and still with the finality of death. McDonald entered the building looking for Confederate soldiers, but stopped when she noticed a pair of “sad eyes” watching a servant with a water pitcher. Overcome, McDonald stopped to give the man a drink but he was too badly wounded to swallow, so McDonald fed him the liquid with a tablespoon. Although Confederate women’s hostilities for the Union Army did not relent, their compassion for wounded and dying Federal soldiers brought a level of humanization to the war that had previously been absent. It was easy for Confederate women to generalize Union soldiers as the “enemy,” but caring for them revealed the human side of the war as women watched vulnerable young men die far from their homes.¹⁵⁴

Nursing helped women to cope with wartime not just in Winchester, but helped alleviate homesickness for those whose loved ones were on the other side of the battle front. Mollie Hansford had moved to Winchester from Kanawha County, West Virginia in the early 1850s following her marriage to Dr. John Wells. Like other women in Winchester, Hansford took it upon herself to care for the wounded Confederate soldiers

¹⁵³ M.G. Lee Diary, March 23, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; Kate Sperry, March 28, 1862, Accession 28532, Personal Papers Collection.

¹⁵⁴ McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War*, 37-38.

who were transported to Winchester. Following the Battle of Cedar Creek in 1864, there were so many wounded ushered into the town that many were placed into a storehouse. According to Hansford, “the poor fellows wrapped in their blankets were lying so close together on the floor that they looked like rolls in a pan.” Hansford had brought a basket of baked apples for the soldiers and as she walked through the rows of men handing them out, one Union man in particular caught her attention. Hansford looked affectionately at the boy because he reminded her of her brother and when asked revealed that he was also from Kanawha County. Delighted to meet someone who knew many of the same people she did, Hansford generously offered to have the man’s clothes washed for him. When she returned the next day with his clothing, though, Hansford found that the young man was dying. Although there was no direct connection between Hansford and the young man, she mourned him as though he had been her brother saying, “I could not speak of him for a long time without crying. Dr. Walls said that I made such a fuss over that Yank that anyone would think he was a relation.”¹⁵⁵

For Mollie Hansford, as for many Winchester women, nursing obscured the line between friend and foe. The boundaries between North and South were not clear cut, particularly in areas of Virginia and West Virginia where the Shenandoah Valley had been split in two by West Virginia’s secession. Although Hansford’s experience was extreme because the majority of her family remained in West Virginia, her inner turmoil over the defining the young man as the “enemy” was not.

Winchester women’s inner turmoil over caring for the Union “sufferers” was a common reaction during wartime. In Mobile, Alabama the matron of the hospital

¹⁵⁵ Mollie Hansford, *Civil War Memoirs of Two Rebel Sisters*, ed, William D. Wintz (Charleston, W. VA: Pictorial Histories Pub. Co., 1989), 51-52.

amended hospital policy to include Union men, arguing that they were suffering as much as Confederate soldiers. As a group, the Yankees continued to be despised in Winchester, but as individuals it was harder for women to turn a blind eye to those who were dying in the hospitals. Women's desire to aid only their own soldiers contradicted with their ethical sense that letting wounded men suffer was wrong. In addition, women's inner conflicts distinguished their wartime hardships in a different way. As long as there was a clear "enemy" women could justify their hostile actions as defensive. When the line became blurred, however, it became unclear who was right and who was wrong. By skewing the boundaries of good and evil, women's justification for their suffering was undermined, which in turn, hurt their morale.¹⁵⁶

The humanization of Federal soldiers complicated the patriotism of Winchester women, who had earned reputations for their cruelty to soldiers. In 1862 the Federal Secretary of State William Steward reported to Washington, D.C. that "the men are all in the army and the women are all devils."¹⁵⁷ Women's hostilities for soldiers were not unfounded since many Winchester women were the victims of vandalism and theft at the hand of occupying armies. As a result, women used soldiers as scapegoats for their wartime frustrations and fears. Yet when questioned about Federal occupation by British observer J.L. Fremantle, Winchester women "spoke of the enemy with less violence and rancor" than women from other parts of the South that he had questioned. Baffled, Fremantle commented on the women's attitude to which "they replied that they who had seen many men shot down in the streets before their own eyes knew what they were talking about, which other and more excited Southern women did not." Having been

¹⁵⁶ Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revised: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Albery Press, 1995), 83-84

¹⁵⁷ M.G. Lee Diary, April 5, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

situated on the battle front since the beginning of the conflict, Winchester women had come to know a different aspect of war. In particular, when women came to know soldiers on an individual basis the concept of invader versus protector became confused, leaving women with distorted views of not only their enemies, but their husbands and brothers.¹⁵⁸

The hardships suffered by women during the Civil War led to a departure from traditional gender roles. Antebellum southern society dictated that men were responsible for providing their families with comfort and sustenance while women were expected to fulfill their “Biblical imperative, biological destiny, and patriotic duty” by producing and nurturing children. In the early phases of the war, women encouraged men to embrace their roles as “defenders” while women sacrificed for their families and country. Cold, tired, and distraught over her inability to procure goods for her family because of her refusal to take the Oath, Mary Greenhow Lee mournfully reflected on her widowhood: “I could but think of what my darling would have felt could he have seen me in such a plight, braving the weather –such an enemy as now occupies the town and many other annoyances to buy food for my family.” War had left women without their male support systems and forced them into roles, such as nursing and household providers, that had not been previously acceptable.¹⁵⁹

Women had been raised to believe that it was their feminine responsibility to put their own interests aside for their men, so that in return they would be protected and cared for. Occupation crushed the structure of these beliefs, especially in later years of the war when the Confederate army suffered devastating losses. Confederate women were forced

¹⁵⁸ J.L. Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 234.

¹⁵⁹ M.G. Lee Diary, March 20, 1863, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

to admit that their men had failed to protect their homes and families while Union women were faced with the realization that the Federal Army had neither supported nor protected them from Confederate forces. Throughout the war, Mary Greenhow Lee continued to hoard goods for her family, terrified that either supplies or money would run out. Lee's incessant shopping suggests that this was the only way she knew how to provide for her family. With her husband dead and her nephews at war she was left alone as the head of a household of women who had been forced to step outside the accepted sphere of their gender without the promised security of male protection. Unionist Harriet Griffith suffered similar disillusionment as Lee. Griffith's brothers had fled at the onset of the war to avoid being drafted, and her older male relatives were continuously being arrested. Griffith and her female relatives were faced with not only a lack of male protection but with the realization that the Union army would not protect its loyal southern sympathizers. The default of these societal promises collapsed the structure on which southern society had rested. Men had failed to provide their women and children with food, clothing and most importantly, safety. In many cases men were directly responsible for the deprivation of these necessities.¹⁶⁰

Martial law further complicated gender roles in wartime Winchester by mandating that soldiers be quartered with civilians. Quartering soldiers with local families was a common practice in areas where armies stayed for any duration, but housing enemy soldiers imposed further burdens on people whose lives had already been compromised. Unionist and Confederate women did not socialize with one another even during the direst times, making their experiences under martial law different.

¹⁶⁰ Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 69, 74; Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) 206; M.G. Lee Diary, March 28, 1863, April 1, 1963, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," 1220.

Housing soldiers was one of the most despised aspects of occupation for Confederate women. In order to manage their hatred for soldiers, these women departed from the moralistic ideals of femininity by verbally attacking the men they housed. The Confederate authorities encouraged belligerent acts as patriotic deeds, but also enabled women to step outside of their sphere of feminine weakness to defend themselves. One Winchester woman claimed that “we will become thoroughly demoralized if the Yankees stay much longer; mild and lady like language is not strong enough to express our feelings and I fear we will never be fit for refined society again.” Ironically, it was traditional gender roles which enabled women to exercise these wartime frustrations because, although soldiers were directly responsible for thefts and destruction of property, few soldiers were willing to harm white southern women, especially those of the middle and upper classes.¹⁶¹

With southern men fighting for the Confederate cause, it was the ultimate insult for their women to house Federal Soldiers. Mary Greenhow Lee claimed that inviting Northern officers into her home would have been the same as befriending the “murderers of our friends and the enemies of our liberty.” Women’s hostilities were in part based on Winchester’s breakdown of “private” property. Occupying soldiers never hesitated to take what they needed or desired from the homes of residents, in particular food and wood. Stealing became so horrendous, however, that Cornelia McDonald feared for her children’s ethics. The Lees also voiced disgust for thefts. Having buried all of their valuable silver, the women hoped they could avoid theft, but they were not so fortunate

¹⁶¹ *Official Records*, Section 2, vol. 2, Chapter VIX, 925. M.G. Lee Diary, April 3, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 199-200.

with their supply stores. While their silver was safe, the Lee women lost a large quantity of food when “robbers” broke into their cellar.¹⁶²

Despite their hatred for quartering soldiers, many women tolerated the practice to keep from being turned out of their homes. Women’s resentment for boarding enemy soldiers provided another element of contradictory female behavior in occupied Winchester. For civilians, quartering their own army was an honor. In 1861 the Confederate populace of Winchester petitioned General Johnston to have some of the southern army quartered there over the winter. During periods of southern occupation, Confederate women openly offered rooms in their homes to southern soldiers and provided meals. While traveling with the Confederate Army, British observer J. L. Fremantle escorted one of the soldiers into Winchester where one woman invited them to stay with her. This woman had boarded Fremantle’s companion some months before and eagerly invited the men into her home where she and her family proceeded to describe the horrors that they had encountered under Federal occupation. Similarly, Mary Greenhow Lee welcomed Confederate boarders both for the income and for the sense that she was aiding her country. The standards for boarding soldiers were very stringent, and there was no such thing as social acceptance of the enemy. One Winchester woman boarded General Shields and was known to socially receive Union officers into her home. When the woman was seen walking in the street with one of the officers, she was shunned by the residents of Winchester.¹⁶³

¹⁶² As quoted by Shelia R. Phipps, *Genteel Rebel*, 196; McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War*, 127-128, Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 21, 119, (L. Lee Diary).

¹⁶³ Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 11, (L. Lee Diary); J.L. Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 232; M.G. Lee, April 28, 1862, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

Diaries do not indicate if the woman who boarded General Shields met with any punishments other than public scorn, but Unionist accounts suggest that residents who maintained similar relationships with Union officials were arrested. While men were more commonly arrested as military spies in Winchester, women were not exempt from punishment. In addition Winchester diaries suggest that Unionist residents were more often arrested than Confederates. As a result Unionist families were forced to entertain both armies in order to avoid suspicion from Confederates. Harriet Griffith's family graciously hosted both Union and Confederate soldiers for dinner.¹⁶⁴ Despite her strict Unionism, Julia Chase also willingly ate dinner with Confederate soldiers. The Chases' attempts at being inconspicuous, however, did not prevent them from housing Union soldiers. In 1862, Orville Thomson of the Seventh Indiana Infantry and a companion found themselves wandering through Winchester looking for housing. With all of the hotels and boardinghouses occupied, the men were forced to knock on civilians doors. At the first home, the door was slammed and locked in their faces. The second home that they approached was the Chase home. Although Julia's father was imprisoned at this time, she proclaimed that she was not concerned about gossiping neighbors and offered Thomson and his companion a place to stay for the night, complete with breakfast the next morning.¹⁶⁵

Chases' invitation to the Federal soldiers was brave since her father had already been incarcerated for his political beliefs. Avoiding Confederate neighbors' suspicions necessitated ingenuity, and both Harriet Griffith and Julia Chase's diaries suggest that

¹⁶⁴ Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 74, 76.

¹⁶⁵ Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 23,74-77; Thomson, *From Philippi to Appomattox: Seventh Indiana Infantry in the War for the Union*, Army of the Potomac Series (MD: Butternut and Blue, 1993), 83-84.

they avoided local discrimination by catering to both armies. Yet neither woman disguised her Unionist principles, and the Chase and Griffith families were both identified in Confederate diaries as Union sympathizers.

Although their hostility for the “enemy” was to be expected, women’s attempts to protect their homes from the influence of the “vile creatures” often made their situations more difficult. Federal generals did not shirk to evict women from their homes or send them behind Union lines in order to take over their homes. General Milroy was openly condemned by Confederate women for evicting the Logan family in April 1863, especially since it was never clear to the residents of Winchester why the Logans were sent away. Mrs. Logan, one report claimed, had been concealing goods. Another report claimed that she had held an illegal prayer meeting, but the Confederate women felt that Milroy had evicted the family simply because his wife had wished to occupy their home. The Logan’s eviction was particularly upsetting for Winchester women because the Logan women were very ill. In protest, Mary Tucker Magill wrote a letter to a northern newspaper condemning Milroy for his eviction of the Logans. For her efforts, Magill was banished from Winchester.¹⁶⁶

Milroy’s strict enforcement of martial law in Winchester proved to Confederate women that it was in their best interests to comply with orders, even if it meant inconveniencing themselves. General Milroy required that those families who would not take the Oath quarter soldiers. The Lee family, in particular, became his target because Mary Greenhow Lee had earned a reputation as “the most outrageous rebel in Winchester.” In March 1863 officers came to the Lee door and asked that they vacate several rooms in their house. The Lee’s protested, claiming that their sister Antoinette

¹⁶⁶ Rable, *Civil Wars*, 164.; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, (L. Lee Diary), 86-87.

was ill upstairs. The soldiers, however, insisted by order of the provost marshal that they give up the rooms. After much squabbling, the general in charge agreed to take the smaller rooms in the Lees' house so as to not displace Antoinette, claiming that he had been "outgeneraled" by Mrs. Lee.¹⁶⁷

Another highly sought after home in Winchester was that of Cornelia McDonald. The McDonald home had been sought after by the Union Army since its first occupation of Winchester in 1862. McDonald consistently resisted allowing Union soldiers in her home, and although she was often forced to compromise, the Yankees tenures in her home were short because of her frequent appeals to the provost marshal. In one instance, however, Union soldiers pounded on her door so persistently that McDonald gave in and opened the door, allowing them to enter with their wounded captain. The next morning McDonald found her home covered in mud and had to work her way through the mass of soldiers in a vain attempt to prepare breakfast for her children.¹⁶⁸

The injured captain, referred to only as Pratt, exemplifies one of the contradictions presented in women's forced housing soldiers. Initially McDonald was furious at the intrusion into her home, but the pitiful sight of the wounded man "melted her heart." Captain Pratt stayed with the family until he was well enough to rejoin his unit and almost became a member of the family. McDonald remembered: "He had a merry, good face, and his fun was so effective as to turn our wrath away from him as a new intruder, and make us rather enjoy him" By the time that Pratt was well enough to leave the McDonald home, three-year-old Donald had become particularly attached to the man. One night as the family sat in front of the fire, Captain Pratt allowed Mrs.

¹⁶⁷ M.G. Lee Diary, April 18, 1863, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, (L. Lee Diary), 75, 82-83.

¹⁶⁸ McDonald, *A Woman's Civil War*, 43-44.

McDonald to examine an ornate pistol that he had received as a gift. Concerned for the safety of his new friend, Donald warned his mother to be careful that she did not accidentally shoot the captain. McDonald replied, “Ought I not to shoot him, he is a Yankee?” With sad eyes Donald “gave a deep sigh and said, ‘Well shoot him then.’”¹⁶⁹

Donald McDonald’s attachment to Captain Pratt demonstrates the complicated relationships that Federal soldiers presented for Winchester children. While their mothers tried to cope with material shortages and martial law, children were forced to deal with absent fathers and brothers. Too young to understand the concept of war, Donald McDonald attached himself to a strong male figure within the household. In turn Donald’s attachment presented an awkward situation for his mother who had previously viewed Federal soldiers as demons. The concept that Pratt was not a barbarian, but a man like her husband with a family eagerly awaiting his return, contradicted McDonald’s notions about Federal soldiers.

With their men gone, Confederate women relied on Union soldiers for protection, a fact that was terrifying since the soldiers were also their oppressors. Housing members of the Federal army also afforded women a certain amount of protection. Those who were housed with Winchester residents were either officers or surgeons. The presence of such valuable members of the Union army protected families from pillaging. The relationship between Winchester women and occupying soldiers was further complicated by the fact that, as the war continued, women began to feel as though they had been abandoned by their own men. While women sought to cope with occupation by using belligerence to

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 44-47.

combat soldiers, the idea that these men had a human side coupled with southern military losses threatened to unravel the respective women's rationalization for their cause.¹⁷⁰

Women were also forced to acknowledge maternal feelings for young Federal soldiers. One woman was horrified when she went to see the Union wounded and found a fourteen year old boy who had been wounded when a caisson fell on him. Mary Greenhow Lee's effort to antagonize Federal soldiers was undermined by her conflicting opinions of soldiers. In 1862 Lee wrote, "I cannot get up a feeling of fear for the Yankees; I have such a thorough contempt for them that I do not realize they are human beings." Lee's affection for a young orderly named Dutton contradicts this statement. Dutton assisted the Federal surgeon, Dr. Love, who boarded with Lee. In December 1864, Dutton was accused of desertion and sentenced to hang. Lee was aghast at the punishment saying, "It was a terrible shock as I knew the poor creature well and know also that he was almost childish and had no the moral courage to form such a plan." Lee further defended Dutton, explaining "on inquiry I found he was also very much intoxicated." Although Dr. Love appealed to General Sheridan to pardon Dutton, his request was denied so Lee organized a petition to pardon the man.¹⁷¹ By 1864 Lee's view of Union soldiers had changed. Although she still despised Winchester's occupiers, Lee had come to acknowledge that she hated Federal soldiers "not as individuals but as a class." Her efforts to protect Dutton show that like Cornelia McDonald, she was unable to reconcile her hatred of the Union army with her fondness for an individual soldier.¹⁷²

Although Cornelia McDonald and Mary Greenhow Lee both became affectionate towards Federal soldiers, other women used kindness to manipulate soldiers, hoping that

¹⁷⁰ Rable, *Civil Wars*, 164.

¹⁷¹ M.G. Lee, Dec. 28, 29, 30, 1864, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, July 17, 1862, Dec. 18, 1864.

it might afford them privileges such as the return of stolen property or compensation for losses. Emma Riely and her female relatives charmed General Milroy into promising to neither confiscate nor burn their house. During Milroy's reign in Winchester, he turned a blind eye to the actions of the Riely women, including smuggling, which was usually punishable by banishment. The Riely's were not so lucky when General Sheridan took over the town, however, and were forced to give up the second floor of their home to the general for his headquarters. On the first floor, the women were required to board soldiers and either live with the men or vacate the home.¹⁷³

Although Winchester women coped with occupation in a variety of ways, the one constant throughout their writings was women's reliance on religion. Religion justified the southern cause and compensated for the lack of trustworthy news sources. With few supplies, rampant illness, and forced housing of occupying soldiers, Winchester was a dismal place. Religion presented an opportunity for women to profess hope beyond war and that their hardships did not mean that God had turned his back on them. Matilla Harrison wrote in her diary: "Oh God help me. Satan has stifled my heart." Women on both sides sought to interpret military victories as proof that God supported their army and fretted that defeats signaled his disfavor. In particular, southern women felt that Confederate defeats were punishment for the South's godlessness. Therefore, women reasoned, it was within the South's power to return the Confederacy to God's favor. As a result, women turned to Bible study. Religious study was a comfort for both Unionist and Confederate women and bound Winchester together as a community as well as gave them hope. Following her brothers' departure north to avoid the Confederate draft, Unionist Harriet Griffith wrote, "I must now get my Bible and read and try and not think

¹⁷³ Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 76-105.

of the future or of what may happen.” Religion helped women to combat the unknown and gave them hope by appealing to an entity greater than themselves.¹⁷⁴

In contradiction, religion also fueled women’s divisions within the town. Confederate women refused to attend church with Union soldiers, while Union women reveled in the presence of these men. Julia Chase noted in 1862 that the church had “a good many empty seats. The Secesh do not entertain very kind feeling to the Unionists; let them disguise the facts as they may—actions speak louder than words.” Mary Greenhow Lee reiterated Chase’s suspicions about Confederate biases by recording that there had been thirty seven men in church and no women the previous Sunday. As an alternative, Winchester Confederates began to hold church services on a rotating basis in their homes. Although Lee was not entirely comfortable with the responsibility that holding church in her home presented and chose to read strictly from her prayer book, the idea of attending church with Union soldiers was worse and she would go for weeks without attending services when Winchester was occupied by Federal troops.¹⁷⁵

During the Civil War there were ten white Christian churches of varying denominations in Winchester including: Episcopal, Lutheran, Quaker, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist. Out these ten building, eight were damaged or destroyed during the war. In addition, many of the churches were converted into hospitals at varying times. Therefore Winchester residents’ religious options were limited to whichever churches were available, creating floating church congregations. Mary Greenhow Lee’s diary gives the most detailed account of religious practice in Winchester

¹⁷⁴ Clarke Co. Historical Association. Harrison Diary, 26; Griffith Diary, undated pages, 1179 Wfchs, Griffith Collection, 69.

¹⁷⁵ Mahon, ed., ed., Winchester *Divided*, 49, (Chase Diary); Simkins and Patton, *The Women of the Confederacy*, 33; M.G. Lee Diary, March 17, 1862, May 16, 1862, March 20, 1863 April 12, 1863, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection.

during the war. According to Lee, although she was a devout Episcopalian, her regular minister had enlisted in the Confederate army as a chaplain. As a result Lee attended Presbyterian and Lutheran services throughout the war. As mentioned previously, Lee also described in detail attending prayer meetings in private homes. These meetings were held nearly every Sunday and combined with rotating church services explains why the network of Winchester diarists appears to have been attending church services together.¹⁷⁶

Christianity provided women with a method of coping that was both constant and provided comfort in the madness of wartime Winchester. For those who had lost loved ones, religion provided a promise that they would be reunited with the dead. Ann Jones's grandson Marshall was killed during the First Battle of Winchester in 1862. Crushed, the entire family became ill with grief. When Mrs. Jones' son, Strother, was killed at the Battle of Gaines Mill later that same summer, she claimed that he had become so ill following Marshall's death that he finally died. Although she was able to write with bluntness about the physical condition of Strother preceding his death, Ann Jones could not overcome her sorrow and wrote time and again that her only comfort following the deaths of Marshall and Strother was that both men were Christians. Similarly, Cornelia McDonald was overcome with despair following the death of her baby in 1862. Following the baby's funeral, McDonald was unable to function and could only "[lie] in bed with a feeling only of indifference to everything, a perfect deadness of soul and spirit. If I had a wish it was the world, with its fearful trials and sorrows, its mockeries and its vanishing joys, could come to an end." McDonald's only comfort was that her

¹⁷⁶ Garland R. Quarles, *Winchester, Virginia: Streets—Churches—Schools*, (Winchester Virginia: Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, 1996), 117-121.

baby was in Heaven, peaceful and away from the hardships facing the living in Winchester.¹⁷⁷

Other women—Union and Confederate— whose beliefs in the rationalizations behind the war had been tested, looked to religion to substantiate their military. Confederate supporter, Portia Baldwin Baker claimed, “in the days of wars and commotions our hearts would break were it not for the tender love and control of God.” Likewise with the Union army’s defeats mounting in 1862, Julia Chase furtively prayed to God to help the Union army wake up and assert themselves on the battlefield. Obviously distraught, Chase wrote, “Great God...Hast though given up the people of the North to their own destruction, is there no hope for our Country?” By associating the war with a religious crusade, women were able to assure themselves that the war was God’s will, making death and suffering worthwhile.¹⁷⁸

When General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson died from complications related to wounds and pneumonia in 1863, the hopes of many Confederate women died with him. As a devout Presbyterian, Jackson embodied the ideal Confederate leader. Winchester Confederates felt a particular connection to the general because his army had wintered in the town in 1862, and it had been his army that drove the Federals from the town following the First Battle of Winchester. Jackson’s death was a “spiritual crisis” for much of the South, and those who had felt as though Jackson was the savior of the Confederacy were forced to reevaluate their religious beliefs. Yet it was not the death of Jackson that is important as much as the interpretation that his death was punishment for the South’s sins and an indicator of the Confederacy’s imminent defeat. Following

¹⁷⁷ Jones correspondence, October 15, 1862, October 23, 1862, 451 Thl, Jones Papers; McDonald, *A Woman’s Civil War*, 72, 74, 150-154.

¹⁷⁸ Baker Diary, Dec. 29, 1862, 1178 Wfchs mmf; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 96-97 (Chase Diary).

Jackson's death, one Winchester woman mourned the fallen general, but noted that it was a lesson to the South not to depend on a man over God.¹⁷⁹

General Jackson's death signaled a transition in Confederate morale. Laura Lee recorded mournfully, "It is too terrible a blow to believe...Gen, Jackson is dead! There is a wail of woe throughout the South." Even the cynical Unionist Julia Chase admitted, "[Jackson's] death will be felt greatly by the South." To the people of the Confederacy Jackson's death represented the death of an ideal. The man who had warded off the enemy like a great "Stonewall" had perished like any other mortal man, martyred to a cause that was also dying. To the South, Jackson had "embodied the Christian attributes [southerners] considered vital to the strength of the Confederacy" and his death proved that the southern cause was not holy." For the rest of the war southerners would lament how the war would have been different if Jackson had lived.¹⁸⁰

Jackson's death pushed many women to the edge of despair and left them feeling as though they had been abandoned by God. For women who were trying to recover from the deaths of loved ones, the death of a man that had seemed super human reopened their emotional wounds and left them hopelessly appealing to God for strength. Other women succumbed to depression and looked to spirituality for healing. One Winchester woman wrote, "I Feel as if I could not stand this life much longer...a prey to deepest anxiety about those of whom we hear nothing, and subjugated to innumerable petty annoyances, and dreading others which may be far worse...I ask only for strength and patience to bear each day as it comes and to be thankful when it is over that I am one day nearer the end—one day nearer Heaven." By the end of the war, those women who had

¹⁷⁹ Jones correspondence, May 18, 1863, 451 Thl, Jones Papers;

¹⁸⁰ Mahon, ed., ed., *Winchester Divided*, 89 (Chase Diary).

lost loved ones scarcely mentioned the Cause and instead only hoped for the ruin of their enemies. Religion's place in the Confederacy had been undermined by death, disease and defeat. Similarly, Unionists hoped only for an end to the war. Although she prayed for Union success, Julia Chase wrote, "God grant that this war may soon come to an end, and a peace honorable to the whole country be established." War had shown Winchester women that faith in God could not protect them from the cruelties of civil war. Likewise, men's inability to protect their women created a need for Winchester's females to assert and defend themselves. By combining their traditional roles as nurturers and their wartime roles of providers, necessity had forced Winchester's women beyond the boundaries of nineteenth century womanhood in order to defend their homes.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ M.G. Lee Diary, March 14, 1862. March 24, 1863, 1182 Wfchs, Lee Collection; Rable, *Civil Wars*, 209; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 168-169 (Chase Diary).

Conclusion: Winchester's Legacy

By 1865 the fervent patriotism that had initially characterized Winchester had fallen to the wayside. The battered Army of Northern Virginia limped home, but Winchester had changed from a prosperous market town to a town ravaged by war. Postwar poems mourned the fall of the Confederacy and with it the lives that had seemingly been sacrificed for nothing:

Fold tenderly that banner
 And gently lay in by
 As we do the tear wet garments
 Of our loved ones when they die

It is now our sad memento
 Of our gallant brothers slain
 It's a relic sad and holy
 Of a past forever fled;
 And you see in it a symbol
 Coffin of a cause that's dead¹⁸²

Emma Riely remembered that when General Robert E. Lee surrendered, Winchester became “a town full of Southern people whose hearts were bleeding and

¹⁸² Scrapbook of Mrs. Holmes Conrad, The Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, VA.

orn.” The Federal officers occupying the town ordered a “grand illumination” to celebrate the North’s victory, but many of Winchester’s Confederate residents refused to participate. Winchester residents’ refusal to acknowledge the authority of their occupiers even when the war had been lost reveals that although their lives had been compromised in every way possible, their spirits had not been broken.¹⁸³

By 1865 Winchester’s society had changed drastically. Not only had ideas about gender changed as women took over the roles as providers and defenders of the home but Winchester’s social network had unraveled. Many of the diarists had either fled or been banished from the town by the end of the war. Although it is difficult to apply the broad generalizations about the war’s effects on women, as outlined by historians such as Mary Elizabeth Massey and Drew Gilpin Faust, to women’s experiences in Winchester during the war, it is evident that these events shaped the rest of their lives.

General Sheridan banished Mary and Laura Lee from Winchester in February 1865 for operating an underground mail service. Although they initially fled to Staunton, after the war the women relocated to Baltimore where they helped to form the Baltimore chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy. Mary Tucker Magill, who had been banished following her public criticisms of General Milroy in 1863, gained fame as an educator and writer. Following the war, Magill and her mother moved back to Winchester where they opened a boarding school. Magill’s most famous work *A School History of Virginia*, published in 1877, became a standard text book used in Virginia’s public schools in the late nineteenth century. The legacy of wartime Winchester stayed with Magill, however, leading her to publish *Women, or Chronicles of the Late War* in 1870. Emma Riely also became a published author when she and her husband

¹⁸³ Macon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 127; Colt, *Defend the Valley*, 375.

collaborated to publish their memoirs of their lives during the war. Harriet Griffith married one of General Sheridan's officers and moved with him to Melrose, Massachusetts in 1867. Griffith's work as a nurse carried her into the post war years as a member of the Ladies Aid of the Soldier's Home and she was also an active member of temperance and suffrage movements in Massachusetts.¹⁸⁴

Like Harriet Griffith, Kate Sperry met her husband while he was stationed in Winchester. In 1864 Sperry left Winchester to join her future husband in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Following the war, Sperry moved with her husband to his home in Mississippi where they raised their six children until Sperry's death in 1886.¹⁸⁵

Cornelia McDonald and her children fled Winchester for Lexington, Virginia in 1863 where they were joined by Mrs. McDonald's husband. Although Colonel McDonald did not survive the war, Cornelia remained in Lexington until 1873 when she relocated to Louisville, Kentucky to live with her son. Later in her life McDonald supplemented her wartime diary with her memoirs, which her son published in 1935. Julia Chase and Portia Baldwin Baker both remained in Winchester with family until their deaths.¹⁸⁶

When evaluating the post-war lives of Winchester's female diarists, it is notable that of all the women mentioned who were either banished from Winchester or refuged, only Emma Riely and Mary Tucker Magill returned. The question remains, then, why women did place their safety on the line to defend a town that they would later leave?

¹⁸⁴ Phipps, *Genteel Rebel*, 200-218; Garland R. Quarles, *Occupied Winchester, 1861-1865* (Winchester, VA U.S.A.: Winchester-Frederick Historical Society, 1991), 48; Biographical note by Laurel A. Choate in Griffith Diary, 1179 Wfchs, cover page.

¹⁸⁵ Quarles, *Occupied Winchester*, 31-39.

¹⁸⁶ Quarles, *Occupied Winchester*, 19-20; Mahon, ed., *Winchester Divided*, 189; obituary of Portia Baldwin Baker, September 28, 1915, included with Baker diary, 1178 Wfchs mmf.

Mary Tucker Magill lends insight into the answer in her book *Women, or Chronicles of the Late War*. Magill describes occupation as a violation of southern women. Historian Jane Turner Censer further suggests that Magill's portrayal of Union occupation as "a violent intrusion upon and appropriation of southern domestic space as a metaphor for the symbolic rape of young, patriotic Confederate women." For the women who struggled and suffered in Winchester, the memory of the town may have been too much to bear, making a return out of the question. For others, their families had either died or scattered making Winchester an impractical place to live. Despite changes in gender roles brought on by the war, social stipulations concerning the welfare of women remained the same. Kate Sperry and Harriet Griffith both accompanied husbands they had met during the war to the men's homes. As widows or single women, Mary Greenhow Lee, Laura Lee, and Cornelia McDonald all followed family members to their various homes and lived with them until their deaths. Likewise Portia Baldwin Baker and Julia Chase remained in Winchester and lived with relatives. Ironically, although Winchester's diarists scattered after the end of the war, they remained united by common experiences and divided by lifestyle.¹⁸⁷

The post-war experiences of Winchester's women demonstrate that contrary to assertions made by historians such as Mary Elizabeth Massey, the Civil War did not universally challenge post-war gender roles. Yet it is naïve to assume that Winchester's women did not view themselves differently after the war. While there is documented proof that the Lee sisters and Harriet Griffith all took part in social organizations after the

¹⁸⁷ Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 247-248.

war, there is not sufficient information about the remaining women to definitively assert that other women did not. The importance of Winchester's homefront experience lies in women's new concepts of identity derived during the war.

Women's struggles in wartime Winchester proved that despite their divided loyalties, women were united by their common need to survive. The continuous presence of both the Union and Confederate army stripped women of valuable material resources. As these needs went from minor inconveniences to extreme difficulties, it became evident that without men to provide for them, it was up to the women of Winchester to defend themselves and provide for their families. By clinging to symbols of identity such as flags, women were able to resign themselves to their changing society by associating their identity with their wartime nationalism. In addition, by relating their sense of self with a particular military cause women were able to create a clearly defined "enemy." Through the vilification of these "enemies" women were able to assert themselves through blatant acts of contempt and verbal abuse. For Confederate women the mistreatment of Union soldiers allowed them to exert the need to aid the southern cause by defending the homefront. Unionist women fulfilled a similar need by showing contempt for southern soldiers, who they felt had defamed the United States constitution and the Union. For both women, however, aggression against enemy soldiers justified their own hardships. By taking out their frustrations on their enemies, women were able to convince themselves that the death and destruction they were suffering was worth it.

Women's ability to cope with wartime by abusing soldiers was compromised through nursing and quartering soldiers. Although there are many recorded instances of barbaric treatment against women at the hands of occupying soldiers, nursing and

housing soldiers allowed women a glimpse into the human side of their enemies. The realization that individually the “enemy” were not villains, but rather men far from home, like the men that Winchester’s women mourned, threatened women’s assurance that war was a conflict between good and evil.

Homefront studies have gained in historical importance in the last half century because of the impact that non-soldiers had on the war effort. Unlike other areas of the southern homefront however, Winchester dealt with both the struggles at home and the destitution of the battlefield. Because of their proximity to the battlefield, Winchester women existed in dual roles as patriot and caregiver, conflicting with their loyalties to their wartime cause and their duties as women. In addition, Winchester existed as a microcosm of the divisions within the United States. With Confederates and Unionists co-existing and catering to occupying armies, the war was fought not only by the military but by the women as well, in their homes and on the streets. Winchester’s place in history has been cemented through the words of its women, who describe with startling honesty the degrees to which the war affected all who lived through it.

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