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The World After:  
Central Virginia in the Wake of the Civil War  
Harry C. Caldwell  
A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY  
In  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the degree of  
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Department of Graduate History  
May 2024

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Dr. Andrew Witmer, Dr. Jonathan Jones, Patrick Schroeder

*Dedicated to my friends at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park and to Isaiah.*



*The 188<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania infantry regiment as the Provost Guard in Appomattox, Virginia. 1865.*

*Courtesy of Appomattox Court House National Historical Park.*

### *Acknowledgements*

I would like to dedicate this work to all those who helped me get to this point. Beginning with my parents, Billy and Gina Caldwell, without whose unconditional support I would not have made it this far. I would like to thank my sister, Colleen, for keeping me sane throughout all these years in this program and helping me adjust to Harrisonburg. I would also like to thank my girlfriend, Kelsey Snyder, for sticking with me throughout all of this, always giving me a place to vent, and for being a good companion to adventure with. Explaining how you've put up with it this long would require a separate thesis, no matter how this project turns out, meeting you has definitely been the best part of coming to Harrisonburg.

I would like to give a special thank you to all my friends at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. If I were to thank each person individually, it would require another 10 pages. If y'all hadn't taken in a certain 17-year-old high schooler those many years ago, my life would be on a very different course. My time at Appomattox allowed me a place to grow as a person and as an interpreter, and doing living history there is I how I was inspired to undertake this research.

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## *Abstract*

This thesis examines the situation in Central Virginia following the surrender of Appomattox. Its primary focus is on the Federal Provost Guard who were sent back into the region in the month following the Surrender. It begins in March 1865, introducing the world that the Provost will be thrown into that summer, and it will go month to month until January 1866, when the Provost have fully departed from the region and power was fully turned over to civilian authorities. This research is primarily built of the General Orders that were printed in the Lynchburg newspaper, *The Daily Virginian*, or *The Virginian*, as it was sometimes titled. Once printed, these orders remained in circulation in the papers throughout the entire year. Just by looking at the number of General Orders printed, from May when the Provost arrive, to December with their departure, a gradual shift in power from the Provost to the reformed local governments and the Freedmen's Bureau and be observed. This serves as a microcosm for the Reconstruction as a whole, where it begins with a strong military presence but ends with handing power back over to White civilians, many of whom were former Confederates. This is Graduate study on the Provost Guard in Central Virginia using primarily the General Orders that were printed in Lynchburg. It should be acknowledged that other sources, particularly the records of the Freedmen's Bureau, were available, but due to the timing and the size of this project, many of those have not been included. To assist with the writing, a digital Storymap was created. This map shows how the Sub-District was divided up and which counties were included in it, and how the Sub-District changed throughout the year. Furthermore, it helps pinpoint the location of certain events. While not every location is known to be exact, it gives an estimation of the events that happen. Some events happen over top of each other, so they are spread out for clarity. For the entire Storymap version of this research, go to the following link to see the many changes that come to Central Virginia during that year. <https://arcg.is/fvibG>

### *A Brief Prelude*

In his book *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865*, William Blair argues that the war destruction in Virginia formed a crescent shape, forming at the town of Lexington, at the foot of the Shenandoah Valley, curving north through Northern Virginia and towards Fredericksburg, and circling back to conclude in Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> Areas west of this crescent had remarkably endured the war largely unscathed. Aside from the rapid depreciation of the Confederate dollar, the absence of their young men, and the steady stream of dead being delivered to doorsteps, the Old Dominion's Heartland hardly seemed to notice there was a war going on.

When Richmond fell, it brought a deeply rooted social system down with it. Seemingly overnight, a generations-old way of life had been suddenly obliterated without much of a sound from the people of Central Virginia. This meant a drastic change for everyone, White and Black, and, Rich and Poor. At least it was supposed to. The Virginian planter class hoped that life would go back to what was construed as "normal". Fearing what returning to "normal" meant, the United States military sent troops into the Lynchburg area, as well to other places in the Commonwealth, to ensure that the United States' victory was absolute. The jobs of these soldiers were not simply to keep the peace, but to redefine "normal" for the people of Central Virginia. These troops remained in the area for the entirety of the summer and through the fall of 1865. While doing so, they established relationships and worked to establish an impact on the people of the region. When the Freedmen's Bureau was established in the region that August, a gradual transfer of power and responsibilities took place between the two groups. By December, the

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<sup>1</sup>.Blair, William. *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Provost Guard had completely withdrawn their presence in the area, turning the responsibility of establishing “normalcy” over to the Bureau.

What this project aims to accomplish is to observe the impact of the war’s end and the effects of early Reconstruction in what was constituted as the Lynchburg Sub-District.<sup>2</sup> In modern accounts, Reconstruction is largely seen as a complete failure. By the time the federal troops had completely withdrawn from the South in 1877, former Confederates had been placed back into positions of power, and the carcass of slavery had been transformed into what is now referred to as Sharecropping. This created a political oxymoron known as the New South. What this project aims to accomplish is to examine how the year 1865 acted as a microcosm for the years that were to come, and in turn, how the Lynchburg Sub-District<sup>3</sup> served as a representative of other areas, such as Southwestern Virginia or Northwestern North Carolina, that had also gone untouched by the war. The early Reconstruction experience in these regions differed from those that had been heavily exposed to the war, such as the Shenandoah Valley or Northern Virginia. By the time the provost guard had begun to withdraw from the region that winter, Virginians were already attempting to return to power many of the officials who had served during the secession crisis. Many of the Commonwealth’s Black laborers, labeled as “Freedmen”, had no other options for work than the farms and plantations they had been enslaved on.

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<sup>2</sup> The Lynchburg Sub-District loosely consisted of the counties: Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, Franklin, Nelson, Patrick, and Pittsylvania, and included the cities of Lynchburg and Danville. Sometimes included are Prince Edward, Charlotte, and Buckingham as well.



*The Downfall:*

*March 1865*

On the evening of February 28, 1865, the worried citizens of the city of Lynchburg crowded into Dudley Hall for a public meeting that would discuss the city's further involvement in the Confederate cause and the city's nationality. The meeting was presided over by city official, John M. Speed, and two officers of the local militia, Major James Garland, and Captain T. J. Fitzpatrick.<sup>4</sup> The meeting was being held to discuss the concerns for the rapidly approaching Federal army of the Shenandoah, led by General Philip Sheridan. The City of Seven Hills had gotten word of the scorched earth policy that Sheridan had employed in the Shenandoah Valley and many wary citizens were afraid that he was going to move south via the Lexington-Turnpike and apply similar tactics to the Central Virginia area. Save for a failed excursion by the Federal General David Hunter the previous year in 1864, the Central Virginia area had largely remained physically unaffected by the ravages of war.<sup>5</sup> Lynchburg itself served as the region's economic and industrial center, boasting several factories and refineries, supply centers, a rail-hub, and access to the James River-Kanawha canal. Additionally, the city housed several military hospitals, which would have to be evacuated in the event of a surrender.<sup>6</sup> The lasted until after midnight, with the members determining that Sheridan posed no plausible threat to the city and the citizens vowed their renewed faith in the army of Robert E. Lee.

The citizen's choice is an indicator of the enduring secessionist spirit in not only Central Virginia, but for many of the areas of the South that were removed from the war. When the war

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<sup>4</sup> Christian, William Asbury. *Lynchburg and Its People*. J. P. Bell Company, printers, 1900. P.233.

<sup>5</sup> Elson, James M. *Lynchburg, Virginia: The First Two Hundred Years 1787-1986*. First Edition. Lynchburg, Va: Warwick House Pub, 2004. P.177.

<sup>6</sup> Lynchburg was given its name "The City of Seven Hills" due to its location on seven hills.

had first started, many of the South's youth had rushed to the firing lines. As the years grew longer, the Confederacy's resource pools grew shallower. On February 8, 1862, the Virginia State Legislature passed their first Conscription Act, which called for all white males between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five eligible to be drafted into military service. An exception to this levy were owners of more than fifteen slaves and those who were the sole proprietor of the property.<sup>7</sup> This act benefitted the small percentage of Southerners who fell into what is classified as the Planter class, while the rest were forced into the Confederate army. This exception will be the beginning of a class divide in the South, pitting the Southern classes into what can be described as a rich man's war.

After the passage of the Conscription Acts, the Virginia Legislature passed an ordinance that stated that all growers were to cease the production of cash crops and plant cereal crops, corn, wheat, barley, and sorghum, in their place. These crops were to immediately be sold to the army for the war effort. However, a portion of this crop was allowed to be kept in order to stimulate the local economy. The producers could sell the remaining crop at a price that they could set. This resulted in producers banding together to withhold food stores and to dictate the price at which food could be purchased. This commercial policy was disastrous for the ones buying the food, as means to buy goods became increasingly scarce as the value of the Confederate dollar collapsed by the day. A widow in Lexington, Virginia remarked how butter was going for \$12 per pound, and coffee was going for \$18 per pound.<sup>8</sup>

In late 1864, most of the Old Dominion's working class had been sent into the trenches of Petersburg, leaving the government to impress enslaved workers to work in the nitre mines,

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<sup>7</sup> Blair.

<sup>8</sup> Ash, Stephen V. *A Year in the South: Four Lives in 1865*. St. Martin's Press, 2016. P.32.

refineries, and other industries in Central and Southwest Virginia, something that would have been unthinkable at the beginning of the war.<sup>9</sup> As the war progressed, the Confederate States began to seize control of industrial centers and factories to further streamline the production of war material. By early 1865, the Confederacy was in every sense “robbing Peter to pay Paul.” This cannibalization of the Homefront, and the government’s apparent favoritism the planter class, lead to a loss of faith in the Confederate government itself, and by the time of the February 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, there were calls for Robert E. Lee to seize power from President Davis, and to run the Confederacy as a generalissimo.<sup>10</sup> In a letter written to Confederate Speaker of the House Thomas Bocock, Appomattox County planter William Ridgeway wrote,

Our soldiers is very much dissatisfied with the acts of your honorable body, in consequence of the 15 Negro Law and the large no. of [slaves] details in the furnaces [and] Railroads [learned?] and various other situations when our soldiers come home on furlough and see those men doing nothing comparatively, and the rich men riding about on fine horses they become disgusted with the service and complain heavily and say it is the rich man’s war and the poor men fight their battles.<sup>11</sup>

With mass conscription of the lower-class, the elimination of free enterprise, the government’s blind-eye towards blatant resource speculation, and the calls to turn the Confederacy into a military dictatorship, the South had been transformed into a dystopia that the Confederacy’s founders could never have imagined.

Furthermore, public discourse was focused on what a reconciliation effort with the Federal government would look like. With the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation years

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<sup>9</sup> Potassium-Nitrate is the main component for gunpowder.

<sup>10</sup> Blair.

<sup>11</sup> Ridgeway, Willaim. *William Ridgeway to Thomas Bocock, March 2, 1865*. Letter. From, University of Viginia Smalls Special Collections Library.

earlier, and the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in Congress, Central Virginians were well aware that the end of the war meant a very drastic change to their way of life. Virginians looked warily to Confederate states such as Tennessee and Louisiana, that had been captured by U.S. forces earlier in the war, to see how Federal Reconstruction had progressed. In an article that discussed the looming Reconstruction Bill, the *Lynchburg- The Daily Virginian* reported on March 16<sup>th</sup> that,

We never expected any special favors to the South by the radical Congress soon to assemble, but we do protest against the perpetration of any such injustice and cruelty as the proposed bill would inflict. After the ready obedience which the people of the South have rendered the authority of the United States; after their hearty and thorough compliance with all that has been required of them in the work of reconstruction- such as: declaring null and void the acts of secession: adopting the constitutional amendment abolishing slavery: repudiating the war debts; electing loyal men to office and many other acts going to prove their sincerity, they have a right to expect better things in return than this bill indicates.<sup>12</sup>

To the White population of Lynchburg, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the Reconstruction Bill were a bitter omen of things to come. The end of the war not only meant the death of the world as they knew it, but they also meant that they would be subject to an uncompromising Unionist government, and furthermore, it could put them at the mercy of the Blacks whom they held in bondage. While the Emancipation had done little for the enslaved in Central Virginia during the war, enslaved people were aware of the changing tide of the war. As more and more Confederate wounded streamed into the hospitals and supplies grew increasingly scarce, Whites and Blacks both knew change was coming.

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<sup>12</sup> "Reconstruction Bill". *The Daily Virginian*. March 16, 1865.

By the time the threat of “Little Phil” Sheridan had loomed over Lynchburg in early 1865, public faith in the Confederate government and the ruling planter class had all but dissolved. The only thing that was keeping the disintegrating movement together was the South’s faith in the Army of Northern Virginia. However, the Confederate soldiers manning the trenches of Petersburg faced a grim reality. By March of 1865, Lee’s army faced a severe morale crisis. The Army of Northern Virginia was rapidly deteriorating without the need for U.S. bullets and bombs. The ANV faced a dire shortage of food and manpower.<sup>13</sup> Each night, Lee lost hundreds of men to desertion. In the winter of 1864, a rebel soldier wrote that soldiers in the ANV’s 1<sup>st</sup> Corps had lost 2,200 men to desertion, roughly 100 men a day.<sup>14</sup> By 1865, very few soldiers in the rebel army believed that the defense of Richmond, and the war, were a winnable cause. The only thing that was holding the army together was their faith in Lee’s leadership, but even that was not enough. As rebel soldiers received news of the disastrous campaigns in Georgia and the Shenandoah Valley, regimental muster rolls grew smaller and smaller. The situation on the battlefield was hardly different from that on the Homefront; the Confederate war spirit had been shattered long before the first surrender had taken place.

Back in Lynchburg, the city meeting had concluded with the decision to not surrender the city, leaving the fate of the city into the arms of chance. Sheridan was either going to go to Richmond from the south through Lexington, thus going through Lynchburg, or would go north through Charlottesville. Sheridan would end up performing the latter, sparing Lynchburg, and forcing Charlottesville to surrender on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>15</sup> With Charlottesville’s surrender, Lynchburg became the last major Confederate Bastion west of Richmond, and the last major supply source

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<sup>13</sup> ANV is the abbreviation for the Army of Northern Virginia.

<sup>14</sup> Blair. 1998. (Kindle Edition)

<sup>15</sup> Danville was also an untouched Confederate supply center by the end of the war. However, Danville did not have the railroads, canals, and industries that Lynchburg boasted, making Lynchburg more of a vital economic center.

for the beleaguered ANV.<sup>16</sup> Despite this stroke of fortune for Lynchburg, conditions only grew more dismal as the long Spring of 1865 stretched on. On March 24, *The Daily Virginian*, the city's only functional newspaper, had closed its Press, bringing an end to any official public voice in the region, and leaving news to travel via gossip and rumors.<sup>17</sup> Confederate Lieutenant, James B. Craighill, who was a patient in one of the hospitals, recalled the situation in Lynchburg, "Very few people know what was going on, for the railroads were in bad condition and the mails irregular. The wildest rumors were circulated as the movements of our own forces and those of the enemy. Nobody knew what to do or what to believe."<sup>18</sup> The end was nigh, that much was apparent to the people of Central Virginia. The question that remained was, how much longer were they to endure before the end finally came?

### ***The Crash of a Kingdom:***

#### ***April 1865***

The answer to that question came with the freezing rains of April, and with the entirety of the fleeing State and Confederate governments. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Central Virginia had for a brief amount of time, become the epicenter of the Confederacy, and with it, the focus of both Federal and Confederate armies. Richmond had fallen. Lee's thin lines outside Petersburg had been punctured and overwhelmed by masses of Federal troops. It was nothing short of a total rout for the army of Northern Virginia. Jeff Davis had fled from Richmond and taken his government south to Danville, where he could use Danville's location between Lee's army and General Joseph Johnston's army, which was outside of Raleigh, to coordinate the war effort from both directions. Davis and his cabinet had arrived at the rail station in Danville on the afternoon of the

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<sup>16</sup> Scruggs, Philip Lightfoot. *The History of Lynchburg, Virginia 1786-1946*. First Edition. J.P. Bell, n.d. P.133.

<sup>17</sup> Christian, William Asbury. *Lynchburg and Its People*. J. P. Bell Company, printers, 1900.P. 234.

<sup>18</sup> Elson. P.177

2<sup>nd</sup>. As President Davis disembarked from his rail carriage in Danville, President Lincoln was being treated to a 34-gun salute in Richmond.<sup>19</sup> Davis's arrival meant the small city, already overwhelmed with wounded soldiers and war refugees, had to further extend itself to meet the needs of the government officials, and of the government itself. Soon, public buildings were commandeered and private homes were offered up to house the government ministers. Davis himself was boarded in the home of a Major William Thomas Sutherlin, the quartermaster for the city. A former women's institute was transformed into the central office of the Confederacy.<sup>20</sup>

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, Davis issued what would be his final proclamation to the Confederacy. In this proclamation, Davis insisted that the Confederacy would endure, regardless of the conditions or the sacrifice. The war was not lost, according to Davis, but it was entering a new phase. To this point, Davis argued that the fall of Richmond was really a liberation for Lee's army, as the army had been "relieved from the necessity of guarding cities and particular points, important but not vital to our defense, with an army free to move from point to point and strike in detail the detachments and garrisons of the enemy..."<sup>21</sup> To Davis and the rest of the Confederate government, this meant fighting through no matter the odds. To the people who lived in the countryside, it meant bands of guerrillas and bushwhackers tearing through their property.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the next few days, Danville's population swelled to unsustainable proportions. Confederate soldiers, mostly sailors from the disbanded Confederate Navy, made their way into the city to man the defenses for the new rebel capital, and throngs of civilians fleeing Richmond made their way into the undersized city. Even a bridal party, which had been

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<sup>19</sup> McFall, F. Lawrence. *Danville in the Civil War*. First Edition. H.E. Howard, Inc, n.d. 2001. P.84.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> McFall. P.89.

<sup>22</sup> Bushwhackers is a term used for ruffians and bandits who camp "in the bushes" along the roads for the purpose of highway robbery.

in the middle of celebrating in Richmond, was forced to join the droves of refugees as they followed the Confederate government southward, away from the United States army.<sup>23</sup> These exiles were forced to live in cramped and often dilapidated warehouses, boxcars, and even on flatbed boats on the Dan River. Danville was not prepared to be a war sanctuary.

While President Davis's ramshackle government acquainted itself to Danville, Virginia Governor William "Extra Billy" Smith made his way through the dark into Lynchburg via the James River canal.<sup>24</sup> Within days, state officials began to trickle into the city. While the Confederate government, 70 miles to the South, was readily being outfitted by the city of Danville, state auditor Jonathan M. Bennett requested from Lynchburg a total of \$55,400 for the costs of relocation, an amount that Lynchburgers grudgingly handed over. With that transaction, for a brief amount of time Lynchburg became the 4<sup>th</sup> state capital of Virginia. Governor Smith, in an effort to raise morale, attempted to give a speech to his hard-pressed neighbors. Lieutenant Craighill, stood nearby and watched the Governor stand in front of an untidy crowd in the misting rain to pontificate. He recalled that the Governor was "a brave man and was evidently minded to fight it out to the very last ditch. But the impression was very general by this time that we were very near the last ditch already."<sup>25</sup> In his speech, Governor Smith tried to echo the same fiery determination that President Davis had put through in his proclamation, and it likely would have been a success if it had not been interrupted by a bread riot. Craighill described the event that had unfolded before him:

an excited crowd of men and women surged through the streets demanding food and, alas! drink also. The authorities ordered all drinking places to be closed and afterwards barrels of alcohol, rum,

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<sup>23</sup> McFall. P.90.

<sup>24</sup> Governor William Smith had earned the name "Extra Billy" for the generous payments he received from the Federal Government for the mail line he ran from Washington D.C. to Georgia before the war.

<sup>25</sup> Elson. 177.



whiskey, etc, were emptied in the gutters. With my own eyes I saw men and women, with tin cups and other vessels dipping up from the gutters and drinking these intoxicants, The condition of things was chaotic.<sup>26</sup>

The Governor's appearance had likely riled the destitute of the city into a clamor for more food. News of Lee's flight from Richmond had brought forth a panic that the end was coming, and the Governor's presence in the city had only confirmed those fears.

Those fears had become incarnate when Brigadier-General Thomas Munford's cavalry division, or rather what was left of it, stormed into the city from the east on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Upon seeing the cavalry, nineteen-year-old Mary Washington Cabell, daughter of a local minister, wrote that "There are no words to express the bitterness and poignancy of the grief I now feel. If my death could have averted the blow I must now record, it would have been willingly given." As they passed her by throughout the day, she continued that "their hearts seem broken, yet their bearing is firm and manly. They say they could not stay and see Lee go up and deliver himself to the Yankees...As much as I love [Virginia]," she wrote, "I wish to go away, for now everything has changed."<sup>27</sup> Munford's cavalry had been with Lee's army at the village of Appomattox Court House, just 20 miles away in the neighboring county of Appomattox.<sup>28</sup> The ANV had made its way to Appomattox in an attempt to move west to regroup and attain supplies, however it had found itself boxed in by three of Grant's Federal armies. Munford's cavalry had been able to breakthrough; however, the rest of the army had not been so fortunate. With nowhere to turn and an army of starved men on his hands, Lee surrendered the ANV on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1865, Palm Sunday.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Elson. 177.

<sup>28</sup> Janney, Caroline E. *Ends of War: The Unfinished Fight of Lee's Army after Appomattox*. The University of North Carolina Press. Kindle Edition. P.26

The news of Lee's surrender was greeted with utter silence. Rumors quickly but quietly spread that Lynchburg would be sacked and looted, that the Federal troops would come and take their vengeance on the unscathed rebel city.<sup>29</sup> A local doctor lamented, "This day is the saddest and most heart sickening of the whole of this terrible war."<sup>30</sup> Governor Smith quietly fled to Danville to join the rest of the Confederate government in what would be yet another evacuation. The rest of the government officials silently slunk off, fearing persecution from the uncomfortably close Federal army. The disappointment and sorrow that the citizens felt was not directed towards Governor Smith, the government itself, or even Jeff Davis, their faith in those items had already disappeared by this point. What the people felt disappointed in was Lee's army. For years, the army of Northern Virginia had been the pride of the Confederacy. It had successfully kept the United States army at bay, however even through their losses, public faith in Lee's army had only grown stronger, as opposed to the Confederate government itself, which had practically withered away. This time was different. This time, Lee didn't just make a mistake that he could come back from. This time, he had failed completely. Now the people of Central Virginia had no protectors, now they were at the complete mercy of the United States army. On April 12, the Lynchburg city council, headed by Mayor Branch, met Federal Brigadier-General Ranald S. Mackensie on the bridge that entered the city from the east. Upon his arrival, Mackensie swore no harm would befall the city.<sup>31</sup> After Mackensie had left to return to the army, the surrender of Lynchburg saw the city fall into a deep state of silence. Then the riots started.

By sheer providence, Rosa Faulkner Yancey, a historian in her later life, had just returned from Appomattox when she found Lynchburg in a state of furor. She was accompanied by her

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<sup>29</sup> Potter, Clifton, Dorothy Potter, and Clifton W. Potter. *Lynchburg: A City Set on Seven Hills*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Elson. 178.

<sup>31</sup> Scruggs. P.114.

relative, Major Stephen P. Halsey, who had been with Lee's army for the surrender. Upon entering the city, they encountered what they described as a "a gang of Yankee camp followers [likely prisoners of war], unruly Negroes, and the riffraff of the town, who, emboldened by the news of the surrender, were bent upon looting the stores and houses."<sup>32</sup> Mrs. Yancey wrote that

Feeling that the entire town would soon be at the mercy of the rabble unless something was done, the Major drew his sword and rode into the rabble slapping it right and left with the broad side of it. One man cried 'Get out the way! He'll kill use!' while [Major Halsey's] Negro body servant, riding as close to his master as he could, yelled back: 'You're damn right he will!'<sup>33</sup>

Halsey, upon encountering a group of armed citizens that were loosely acting as police, were able to form them up into a loose regiment to combat the unruly mobs.

What did not help the situation were the paroled Confederates that were passing through the city. Hordes of half-starved rebel soldiers poured into the city from Appomattox. They were tired, as they had marched over 100 miles in a week, all on empty bellies. Crazy by starvation and enraged by the defeat of their army, much of their frustrations were taken out on public property. In several cases, soldiers burned caissons and wagons in the streets. Civilians, upset by their sudden poverty, began throwing Confederate money and agricultural bonds into the James River canal. For many of the soldiers, their hunger got the best of them. Lynchburg was a supply center, and there were supposed to be storehouses full of food. These Confederates justified that they were soldiers after all, and that the food was meant to be for them in the end. Soldiers began breaking into commissary buildings and warehouses. When all of the military supplies had been claimed, they turned to civilian businesses, taking clothes, tobacco, spirits, and anything else

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<sup>32</sup> Elson. 178.

<sup>33</sup> Elson. 179.

they could get their hands on.<sup>34</sup> Businesses hurriedly closed their doors and darkened their windows out of fear that their storefronts may become subject to the interest of looters. The violence seen in Lynchburg served as the first of many cases where half-starved, former-Confederates, had forsaken the very Southern soil they had once sworn to defend, and turned to pillaging the property of their fellow Southerners, falling from the status of soldiers to that of rogues and cavaliers.

While Lynchburg faced the despondent soldiers, the situation in Danville was no different. By April 12, Jeff Davis and the rest of the Confederate government had fled to Greensboro, leaving Virginia behind to the complete and total control of the United States government. Like Lynchburg, Danville faced hordes of homeward bound Confederates, many of whom were more driven by their hunger than the sorrows of their loss. The arrival of the pardoned soldiers started as a trickle, coming in as ones and twos, but soon it turned into throngs of former soldiers swarming into the former Confederate capital. At one point, it was calculated that over 3,000 soldiers had come to Danville within only a few hours.<sup>35</sup> So many soldiers were making their way into the city, city officials were forced to build makeshift bridges to allow soldiers safe entry into the city.

Just like in Lynchburg, these soldiers were there for a purpose. They were there for the Confederate storehouses. With the throngs of destitute soldier's building up in the city like water in a dam, the city was placed under martial law. However, that wasn't enough, as nearly 2,000 rebel soldiers congregated at the front of one of Danville's storehouses, and demanded to be fed. The Mayor of Danville, Mayor Walker, who was described as a "plucky" fellow with a short

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<sup>34</sup> Janney. *Ends of War*.

<sup>35</sup> McFall.P.101

temper and a bushy black beard, went to go confront the mob. When facing the mob, Walker demanded that the soldiers scatter. When the crowd refused to heed his instruction, Walker drew his pistol and fired into the crowd.<sup>36</sup> The shot had failed to find a mark, but had succeeded in provoking the ire of the soldiers, who were by this point no longer frightened by mere gunshots. Paying no heed to the mayor's weapon, the soldiers charged the doors of the storehouses, and forced their entry. Inside, they were delighted to find storerooms full of bacon, cornmeal, molasses, clothes, blankets, and much more. One soldier was in such a hurry to get inside, he fell into a vat of molasses. Another soldier was able to get inside and come out with a few pieces of bacon, cornmeal, army blankets, and a brand-new saddle, even though he had no horse.

Despite the looting, the city of Danville made an effort to move the soldiers elsewhere. Unlike Lynchburg, Danville still had a working rail line. By April 17<sup>th</sup>, Easter Monday, the city had arranged for trains to take the swarming soldiers from the city to Greensboro, where they could continue their journey from there.<sup>37</sup> This system appeared to run well at first, but trouble eventually arose. The engines and rolling stock broke down within just a few days of continuous journeys to and from Greensboro. This resulted in a backlog of paroled rebels loitering in Danville. One of the trains had been sitting at a water tank for a refill when a sudden roar and shudder shook everyone within a 100-yard radius. Firey debris rained from the sky, smoke filled the air, and someone shouted out that "the Yankees are attacking us!"<sup>38</sup> This statement was fairly close to true, only that it was not the Federal soldiers who were causing the raucous, it was former rebel soldiers breaking into the city arsenal. During the event, some person had carelessly

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<sup>36</sup> McFall. P.102.

<sup>37</sup> A condition on the parole pass issued to Lee's soldiers by Grant's army is that they were to be given free passage on rail lines and waterways.

<sup>38</sup> McFall.P.103.

lit a spark which then turned the arsenal into a giant crater.<sup>39</sup> Several people had been killed in the incident, many of the bodies that were found were burned beyond recognition. In the case of some nearby women, the flames had caught on to their dresses, and being unable to extinguish the flames themselves, they jumped into the Dan River and drowned.

During this confusion, the train that had been sitting at the water-tower had been exposed to the exploding ordinance. If the pressurized steam-engine had been struck by one of these exploding shells, the carnage would have been ten-fold. During the confusion, a man had jumped into the cabin of the engine, claiming to be an engineer. The man had started the engine and forced it out of the station at top speed, saving it from the flying and flaming debris. Fortunately, the engine safely came to a stop just outside the city with only a broken axel rod.

80 miles away in Pamplin, a rail depot in Appomattox County, Fannie Berry sat in front of her owner's, now former owner's, house and watched the white flag fly over the village center.<sup>40</sup> This effectively surrendered the small cluster of buildings and the nearby rail station over to the Federal army. All through the village newly made freedmen and women fellowshipped in the streets, singing songs with each other, and lamenting the fact that they "knew dat dey were free."<sup>41</sup> Mrs. Berry herself would remember that "Never was no time like 'em befo' or since. N\*\*\*\*\*s shoutin' an' clappin' hands an' singin'! Chillun runnin' all over de place beatin' tins an' yellin'. Ev'ybody happy. Sho; dud some celebratin'."<sup>42</sup> To the enslaved of Central Virginia, Lee's surrender must have been a bewildering moment. Throughout the entirety

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<sup>39</sup> Janney. *Ends of War*. (Kindle edition)

<sup>40</sup> Heinemann, Ronald L., John G. Kolp, Anthony S. Parent Jr, and William G. Shade. *Old Dominion, New Commonwealth: A History of Virginia, 1607–2007*. University of Virginia Press, 2008. P.240.

<sup>41</sup> Janney, Caroline E. *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. University of North Carolina Press, 2013. P.47.

<sup>42</sup> Encyclopedia Virginia. "Interview of Mrs. Fannie Berry' (February 26, 1937)." <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/interview-of-mrs-fannie-berry-february-26-1937/>.

of the conflict, they had been told time and time again that the war was only going to end with their continued enslavement. With no major wartime events happening in the area throughout the conflict and nothing more but the word of their owners as a source of news, the enslaved of Central Virginia had no way of seeing the full picture of the war until it marched right past their doorsteps. Berry's words recorded the reactions of the enslaved as they saw regiments of Federal soldiers, around 5,000 of which were United States Colored Troops, march down the road right in front of them. Upon the arrival of the United States army, they were no longer considered slaves, but as freed men and women. Indeed, the enslaved in Appomattox County were the first in the area to learn of their emancipation.

Despite the arrival of the Federal army, the relationship between slaveowner and enslaved did not immediately dissolve, in fact some enslaved in the area. This would be the case of Hannah Reynolds, who had belonged to a local doctor, Samuel Coleman, and his wife Amanda. When news of the Federal army's impending arrival had swept through the area, landowners fled to avoid the destruction, but had left the enslaved behind on the property. When the Colemans prepared to flee, they told Hannah to stay behind and watch the house. Hannah, knowing that the arrival of the U.S. army meant emancipation, agreed to stay. When the armies clashed on the morning of April 9<sup>th</sup>, Hannah had been woken from her bed, which she shared with her husband, Abraham. The Coleman house had the misfortune of coming in-between the fighting lines of the clashing armies. During their attempt to flee the doomed homestead, Hannah was fatally wounded by a piece of an artillery shell. With the help of a U.S. army doctor, Hannah was taken to a nearby field hospital, where she laid for a couple days, until she eventually succumbed to her

injuries on April 12<sup>th</sup>. Hannah died as the only civilian casualty of the battle of Appomattox, being wounded as a slave on April 9<sup>th</sup>, but dying as a free woman just a few days later.<sup>43</sup>

Not all enslaved in the area belonged to local landowners; there were many more that were serving the rebel army itself. When Lee's army arrived at Appomattox, it consisted of approximately 30,000 soldiers and hundreds of enslaved who had been brought along with the armies to serve in non-combatant roles. These men had undergone the same trials as Lee's soldiers and were in just as bad of condition, and perhaps even worse off. With the surrender and dissolution of the army, these newly emancipated workers were just as lost as their soldier counterparts. They were equally as ragged, equally as hungry, and they wanted to go home just as badly. Some had arrived with their former masters and were able to travel back with them, however many others had been pressed into service by the Confederate army, and with the collapse of the army, it meant they had to find their own way to get back home. Around 39 of these conscripted enslaved were documented, meaning that they were given parole passes, however the majority were not. Some were able to follow their former owners and neighbors from their home counties, while others were left to their own means of finding home.<sup>44</sup>

On the farms and plantations across Appomattox County, enslaved communities were discovering that their day of jubilo had finally arrived, and while there were plenty of cases, such as that of Fannie Berry, where the enslaved were able to celebrate their liberation, there were just as many cases where they were unable to. This instance is seen on the Flood property, a large plantation just south of the village of Appomattox Court House, where the overseer had come out before the slaves and pronounced that they were not to be set free until he said they were free. It

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<sup>43</sup> Marvel, William. *A Place Called Appomattox*. UNC Press Books, 2016. P. 234.

<sup>44</sup> Janney. *Ends of War*. P.76



was sentiments like these that had the freedmen worried. They knew that the arrival of the Union was only a temporary blessing. The Federal Army was bound to leave within a few days; this would mean that their moment of celebration would be over, and then everyone, White and Black, would find out if the old world that they knew was gone for good.

By April 17<sup>th</sup>, the mass of the United States army had departed from the region, taking with them swarms of Confederate parolees, who were looking to use their parole passes as a means of getting food from the U.S. soldiers. The atmosphere was tense as the U.S. army withdrew from the region. Just days earlier these Federal troops had been echoing their praises to the heavens, only to have their moment of exultation cut short on the evening of April 15<sup>th</sup>. The news had begun to travel throughout the Federal ranks of the death of the President. Lincoln had overseen the earliest implementation of a reconciliation plan, but that plan died with him at 7:22 A.M. Congress, his cabinet, and the new President, Andrew Johnson, were then left to pick up the pieces that he had dropped. Lincoln's death came just five days after the surrender of Lee's army.

While Lincoln's passing came as a devastating blow to the United States soldiers, it received a mixed response from the White population. In Farmville, just 35 miles to the east of Appomattox, the town honored a request made by passing Federal troops to open the doors of the local Presbyterian church for Federal soldiers to attend a memorial service. This service saw a majority of Federals with only two Farmville citizens in attendance. One of which, a local doctor, remarked that the conduct of the soldiers was cordial, the eulogy was overstrained, but nothing was offensive to Southerners.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, 90 miles to the west of Farmville in

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<sup>45</sup> Bradshaw, H. Clarence. *History of Farmville Virginia, 1798 - 1948*. First Edition. The Farmville Herald, 1994. P.32.

Lexington, Cornelia McDonald, a war widow with seven children, remarked that “it was just what he deserved”, but she was able to resist the urge to cheer.<sup>46</sup> To Southerners, Lincoln’s death came as a bittersweet paradox. On one hand, his presidency had precipitated the war, but on the other hand, Lincoln had explicitly expressed his wish to reincorporate the South into the United States with open arms:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all Nations.<sup>47</sup>

Lincoln’s closing words in his second inaugural heralded reconciliation rather than retribution. Lincoln envisioned a postwar South where Southerners would be allowed to rejoin the United States with few repercussions, much to the dismay of the Republican Party. Many in the party called for a harsh and swift retribution on the South. This caused some Southern leaders by the War’s end had come to believe that Lincoln, through a cruel twist of irony, had become the South’s only friend in the U.S. government. Despite his intentions, John Wilkes Booth had done the opposite of aiding the South. Lincoln’s absence led to a division of power between Congress, and the Vice-President, Andrew Johnson.

Lincoln’s death foreshadowed a dark path for the Freedmen, who had come to see Lincoln as their great emancipator. The arrival of the U.S. army had meant the arrival of Lincoln’s Emancipation. With Lincoln’s death, it meant an uncertain future in the hands of unkind men for the Freedmen. The Emancipation made no attempts to ensure the security of the Freedmen. They did not have any sort of education to help them navigate the world around them,

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<sup>46</sup> Ash, Stephen V. *A Year in the South: Four Lives in 1865*. St. Martin’s Press, 2016. P.105.

<sup>47</sup> Lincoln, Abraham. Second Inaugural Address. March 1865.

they did not have any money they could use, nor any helpful skills, aside from that of the farmwork which they had done all their lives. Lincoln's death had in Lincoln's place come Andrew Johnson, a Southerner, a Unionist, but by no means a friend to the Freedmen. Upon Johnson's ascension, the U.S. troops that had chased Lee's army into Central Virginia slowly began to return to Richmond. This left the Freedmen emancipated, but alone, deep in poverty, and with nowhere else to turn to but to their former masters. While some did attempt to leave in search of new opportunities, many Freedmen either stayed on the plantations or were arrested as vagrants. Many had stayed due to familial bonds in the area, and just by the fact that they knew of nowhere else to go.

By the end of April, Confederate defeat seemed to have changed very little. If the U.S. army was not going to remain in the area to enforce the changes that they had fought for, then there was nothing stopping the people of Central Virginia from returning to their antebellum way of life. This is evident in the ledger books of Thomas Bocoock. Bocoock was a citizen of Appomattox County, a graduate of Hampden-Sydney college, a prominent antebellum statesman, and was the first and only Speaker of the House for the Confederate government. When the Confederacy collapsed, Bocoock fled to his riverside plantation home in the northern part of Appomattox County before the surrender of the ANV.<sup>48</sup> At the end of April, he traded sixteen enslaved women and children from his cousin, Colonel Thomas Flood, in exchange for two dozen bushels of corn and seventy-four bushels of wheat. Five of these enslaved were then given to a neighbor.<sup>49</sup> Bocoock explained in his ledger that he and Flood made the business agreement

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<sup>48</sup> The Bocoock family-owned multiple pieces of land throughout Appomattox County, with their plantation of Wildeway being their most prominent property.

<sup>49</sup> Marvel. (271)

“after Lee’s surrender and before the order freeing the negroes”<sup>50</sup>. However, the order freeing the enslaved in Virginia had been issued years earlier with the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation<sup>51</sup>. The surrender of the ANV in Appomattox County, Bocoock’s home, was the event that had applied the emancipation to Central Virginia. They were by no means separate events. By pleading unawareness of these facts, Bocoock was either a liar or an ignoramus. Thomas Bocoock was not an ignoramus.

Within weeks after the surrender, life in Central Virginia had hardly changed. That was apart from the heaps of abandoned military equipment that had been discarded by the soldiers. Local farmers and Freedmen took to clearing the roads and fields of the debris. While hardware such as artillery, musketry, and munitions had been collected by Grant’s troops, there were still hundreds of abandoned wagons, burned-out caissons, pieces of canvas, shovels, pickaxes, hammers, and other items that littered the muddy roads, and sat in trampled fields and yards. With the discarded rubble and debris were the carcasses of almost 500 horses and mules. It was said that the combined stench had deterred the buzzards from picking at the remains. A traveler through the region remarked that the landscape resembled “one eternal scene of desolation and destruction.”<sup>52</sup> As for the herds of emaciated horses and mules that had survived, many of these animals were in such poor condition that many of the owners had deemed that they would never make it back to places as far as Arkansas and Texas. So, they were cast off, with shrunken bellies and prominent ribcages, to wander through grassless fields and briar-filled cutovers looking for

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<sup>50</sup> Bocoock, Thomas S. “1865 Ledger Book.” Papers of Bocoock and of the Bocoock, Thornhill Christian, Stephens, Flood, Patteson, and Diuguid Families of Buckingham and Appomattox Counties. Smalls Special Collections Library. University of Virginia.

<sup>51</sup> The Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863. This act effectively abolished slavery in each state that was acting in rebellion against the U.S. However, the act was not effective until the Federal army had arrived in each region to quell the rebellion. In the case of Central Virginia, it was the end of the war.

<sup>52</sup> Marvel (270.)

anything that resembled the color green. Many of these horses, along with much of the discarded equipment, ended up being claimed by local farmers and Freedmen. The ones that weren't claimed were typically found months later in gullies and creek-bottoms, where they had gone for a final drink.

*Sweeping Up the Shards:*

*May 1865*

While the drenching showers of April certainly brought more mud than any sort of May flowers, Central Virginia welcomed the warm sunlight and the absence of Federal Troops. The residents of the region were able to wearily return to their homes to clean up the mess. When the armies had completely withdrawn from Appomattox at the end of the April, orders had been given to the county sheriff, William "Billy" Hix, to round up a team of men, and to collect all the discarded supplies and animals that had been left behind. Once he had done all of this, he was to distribute these things out to the poor and the freedmen. The first part of these orders was carried out with precision. However, when it came to the other half of the orders, things became quickly complicated. Instead of distributing to the poor and needy, he sold the equipment to the wealthy in the area. Thus, becoming a war profiteer.

After all the supplies in Appomattox County had been gathered up and sold off, the Sheriff's war profiteering enterprise expanded into the neighboring counties. Despite having no jurisdiction outside of Appomattox, Sheriff Hix recruited men from Appomattox County to ride into Amherst and Campbell counties to "reacquisition" supplies that had been claimed by the locals. This operation continued for nearly two weeks until disaster fell. A couple of the Sheriff's men had attempted to relieve a Campbell County farmer of a mule. The mule bore the brand of one of the armies that had been present in the area, proof that the mule had been left over from

the military presence. When the farmer refused to surrender the mule, Sheriff Hix rode out to secure the mule. When the farmer showed further resistance, the man was shot. Hearing of the incident, the villagers of Appomattox County did not take kindly to the rumors of their sheriff becoming a thief and murderer, and so they formed a posse in retaliation. The mission of this posse was to locate the sheriff and his band of ruffians, snuff out any resistance they offered, and to apprehend the sheriff and his followers. Given that the county jail in Appomattox had burned in a fire years before the war, and the new jail had yet to be completed, Sheriff Hix and his gang likely were facing a rather swift and harsh trial.

Before the vengeful posse could locate the sheriff, his fortune changed. Days before the posse had been formed, Appomattox County Clerk, George Peers, had telegraphed the Federal army describing the situation. In response, a brigade of cavalry, under Colonel Samuel Young, turned back to Central Virginia to intervene before the vigilante mob found the sheriff. The brigade had been dispatched on the 11<sup>th</sup>, on the 13<sup>th</sup> a detachment of the cavalry had located and captured the renegade Sheriff, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> the full force of Young's Cavalry had arrived in Appomattox Court House and civil order had been fully restored in the county.<sup>53</sup> Upon their arrest, the Sheriff and the rest of his band were transported to Richmond to await trial. Shortly after, Colonel Young telegraphed his superiors in Richmond that "trouble was brewing in Central Virginia and was ordered to disperse his brigade all throughout the region."<sup>54</sup> Young sent a squadron to Amherst Court House and kept an entire regiment in Appomattox Court House.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Marvel. (272.)

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> A cavalry squadron is roughly 120 men while a cavalry regiment is typically around 1,200 men; A cavalry brigade is typically two regiments combined.

Days later he sent two officers and at least twenty-five men to each of the other counties, while the rest of his brigade gathered in Lynchburg.

In Richmond, General Edward Ord was given command of the Army of Occupation in Virginia, which had by this point been labeled as Military District 1. At the beginning of the month, the military, congress, and President Johnson, had ordered that the South be placed under martial law, and that each former Confederate state was to be placed into a military district. Virginia was the smallest, but the most populated of all the districts. For a state to be able to rejoin the United States, at least 10% of the voting population had to swear an Oath of Allegiance to the United States.<sup>56</sup> That population would then have to create a state government that would acknowledge the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment as the law of the land, swear loyalty to the Constitution of the United States, and that former Confederate officials, both military and political, were barred from entering civil service, additionally the state would have to accept a war-debt. Once that had been done, the re-admitted states could hold annual elections and begin sending representatives to Congress.<sup>57</sup>

For individuals, both men and women of legal age, taking the Oath of Allegiance meant reaffirming their loyalty to the United States.<sup>58</sup> Without the Oath, they essentially would not be granted U.S. citizenship, and the rights and privileges that came with the title. The Oath could be administered in any city, town, or village where there was a presence of Federal Troops. The Oath read

I [ ] of [ ] County, State of [ ], do solemnly swear  
(or affirm) in presence of Almighty God, that I will

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<sup>56</sup> Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction Updated Edition: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. HarperCollins, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> "Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction" - Andrew Johnson National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service).

<sup>58</sup> While the laws concerning the Oath of Allegiance will fluctuate throughout Reconstruction, women were initially required to take up the Oath of Allegiance; This was due to the large number of widows and mothers who were required to take charge of properties at the end of the war.

henceforth faithfully support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Union of the States thereunder, and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion, with reference to the emancipation of Slaves-So Help Me God.<sup>59</sup>

Without taking this oath, Virginians could not vote, run for office, enter legal contracts, get married, or take part of any other legal business in the country. Of course, Freedmen were exempt from taking the Oath. Their status in the newly reunited United States was yet to be determined. Emancipation did not mean citizenship, which meant that the War's End had landed them in the same position as many of their White neighbors. Country-less, penniless, and vulnerable.

While the events in Appomattox County unfolded, General Ord sought a way to monitor the relations between the Freedmen and the White population. Reports were flooding the Provost's Offices in Richmond about robbers and bandits in the countryside, and of instances where emancipation was being completely ignored. Once Ord began receiving the telegrams detailing the actions Colonel Young had undertaken, he had found the answer to his problem. In coordination with Congress and the President, the army broke the military districts further down into sub-districts, with major cities forming the center of each sub-district. Central Virginia became the Lynchburg Sub-District, with the namesake city, Lynchburg, as the district headquarters. To further administer the Sub-District, Ord assigned General John Irwin Gregg the command of the Sub-District. Gregg arrived in Lynchburg on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Around the time of his arrival, *The Daily Virginian* resumed its operations after over a month of closure. The first thing that the newspaper printed was on the 18<sup>th</sup>. It was a copy of

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<sup>59</sup>"United States Oath of Allegiance." Office of U.S. Provost Marhsall. 1865-1866.



Gregg's "General Order's No.1", which effectively stated and explained the presence of the federal troops in the region, what their presence meant, and what was to be expected of the sub-district's inhabitants.<sup>60</sup> These General Orders were then reprinted in the other counties of the Sub-District. Unless the order directly addressed the Sub-District, each county would typically adopt their own version of the General Orders that were passed out of Lynchburg to better apply to them. These General Orders were the Provost Guard's way of addressing the people of the Sub-District, and they used the newspaper as a medium to do so. Occasionally, Gregg received orders from Ord's office in Richmond, which he would then forward through the papers as one of his own orders. Ord's orders generally applied to the entire Sub-District. Gregg's "Order No.1" was followed up with on the same day with "General Order No. 2" which stated

That good order and quiet may be preserved in and around the borders of the city, it is hereby ordered.

1<sup>st</sup>. That all persons engaged in the sale of spiritous liquors will at once cease to sell liquor to any person.

2d. That persons will not congregate in groups more than 3 (three) on the streets or on the street corners, and at no time will they obstruct the sidewalk so as to interfere with travel.

3d. All residents having non-visible means of livelihood, and all negroes not living in the city, will leave within 24 (twenty-four) hours, and all negroes congregating in groups in the streets will be arrested and placed at labor cleaning the streets of the city.

4th. All citizens or Confederate soldiers, wearing arms, except the former city guard, will report to these Head Quarters between the hours of 9 and 12 A.M. and when it is necessary permission to wear arms may be granted.

5th. Stragglings of troops from their quarters is forbidden, except by special permission from these Head Quarters, and any soldiers, (Federal or Confederate) breaking into houses, robbing and plundering, burning property, insulting ladies, or in any way molesting or disturbing peaceable citizens, shall be arrested and punished severely.

6th. Soldiers are strictly forbidden to enter any private dwelling within or on the borders of the city.

7th. That trouble may be saved, no citizens will take the law into their own hands, but will report any violations with this order, or any misdemeanors

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<sup>60</sup> "General Orders No. 1" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 18, 1865.

that come within their observation or knowledge, and all violations of these orders will be punished severely.<sup>61</sup>

To summarize Gregg's order, the first three items on the list were in response to the large number of vagrant soldiers and freedmen that wandered the streets of Lynchburg. These people had no means of work or shelter, this prompted fears that they would take to drunken mischief. By making it a dry city, it kept that fear only to the imagination. By driving the vagrants from the city it kept the streets clear for those who lived there, and by putting the ones who stayed to work kept them occupied from trouble. In the month following the end of the war, there was much discontent with the public, from White Lynchburgers who were not pleased to host Federal soldiers in their city, and from Freedmen, who were not pleased with having to return to the plantations. By ordering the clearing of the streets it not only kept the roads clear, but it also prevented dangerous mobs from gathering. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> items were made less as instructions for the federal soldiers, as any kind of looting done in a peacetime town under their garrison was punishable by court marshal and possibly death, and more as a way of telling the Sub-District's population what to expect from the soldiers. Sheridan's burnings in the Shenandoah Valley had soiled any sort of reputation that U.S. troops had with Virginians. Publishing articles five and six were about assuring the public that these soldiers were there for peace, not war. Lastly, article 7 was in retaliation to the events in Appomattox. With the arrival of the provost guard, they were the law and order in the region, and there was no longer any need for corrupt sheriffs and vigilante justice.

Along with "General Order No. 2", there was a follow-up that described the situation of the Freedmen. In the months after the surrender, many Freedmen were still seen wandering the

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<sup>61</sup> "General Orders No. 2" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 18, 1865.

countryside and congregating outside of cities. This created a fear amongst the White population that they would start ravaging the countryside. While some had turned to bushwhacking and robbery out of refusal of returning to plantation work, as this was seen in the deeper south, the vast majority were really just looking for family members and loved ones.<sup>62</sup>

Slavery did not allow for long distance social networks to develop amongst the enslaved, when loved ones were sold off, it was more likely than not that they would never be seen again. Rather than looting the properties, many of these ramblers were visiting to see who was at which plantations. Additionally, there was a lot of confusion and uncertainty about the power dynamic that had arisen from the Emancipation. If the Freedmen were no longer enslaved, then they should be paid. How much should they be paid, and what should they be paid with? How much responsibility did the planter have when it came to seeing to the needs of the Freedmen? When they were enslaved, the planter was responsible for supplying them with food, clothing, and shelter. If they were expected to provide for themselves, they had no means of doing so. This left the two groups in an uncomfortable situation.

To address these concerns, the continuation of “General Order No. 2” stated that

Their [the Freedmen] error consist mainly in the belief that with their liberty they acquire individual rights in the property of their former masters, and that they are entitled to live with and be subsisted by them, without being obliged to labor or give any remuneration for their support. Many even believe that the entire property of their former owners belongs to themselves, and that the owner with them only by their sufferance. This mistake has been originated and sustained in many instances by thoughtless, ignorant, or mischievous soldiers.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Carter, Dan T. *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865--1867*. LSU Press, 1985.

<sup>63</sup> “General Orders No. 2” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 18, 1865.

The subsequent order proceeded to explain that all Freedmen are expected to remain on the plantation and work in exchange for a share of the crop, that they in turn may sell for their own sustenance. It was not expected of the landowner to provide for their workforce. “Their former master has the right to refuse them anything that he may deny a complete stranger.”<sup>64</sup> However this statement will later be amended in subsequent “General Orders No.13” and “No. 18” which stated that farmers who produce cereal crops that have been planted by freedmen are forbidden from removing them from service without providing for their support. “The support of the laborer and his family is a just charge against the product of the land, and the owner cannot escape the payment, either as wages paid periodically, or by giving a fair proportion of the crop”<sup>65</sup> and “persons employing able-bodied men and knowing them to have families on other plantations are requested to withhold a portion of the stipulated wages to be paid over to an agent regularly authorized to receive it, that it may be applied in support of their families...”<sup>66</sup> Wages for the Freedmen were to be negotiated in the presence of a Provost officer. The size of the wage varied from plantation to plantation; however, it was widely understood that each Freedman was to receive a substantial amount of the crop for them to sell in order to support themselves and their families. It fell to the Provost Guard to negotiate the labor contracts between the Freedmen and the Planters.

Keeping the Freedmen at work seemed to be a priority for the Provost. Fearing that idleness amongst the Freedmen would lead to insolence, Gregg included in “General Order No.2” that if any able-bodied freedman was found off the plantation without a means of work,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> “General Orders No. 13” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 27, 1865.

<sup>66</sup> “General Orders No. 18” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. June 3, 1865.

they could be seen as vagrants and treated as such. There were stipulations of course, women, children, and the infirm were exempt from this order, as this largely applied to healthy males from 18-35. Unless they had already lived there, freedmen were not to enter the cities, as there was no work for them there. As stated in “General Order No. 5”, that any that did work and live within the city limits were required to have passes from their employers to prove their business in the city. Any found without a pass were arrested. On the other end, landlords were forbidden from evicting tenants from their dwellings unless deemed necessary by the Provost Guard.<sup>67</sup>

Freedmen were not the only group the Provost Guard were concerned with. By mid-May, Lynchburg’s now dwindled population of Confederate soldiers had slowly limped back to their homes. As to be expected, many were not pleased to see their city occupied by Federal troops. General Gregg published several orders directed towards the paroled rebels. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, *The Daily Virginian*, printed a statement from Gregg that directed all “paroled prisoners”, which is what Gregg referred to them until they had taken the oath, were to report to the Provost Headquarters every day at 9A.M.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, ‘No paroled prisoner will be permitted to leave the city, and they are not allowed to be out from their homes at night after “Retreat” (9 o’clock we suppose)<sup>69</sup>.’ This would go on until they had taken the Oath of Allegiance, otherwise they must continue to report to the Provost.<sup>70</sup> Those who failed to report were arrested.

In addition to their curfew, under the threat of arrest, former rebels were forbidden from displaying any flags, icons, or military insignias in their homes or on their persons. As ordered

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<sup>67</sup> “General Orders No. 5” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 25, 1865.

<sup>68</sup> “General Orders No. 4” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 20, 1865.

<sup>69</sup> Note the exasperated tone in Button’s side comment. Charles Button was among the Lynchburg residents who were less than thrilled by the presence of the Provost Guard and was even less thrilled with having his paper serve as their mouthpiece.

<sup>70</sup> “Special Notice” *The Virginian*. May 20, 1865.

by General Ord in Richmond, only those who had taken the Oath of Allegiance were allowed to travel out of state<sup>71</sup> and those who had not taken the Oath of Allegiance were forbidden from using the rail and postal services.<sup>72</sup> This last one was particularly important for the farmers and Planters of the Sub-District. Usage of the railroads was vital for growers to get their crops to market. By being denied use of the railroads, farmers were given the choice of either destitute poverty or taking the Oath.

Along with brokering labor contracts and keeping the peace, the Provost also served to provide sustenance for the poor and destitute. On certain days of the week, Central Virginia's destitute were able to enter the Provost camps and request rations. These rations were nothing special; they typically consisted of military issued meals such as cornmeal, hardtack, coffee, and salted pork. Despite their duty to the poor, there were still stipulations. Whites were required to take the Oath before they were allowed sustenance from the government. Furthermore, both Whites and Freedmen were required to take The Indigent Oath.<sup>73</sup> This Oath made the taker swear before the Provost that they had no means of providing for themselves or their families and that they were at the Provost's mercy. It read:

I do solemnly swear before Almighty God, the Searcher of all hearts, that I am in destitute circumstances, that I have nothing to subsist upon, that I have no money to purchase subsistence with; and that I have made every effort in my power to obtain honest employment, and without success. That I am a \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ helpless children, and that, unless relief is afforded me, must perish. I further declare that I have taken the oath of allegiance to the U.S. Government.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "General Orders No. 8" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. Office of General Ord. Richmond, Va. May 22, 1865.

<sup>72</sup> "General Orders No. 8" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 19, 1865.

<sup>73</sup> Dennett, John Richard. *The South As It Is: 1865–1866*. University of Alabama Press, 2010.. P.49.

<sup>74</sup> "The Indigent Oath." *The Virginian*. May 20, 1865.

Taking The Indigent Oath was seen by many, White or Freed people, as an absolute last resort. It meant that they were totally pitiful and helpless, and to bring oneself so low was seen as a disgrace, especially for the whites who did not want to be dependent on Yankee soldiers. For Freedmen who took this Oath, they often required assistance from the provost in reading it.

With the issuance of rations, provost offices and camps were often flooded with the destitute. The Provost's primary dependents were unsurprisingly Freed men and women. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Charles Button, the editor for *The Daily Virginian*, published a statement that Lynchburg's Provost Office had been "besieged" by swarms of women, both freedwomen and white. Their applications for rations were "carefully considered, and the deserving receive all the substance possible." Button reflected that since the war had ended, it had increased the number of people who needed such sympathy in the city. He concluded with "Their condition is more distressing at this time in consequence of their inability in many cases to procure any kind of remunerative employment."<sup>75</sup> When General Gregg decided that he needed to address the swarms of Freedmen that were flooding into the provost camps all throughout the Sub-District, he published "General Order No. 7". This stated that Freedmen were not allowed to congregate inside and around the federal camps. However, freed women and children were still allowed to visit the camps between dusk and dawn to sell baked goods and produce to the soldiers as a means of profit. Also, that enlisted men were not allowed to hire freedmen for personal work, and that unless they were there as sutlers or as officer's servants, freedmen were not permitted to enter the camps.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> "The Poor of the City." *The Daily Virginian*. May 22, 1865.

<sup>76</sup> Sutlers were private mercantile vendors in army camps.

Additionally, Gregg stated that he would be increasing patrols on the road, and that any assemblages of freedmen found on the roads were to be dispersed immediately.<sup>77</sup>

Lynchburg was not the only city in the region facing these issues. In fact, Danville had been occupied by Federal troops longer than Lynchburg. A few weeks after the Confederate government had fled in April, remnants of General Sheridan's Sixth Army Corps had moved throughout the southern belly of the Commonwealth, following rumors of Confederate holdouts and looting vagabonds. While most of these soldiers were eventually recalled to Petersburg, a few detachments remained in Danville under the direction of Major General Wright. Danville had been the final home for the Confederacy after all. Keeping a garrison in the city made the best of sense to the Federal army. With exclusive authority from Sheridan, Wright was able to reform a civil government within Danville and throughout most of Pittsylvania County. Wright called for an election, in which current officials who had served during the time of the Confederate government were able to run, granted that they had taken the Oath of Allegiance.<sup>78</sup> Upon their acceptance of the Oath and their re-election, they could continue their duties without any delay. This allowed for life in Pittsylvania County to continue largely undisturbed.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, the same day Colonel Young's cavalry was dispatched to Appomattox, Wright held the election in Danville, in which many former Confederate officials, including Mayor Walker, were brought back into power. Wright would eventually transfer command over to Gregg once the latter had arrived a week later, and Pittsylvania County was absorbed into the Lynchburg Sub-District. But even with Gregg's authority, the officials that Wright had placed back into control gave Pittsylvania County more autonomy than from the other counties in the

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<sup>77</sup> "General Orders No. 7" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 22, 1865.

<sup>78</sup> "Re-Establishment of Civil Government in Danville." *The Daily Virginian*. May 22, 1865.



region. It gave the county more power to act apart from Gregg's orders, and it also placed the county into conflict with the new commander-in-chief.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, President Johnson officially announced his plan for reconstruction and reunion. Despite the strong objections from the Republican-held Congress, Johnson also offered pardons to all Confederate officers and politicians, excluding Jefferson Davis, who had been captured in Georgia on the 10<sup>th</sup> and was then being held in Fortress Monroe. While the Oath of Allegiance served as the pardon for ordinary Confederates, major officials and military officers were required to write to the President personally asking for a pardon. This also included Southerners who owned taxable property of equal to or greater than \$20,000.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, they were required to pay back taxes on any slaves that they had owned during the war.<sup>80</sup> When the Federal Government began to constrict the Southern leadership, some of the lower class began to chafe at the concept of becoming Americans once more. Ironically, Johnson's policy favored most of the Sub-District's population. It was the likes of Thomas Bocock and William Ridgeway who bore the brunt of Johnson's pique.

Just months earlier, lower-class Virginians were calling for the dismissal of the likes of Thomas Bocock. They had blamed the Planters for starting the war, for goading their husbands and sons to their deaths while they had stayed behind on their plantations. Just months earlier, they had little love for the planter class. If the lower-class resented the Southern aristocracy so much, why were they so fast to return them to positions of power, as what had been done in Danville? As brittle as that relationship was, it only seemed to strengthen in the face of the Federal occupation.

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<sup>79</sup> Foner.

<sup>80</sup> This rule mostly applied to slaveholders of 15 or more enslaved.

In Lynchburg, *The Daily Virginian* reported that as people flocked to the Provost Office to swear the Oath, all the while others stood to the sides of the street and in front of the office, to heckle those who were willing to swallow the “yaller dog”<sup>81</sup>. Johnson’s attitude towards the upper-class had given the word “citizenship” a bad taste in the mouths of Central Virginians.<sup>82</sup> Many people in the lower-class did not understand that most of Johnson’s wrath was focused on the Southern gentry alone. Johnson had come from a poor white background, which had given him a grudge against the Planters. However, in the eyes of the lower classes, what was stopping the government from punishing every Southerner? Even if they had not served in the Confederate army, they had still supported the rebellion by paying taxes to Richmond, and by selling crops to the armies. The fear and confusion surrounding where Congress and Johnson were going to draw the line is what pushed the lower class back into league with the upper-class. This had been the opposite outcome from what Johnson had been hoping for.<sup>83</sup> Rather than divide in the presence of the Federals, they chose to band together in spite of their grievances.

Around the same time, Charles Button printed another article in his paper titled “Abolitionist before the People”, in which he compared abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison to Robespierre from the French Revolution. This article is Button’s attempt to stir the blood of his fellow Lynchburgers. While he may not have been expecting to fuel a mass hysteria, he certainly did not want his neighbors to warm up to their occupiers anytime soon. In this article, Button claims that the abolitionists were no different from the secessionists from before the war, and that they had played equal role of being some of “the original instigators” of the conflict. Button says that Robespierre, like the abolitionists, was once considered a humanitarian

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<sup>81</sup> A slander that referred to taking the Oath of Allegiance. It was meant to imply that those who took it were cowardly traitors.

<sup>82</sup> “Administration of the Oath” *The Daily Virginian*. May 31, 1865.

<sup>83</sup> Foner.

and that he had opposed killing and bloodshed. “But when he got into power his humanity [s]oured, and he and his associates established the most blood-thirsty tribunal ever known.”<sup>84</sup> Button claimed that the “humanitarian abolitionists” were the same way. The abolitionists seemed mild enough then, but to be weary should they accumulate more power. “Let the people remember,” Button warned “not to put Robespierre in power.”<sup>85</sup> How Button managed to print this article in the presence of the Federal Provost shall forever remain a mystery.

The month of May proved to be just as tumultuous as April. The events in Appomattox County may have been unique for the area but were certainly not unique throughout other parts of the South. With the presence of National and State governments removed, many private citizens and former officials took the law into their own hands and often abused what power they could grab. In the weeks between Lee’s Surrender and General Gregg’s there was a power vacuum that people such as Sheriff Hix sought to exploit. Gregg’s arrival brought a swift end to that power vacuum. As seen through his General Orders, Gregg wasted little time reasserting Federal authority in the region. Both groups, Planters and Freedmen, chaffed at the sudden change of power. As seen with Button’s article, the presence of armed troops was an omen of vengeful Republicans. Freedmen, who had seen these very soldiers as emancipators a month earlier, were now seeing them work in support of the former slaveholders. General Gregg himself may have been a bit too heavy handed upon his arrival, especially in the case of the Freedmen. While his swift actions were successful in establishing order in the region, they can definitely be interpreted as being too lenient towards the Planters at the expense of the Freedmen. Lee’s Surrender the previous month had destroyed all social and economic systems in Virginia.

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<sup>84</sup> “The Abolitionists before the People.” *The Virginian*. May 31, 1865.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

While Gregg asserted that emancipation was the law of the land, his actions show that neither the President or Congress had a clear plan how to allow the Freedmen to practice their freedom.

*A Dead South:*

*June 1865*

As the humid summer heat began to settle, so did the Federal soldiers. Despite the grumblings of the local populace, Gregg's troops kept order within the Sub-District. Life for these soldiers was overwhelmingly dull. For the past year, many of these soldiers had been involved in violent engagements across Virginia. Now they were stationed in what could be described as one of the most uneventful Sub-Districts in the Commonwealth. Samuel Cormany, a cavalry trooper in the 21<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, had nothing notable to report of the happenings in the region.<sup>86</sup> The typical routine for a soldier stationed within one of the Sub-District's counties meant cycling through their assigned county from village to village. From looking at the report book of Captain James Geiser, who arrived in July with the 188<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, soldiers were assigned to details<sup>87</sup>, under the command of a sergeant or a commissioned officer, to different communities within their county. Each detachment of soldiers would spend roughly a week in each village before being cycled out to the next.<sup>88</sup> The company's commanding officer would be found in the county seat, which served as the company's headquarters. From there the commanding officer would receive dispatches from Lynchburg, the regimental headquarters, and he would be able to send them to their details throughout the county. This continuous patrolling

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<sup>86</sup> Mohr, James C. *The Cormany Diaries: A Northern Family in the Civil War*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982. P.560.

<sup>87</sup> Detail means assignment.

<sup>88</sup> Geiser, James. "Monthly Report." *Order Book*. August-December, 1865. Appomattox Court House National Historical Park.

throughout the counties was likely meant to keep the soldiers on their feet as it was to keep local population in check.

With the General Order that made Lynchburg a dry city, the surrounding counties fell into step with Gregg's demands. General Gregg was indeed very swift in cracking down on establishments that could mean disaster if they mixed with a customer-base of bored soldiers. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, before the General had officially arrived in the city, he passed General Order No. 3. This boldly stated that "houses of ill-fame will not, under any consideration, be tolerated within the limits of the city, and all women of bad character found upon the streets will be arrested and placed in prison on bread and water, and such other punishment as they deserve."<sup>89</sup> This was followed up with "houses used for gambling in any way whatever will close at once, and all gamblers will leave the city at once, or show some means of an honest livelihood."<sup>90</sup> The former of these put a crimp in what was perhaps one of the most profitable businesses in the City of Churches.<sup>91</sup> The Buzzard's Roast was Lynchburg's, and Central Virginia's, most widely famed brothel. It had started in the 1840's along the James River Canal, and during the Civil War it made a profit off the soldiers who passed through the city. Throughout its twenty years in existence, it had served soldiers and politicians alike, and in 1865, Gregg's orders would run the establishment underground.<sup>92</sup> With Gregg's concluding statement in General Order No. 3 "all places of business will close, and no unnecessary labor will be performed on the Sabbath day, but

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<sup>89</sup> "General Orders No. 3" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg, Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 19, 1865.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> A nickname given to Lynchburg for the several church steeples that decorate its skyline: Potter and Potter.

<sup>92</sup> Elson. P. 100-103.

a strict observance of the day will be required”, he sought to turn the City of Churches into just that.<sup>93</sup>

In step with his efforts to cleanse Lynchburg spiritually, Gregg sought to cleanse the city physically as well. On June 1, Lt. Colonel A.P. Duncan, Gregg’s second in command, issued a circular that forbade bathing in the river. This was done as a public health measure, as Lynchburg’s portion of the James River was home to many industries which unloaded their refuse into the river, along with many boats that traversed the James River-Kanawha canal. Also included in this circular was an order to tidy up any yards, alleys, and outbuildings on one’s property, and forbade residents from emptying their garbage in the streets. Any who ignored this order were subject to fines and imprisonment.<sup>94</sup> This circular was in response to the squalid conditions the Provost Guard found in Lynchburg when they had arrived in May.

While there were certainly those who were opposed to the presence of the Provost Guard, that did not mean that everyone in the Sub-District was uncorporative. There were more than a few instances where locals were willing to extend an olive branch to the troops. At the end of May, Samuel Cormany wrote that a local woman outside of Lynchburg had invited him and several of his comrades into her home for supper and entertainment, while they were on a brief furlough.<sup>95</sup> In early June, in Appomattox County, a patrolling cavalry trooper was greeted by a wealthy planter, Joel Flood, and his wife Ella. The couple invited the soldier into their home in Bent Creek, for refreshments and conversation. Joel regaled his guest with his own experience in the war and recounted his entire family history to the Pennsylvanian. Meanwhile Ella played the

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<sup>93</sup> “General Order No. 3”. General J.I. Gregg.

<sup>94</sup> “Circular.” Lt. Colonel A.P. Duncan. Provost Marshal’s Office. Military District. Lynchburg Va. June 1, 1865.

<sup>95</sup> Mohr. 561.

piano and sang in at least five different languages.<sup>96</sup> The soldier was taken aback by the hospitality and liveliness of his former enemy. In this case, the Floods may have been trying to win favor with the ones that were in charge. They were among the wealthiest families in the region. During the war they were among Appomattox county's largest slaveholders, and when the war ended, they faced several challenges as they struggled to entice freedmen to come back to work for them.

Many of the planter class, including the Floods, were buckling under Andrew Johnson's \$20,000 reparation tax. With no money in U.S. greenbacks to pay off the debt, many Planters had to resort to selling off land to raise money, and they had to find a way to pay for their now hired laborers. The finer details of the system that would come to be known as Sharecropping were still being ironed out in June 1865. The Provost Guard often had to intervene in disputes between the Planters and freedmen involving matters such as how much a worker should be paid in crops, when the payment should be made, and when the planter had the right to raise and lower payments. The Provost had to find a suitable middle ground between the two groups. The Planters expected the Provost to continuously side with the Freedmen, and many of the Freedmen expected the opposite. Adding to the hopes and frustrations of the two groups were the rumors of land confiscations from the Federal government. Since the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, the fabled legend of the "40-acres and a mule" asserted that land was to be taken up by the government and partitioned out to freedmen, granting them 40-acres and a single mule to help them get on their feet.

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<sup>96</sup> Marvel. 272.

The base of this rumor had started during the war when the Freedmen's Bureau in occupied New Orleans had discussed this possibility and had even advertised it. In 1864 and early 1865, General Sherman had even experimented with it on the sea islands off the coast of Georgia, but in the end, it was proven to be ineffective.<sup>97</sup> Despite its failure, word of it had spread throughout the South, giving hope to the enslaved and dread to the landowners. When the war had ended, both groups held their breath to see what would happen. Months would go by, and many would still cling to the myth of the 40-acres and a mule. But as reality would have it, if there were whites in the South who did not possess 40-acres and a mule, the Federal government certainly was not about to give it to the freedmen. Planter families such as the Floods worked to keep warm relations with the Provost, most likely as a means of protection against the rumors and as a way of keeping the law on their side.

Not all were willing to play nicely with the Federals. In late June, Thomas Bocoock wrote to his cousin Sue that he trusted to receive very little leniency from the federal soldiers. He exerted that they were "bitter, intolerant, and exacting."<sup>98</sup> Bocoock would lament that "the fate of a conquered people is always hard, and experience shows that ours will be harder than usual. If we could all get to some other country where we could make a comfortable living, and raise our children in peace and credit, I would be highly delighted. For the moment, we can do nothing but bear patiently and take what is put upon us with the best possible grace."<sup>99</sup> What Bocoock is alluding to in this letter is what many former Confederate statesmen and military officers were doing, fleeing to South America. Brazil, in particular, was popular since still partook in the slave trade, and were reliant on agriculture. The years following the Civil War saw many former

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<sup>97</sup> Foner.

<sup>98</sup> Bocoock, Thomas. *Letter from Thomas Bocoock to Sue*. June 23, 1865. Smalls Special Collections Library. University of Virginia.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*



Confederates fleeing the U.S. to set up societies based off antebellum life in the U.S. While Bocoock suggested taking part of this, he remained in Appomattox County for the rest of his life.

Bocoock's letter shows how many in the former Southern leadership were never able to come to terms with the war's end. In the same letter, Bocoock says that the Confederacy's collapse was not just due to the defeat of the military but also due to Southerners lack of faith in the cause. "A great many men who if we had succeeded, would have claimed great credit for aiding our cause, are noisy now in declaring that they never were for secession."<sup>100</sup> While Bocoock never outright says it in his letter, most of his frustration seem to be directed towards the lower class, whose loss of faith in the Confederate government he was aware of.<sup>101</sup>

While some Virginians were content to voice their frustrations through written letters and diaries such as Bocoock had, a handful of others went about expressing their frustrations in a more radical fashion. Since the surrender, there had been reports of bands of bushwhackers roving the countryside. These groups included former Confederate soldiers who either could not turn back from their military lifestyle or had lost everything and had nothing else to turn to. Another group included Freedmen, who had no desire to return to plantation work or had lost faith in the Federal government's promise to give them a new life. These bushwhackers lived rough, in tents and shanties throughout hollers and creek bottoms, places that were typically hard to reach. They plundered main highway corridors and looted farmsteads. Most importantly, they threatened commercial enterprise into Southwest Virginia.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ridgeway, Willaim. *William Ridgeway to Thomas Bocoock, March 2, 1865*. Letter. From, University of Viginia Smalls Special Collections Library.

When the fog of war lifted in April, Virginia's infrastructure had been absolutely decimated by the war, and in this case, Central Virginia had not been spared. The James River canal no longer ran all the way to Richmond, as many of the canal locks were damaged, mostly due to strain and overuse. In the northern part of the region, the bridges that crossed the James River had been burned under the direction of the Confederate army midway through the war, this including the railroad bridges of the southern spur of the Orange-Alexandria railroad. This severed Charlottesville from the rest of Central Virginia. In the eastern part of the region, things were no better. During his flight from Richmond, Lee had given orders to burn High Bridge behind his fleeing army as a means of delaying the pursuing Federals. High Bridge, as part of the Southside rail line, was located outside of Farmville and was a massive trestle that crossed the Appomattox River. When it burned, it severed the primary link between Richmond and the Virginia Heartland. This left only one intact route out of Lynchburg, the Virginia-Tennessee railroad.<sup>102</sup> This line ran west from Lynchburg to Bristol, on the Tennessee border. It frequented freights of salt and iron from the mines in the Southwest part of the state.

As the Provost Guard established themselves in Central Virginia, many of the bushwhackers were driven into the mountains, where it was easier to hide and harder to be pursued. The difficult terrain of Southwest Virginia likely allowed for the bushwhackers to quickly strike a prize, and to safely retreat and disappear before any kind of authorities could arrive.<sup>103</sup> The frequency of these attacks caused the affected counties- Botetourt, Roanoke, and later Montgomery, to petition Lynchburg to send troops into Southwest Virginia to preserve

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<sup>102</sup> Black III, Robert C. and Gary W. Gallagher. *The Railroads of the Confederacy*. New edition. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

<sup>103</sup> "General Orders No. 19" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. June 5, 1865.

order.<sup>104</sup> General Gregg at first seemed to ignore this request, until he recognized the jeopardy that the railroad was in. Realizing that his cavalry was already spread out enough as it was, General Gregg decided that he could not effectively police two regions of the State. He resolved that in turn for sending a garrison of soldiers to Salem, “the citizens will organize a police force, and expel from the limits of the counties the bands of marauders -white or black- where ever found.”<sup>105</sup> In return for being allowed to organize these police forces, these counties must divert a percentage of their manpower to patrolling the segments of railway that pass through their counties. There were stipulations to being a part of this ad-hoc police force. The participants had to be white, male, and they must have taken the Oath of Allegiance. But even with having the militia take the Oath, this led to issues. The only white males that were eligible to serve in a militia of any kind were former Confederates. When General Gregg gave orders for the formation of the militia, its a wonder if he was aware that he was giving arms back to the very men he had been fighting months earlier.<sup>106</sup>

*The Wayward Soul:*

*July 1865*

He stepped down from the train in Burkeville at around 1 O'clock. It was mid-July. Confused to why the train had disembarked in Burkeville and not in Lynchburg, its intended destination, he set out to find an official to help resolve the matter. After hiring a nearby freedman to carry his trunk, he walked for another quarter mile through the sticky summer haze before he found another train that was being boarded. Upon approaching a local White man, he asked if this train stopped in Lynchburg. The response he received was “I reckoned it did” before

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<sup>104</sup> A Provost garrison had yet to be assigned to Southwest Virginia, which is why these counties resorted for calling for aid from another region.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> “Special Orders No. 19” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. June 10, 1865.

the man returned to his pouch of tobacco.<sup>107</sup> In search of more “enlightened” help, he pressed on until he eventually found a brakeman, who after asserting that he was responsible for his own baggage, explained to him that one train was heading south to Danville and the other, the one he was about to board, was heading west to High Bridge. Once that train reached High Bridge, the train would once again disembark on the eastern side of the bridge. From there passengers would have to be loaded onto carriages and taken across a wagon bridge, only to board another train on the western that would take them the rest of the way to Lynchburg. To board each train and the carriage required a separate fare.

This troubled passenger was John Dennett, a 26-year-old Harvard graduate who was serving as a traveling news reporter for *The Nation*- an upcoming abolitionist newspaper that was not set to launch until 1866, a year after the goal of abolition had been realized. Despite his youth, Dennett was a thin and sickly man who was believed to be ill with consumption.<sup>108</sup> A full-blooded New York Yankee, Dennett’s editor had assigned him on a special mission. On a salary of \$150 a month, Dennett was to travel throughout the war-torn South, and document the South “as it was”.<sup>109</sup> This meant leaving out any abolitionist biases that he may have had and provide a weekly bare-boned report on the condition of the Southern people. Dennett was indeed an abolitionist, as he had spent most of his war years on the sea islands off the coast of South Carolina, serving as an educator to Freedmen. Now he was applying his knowledge of letters to journalism. Despite his abolitionist background, Dennett accepted his mission with fervor and by late June he had arrived in Norfolk to begin his journey.

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<sup>107</sup> Dennett, John Richard. *The South As It Is: 1865–1866*. University of Alabama Press, 2010. P.36.

<sup>108</sup> Tuberculosis.

<sup>109</sup> Dennet. P.2.

The journey to High Bridge seemed uneventful once it had gotten underway. When the train was a couple miles from Burkeville, the conductor had ordered that the train to be reversed back to the station, so that he could return a missing \$5 greenback to its owner. This had set the journey back in terms of precious daylight. When the train eventually arrived at High Bridge, Dennett noted the red clay earthen fort that had once been a part of the rebel defense for the rail trestle. The red clay of its embankments seemed to glow in the late afternoon sun. High Bridge itself was twelve hundred feet in length, a hundred-twenty-five feet in height, and was built with a wooden frame and brick supports, with the Appomattox River flowing underneath. The western end of the trestle had been burned out during Lee's retreat and was nothing more than a charred husk. Dennett had to pay \$1 to the driver of an open wagon to carry him and his trunk half a mile across a rickety wagon bridge to the opposite bank. As he rumbled along in the back of the wagon, he noted that he "could not help being impressed with the desolateness of the scene as we rode over the pits and gullies of the road.... Everything around seemed to have felt the fire and sword of the war."<sup>110</sup> Debris from the collapsed bridge lay sprawled throughout the river valley. The only other passengers on the wagon were a silent elderly man from North Carolina, who was accompanying the pinewood coffin that contained his son, and two wounded rebels. The wagon arrived to find the next train awaiting them practically on top of the embankments of one of the abandoned rebel fortifications. Once Dennett stepped off the wagon, he was once more obliged to endure another two hours of waiting in the syrupy Virginia heat.

Back in Lynchburg, public morale was at an all-time low. As the days grew longer, the patience that the soldiers and the civilians held for each other grew shorter. To the Whites, the Provost presence was nothing short of overbearing and intruding. To the Freedmen, the U.S.

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<sup>110</sup> Dennet. P.37.

soldiers had not lived up to the promises of freedom and liberty that they had been told they would bring. At the beginning of the month, many of General Gregg's officers were invited by the city's wealthy to a Fourth of July celebration. Ignoring any suspicion of attending a national celebration in a former rebel city just months after the war, many of the officers accepted the invite. Upon their arrival, they were welcomed to the celebration with a chorus of jeers and taunts. Food was thrown and drinks were spilled, and the blighted soldiers were rushed from the scene. A day later, "General Orders No.31" was published in the daily paper.

"The officers of this command having been invited by the citizens of this city to participate in a picnic on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and having been treated with discourtesy, and improper and insulting remarks, having been indulged in by some of the citizens, hereafter United States Officers in this District will not accept invitations to parties, nor enter the houses of citizens, except in the performance of duty, or when especially invited in such a manner to secure them against insult."<sup>111</sup>

Following the initial order, Gregg defended the actions of his officers, saying that their manner was commendable, and that they would continue to act in such a manner, unlike the gentlemen and women of Lynchburg.

A few weeks later, hoping to amend his relationship with the Freedmen and to strike back at the White population, Gregg published "General Orders No. 38" on the 17th. Gregg started off in an almost apologetic tone, describing that the order was initially intended to prevent vagrancy and vandalism. Gregg stated that all Freedmen were expected to be treated with the same courteous manner as their White neighbors. This order was a restatement, and a revision of "General Orders No.5", which was published back in May and had stated that all idle Freedmen

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<sup>111</sup> "General Orders No. 31" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. July 5, 1865.

were to be placed into cleaning crews. This revision stated that all Freedmen “have precisely the same rights, before the law, as white men, and are not to be restricted in them, except as it so far may be necessary to prevent idleness and crime.”<sup>112</sup> Gregg continued in this order to apologize for an incident that had happened weeks earlier, where a Black preacher and two of his congregation were arrested and placed into a street-cleaning crew in accordance to “General Order No. 5”. Furthermore, Gregg expanded “General Order .38” to include Whites into sanitary duties, stating “the number of idle white persons is much too great, and will account for much of the pilfering complained of by the Newspapers, and hereafter, all white persons found habitually loafing about barrooms and obstructing sidewalks, will be arrested and put to cleaning the streets.”<sup>113</sup> This change of attitude towards the Freedmen is a drastic shift from how the Provost had felt towards them a month earlier. The Provost had gone from expecting sloth and vagrancy from the Freedmen, to visibly experiencing it from the Whites.

Following the initial “General Orders No. 38”, he issued “General Orders No. 40”. In this order, Gregg immediately dismissed any rumors that his soldiers were harassing paroled rebels, and in fact stated that investigations proved that this was “not only false, but that the officer [soldier] was grossly insulted.”<sup>114</sup> “Orders No. 40” continued on to remind any paroled rebels in the city that the “privilege” of parole was granted with the understanding that the bearer would continue “in good behavior. When a paroled prisoner insults an officer of the government, which had grants the parole, he forfeits all its benefits and becomes a prisoner of war to be confined of the captor, or punished as a Military Commission may direct.”<sup>115</sup> Gregg further reminded the

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<sup>112</sup> “General Orders No. 38” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. July 17, 1865.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> “General Orders No. 40” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. July 5, 1865.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

pardoned rebels were not to congregate in the streets or heckle the Provost soldiers. He concluded with ordering that all parole bearers were to report to their nearest provost office and were to state their full name, address, and means of living to the officer on duty, within twenty-four hours of the publishing of “General Order No. 40”.

Just like many of the previous orders, General Orders No. 38 and 40 were mimicked in other counties within the Sub-District. However, by this point the Sub-District had changed. As of July 13<sup>th</sup>, Gregg had received orders from Richmond that the original Lynchburg Sub-District would be merged with the District of South-Western Virginia. The original Sub-District included the counties of Nelson, Amherst, Appomattox, Campbell, Beford, Pittsylvania, Franklin, and Patrick. But included into the greater District was the entirety of South-West Virginia and parts of the Shenandoah Valley, this included Henry, Augusta, Bath, Rockbridge, Botetourt, Montgomery, Greyson, Wythe, Tazewell, Russell, Lee, Washington, Highland, Allegany, Roanoke, Craig, Giles, Pulaski, Carol, Floyd, Smyth, Wise, and Buchanan counties. General Newton Martin Curtis, who was renowned for his actions at the battle of Fort Fischer seven months earlier, was selected by President Johnson to command the newly made District of Southwestern Virginia. General Curtis selected Lynchburg to act as his District headquarters. As such, in addition to acting as the capital for the Lynchburg Sub-District, Lynchburg became the center for the entire region of Southwestern Virginia. This included the Sub-Districts of Lynchburg, Danville, Staunton, New River, and Holston.<sup>116</sup>

Along with these changes, more troops were sent into the District. The 21<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Cavalry, which had been in service in the region since May, was officially discharged and

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<sup>116</sup> “General Orders No.” Office of Brevet-Maj. General N.M. Curtis. Commanding. D.A. Nevin. A.A.A. General. Headquarters of District S.W. Virginia, Lynchburg, Va. July 19, 1865.



mustered out, and replaced with the 188<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry. Additional units were sent in, this included the 98<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry, based out of Danville, the 58<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania infantry, based out of Staunton, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Connecticut infantry based out of Christiansburg. Gregg retained command of the Lynchburg Sub-District for another week before he was eventually relieved of command by Brevet-Brigadier General John C. Briscoe. General Gregg would spend the rest of his service supervising the Abingdon Sub-District until he was officially mustered out on August 11<sup>th</sup>.

Except for the tumultuous events in Lynchburg, most of the populace had come to accept the Federal occupation. In Franklin County, on the western edge of the Lynchburg Sub-District, the citizens held a meeting and passed a series of resolutions that detailed their relationship with the Federal Government. The first of these acknowledged the supremacy of the United States Government. It stated that Franklin's citizens were "willing to discharge their duties as citizens and are ready to appreciate and properly reciprocate a forbearing and conciliatory policy towards them on the part of the authorities and the people of the Northern States."<sup>117</sup> This resolution was followed up with; "without expressing any opinion as to the constitutionality or expediency of the measures which have been used for the emancipation of the slaves, they are desirous to adopt such measures as will most alleviate the evils and best develop the good likely to result from so great a change in our social and industrial system."<sup>118</sup> The second resolution continued on to say that laborers were going to have to expect a low wage for the time being, and that while slavery had been abolished, any labor contracts that pre-existed the Federal occupation were not to be interfered with by the Provost guard. However, these resolutions proved fruitless as days

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<sup>117</sup> Dennett. P.43

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

following their passage, General Gregg declared them invalid via an announcement in *The Daily Virginian*.

After over a day of rail travel, John Dennett was able to arrive in Lynchburg on the 25<sup>th</sup>. His travel from High Bridge to Lynchburg included a rest stop at Concord Depot in Appomattox County. However just ten miles outside the city, his train derailed and ran into a nearby bank, injuring forty and killing two. Dennett blamed the wreck on the poor conditions of the rail lines. “To take passengers over a railroad in the present condition of that between this city and Richmond, is to put them in fear and imminent danger of death.”<sup>119</sup> The railroads had been used so extensively during the war, that the rails themselves had been worn to the point that a single journey could mean catastrophe. This was a situation that the Southside railroad was aware of. Hiring advertisements for the railroad made frequent appearances in the newspapers.<sup>120</sup> That summer, laying track for the railroad proved to be one of the largest sources of jobs for laborers. The work for these laborers typically meant travelling along the rails in camps to replace stretches of worn-out track.

The derailment had given Dennett time to canvass some of his fellow travelers. While waiting for the mess to clear, he asked one White foreman what was the going wage for White laborers. His response was that White carpenters were in high demand. They were paid \$50 a month and were provided separate board from ordinary laborers. Ordinary laborers were given \$18 a month and were provided board separate from the carpenters. When asked how Whites fared as a workforce, the response was “Can’t get white men enough. They’re too damned proud

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<sup>119</sup> Dennett. P.39.

<sup>120</sup> “Richmond and Danville Railroad.” *The Virginian*. June 1, 1865.

to work. Rather loaf round Richmond and Petersburg. But they'll have to come to it."<sup>121</sup> When Dennett asked similar questions about hiring Freedmen as laborers, the retort was

“A n\*\*\*\*\*s work a'n't much. Rather have one white man than three n\*\*\*\*\*s. They'll work a day, and then they want to lay off a day. Now with me they used to lay off after they got their week's rations, and I wouldn't see anything of 'em for two or three days. But I broke 'em of that, just set 'em to work till they'd worked out what the rations come to, and then I told 'em to leave.”<sup>122</sup>

Unlike the White laborers, Freedmen were given \$14 a month without any board. Dennett was further told by the foreman that Freedmen consistently needed to be watched in order to keep them working. Hoping to steer the conversation in a different direction, Dennett asked how the man felt about Black enfranchisement. As Dennett had expected, the foreman completely dismissed the idea. The man adamantly believed that it was not in the nature of Freedmen to have such power, and that the South would not stand for such a notion, and if any laws concerning Black enfranchisement were to be passed, it would “make the South fight.”<sup>123</sup> Dennett concluded this thought by saying that giving the Freedmen the vote would ultimately result in another rebellion.

While the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was not ratified until 1870, the issue of Black Suffrage was already on the table for states to determine. By July 1865, Northern states including Iowa, Michigan, and Connecticut were already having discussions of Black enfranchisement, much to the irritation of Southerners and many Northern Democrats.<sup>124</sup> Among Unionist the concept of

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<sup>121</sup> Dennett. P.40

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Dennett. P. 41.

<sup>124</sup> “Negro Suffrage at the North.” *The Daily Virginian*. July 31, 1865.

Black suffrage was a dividing point. Many Southern Unionist already considered the current voting demographic uninformed, and that despite their emancipation, Freedmen were still at the service of their former masters. Unionist in the South feared that if Freedmen were to be given the right to vote, they would vote whichever way their former master told them to.<sup>125</sup> For different reasons, the Southern Unionists agreed with the Secessionists, they believed that it was much too soon for Black suffrage. This contradicted with the views of Northern Unionist. Northern Unionist feared a return of Southern political power. They believed that President Johnson's amnesty proclamation was much too generous, and in parts of the South many former Confederates were already returning to political power. Granting Freedmen the right to vote was a way to offset this threat, given that Freedmen were able to vote on their own accord. Dennett's dialogue provided a vignette into this larger national discussion.

In Appomattox County, Col. Young's cavalry had since been replaced by the infantrymen of the 188<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania., Company D., under the command of Captain James Geiser. Numbering around 60 in total, the soldiers made camp in the yard surrounding the Courthouse building. While relations were bristly at first, the residents of Appomattox eventually came to accept that these Federals were kinder than the cavalry under General Gregg. Relations between some of the townsfolk and the soldiers warmed to the point where the two company officers, Captain Geiser and Lieutenant Edward Cogan, began courting and some of the local women. Geiser would court Nannie Webb, a planter's daughter, and Cogan courted Emma Hix, the sister of Billy Hix, the troubled sheriff.<sup>126</sup> These instances of summertime romance may have been

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<sup>125</sup> Dennett. P. 41.

<sup>126</sup> Marvel. P.276.

results of love at first sight. However, as seen with the Floods the previous month, they may also have been attempts to win favor with those in charge.

The infantry faced the same problem that the cavalry had faced, boredom. Still used to the action of the trenches months earlier, patrolling the silent, sunbaked roads of Appomattox County was a far cry from Petersburg. The most excitement these soldiers had was when two Freedmen were caught robbing houses and were shot by the soldiers garrisoned nearby.<sup>127</sup> The typical duties of the soldiers meant going on patrolling assignments to other villages throughout the county, often fifteen to twenty miles away over hilly terrain. Almost as soon as they had arrived, Captain Geiser had sent out a request for horses to be provided for the foot soldiers, but this was to no avail. Most of the issues the soldiers had to settle came from the remaining military equipment that had been discarded.

Even months after the surrender, the area was still littered with old military wagons and animals, despite the mixed efforts of various forms of law enforcement to remove them. On one occasion, Geiser was forced to intervene in an altercation between a Freedman and a local White farmer over a mule that had formally belonged to the U.S. army. The captain's response was to take the mule from both men and present it to Miss Webb as a gift.<sup>128</sup> Like the Sheriff before him, the Captain took to gathering horses and cattle that had once belonged to the armies and repurposing them for his own needs. This continued for some time before a farmer complained to General Briscoe of the ordeal, prompting the General to question Geiser of the nature of his contraband trade. This brought Geiser's brief venture to a swift halt.

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<sup>127</sup> Dennett. P.42.

<sup>128</sup> Marvel. P.276.

By late July, the Freedmen's Bureau had begun to arrive in the area. Its operations were on a small scale at first, with most responsibilities initially belonging to the Provost Guard. However, it was at this point where the Provost Guard would begin to gradually shift their powers and responsibilities over to the Bureau. Throughout the following months, the Bureau grew in power and influence while that of the Provost Guard slowly diminished until they had completely withdrawn from the region in December.

The Freedmen's Bureau started off as the project of several Republican Congressmen who believed that it was up to the Federal Government to see to the welfare and placement of the Freedmen. The primary goal of the Bureau was to aid the advancement of the Freedmen and ensure that they were being treated fairly by their White counterparts. While they mirrored the responsibilities of the Provost Guard in many ways, the Bureau comprised mostly of civilians.<sup>129</sup> Like the Provost Guard, the Bureau could negotiate labor contracts between the Whites and the Freedmen and could take legal action when one of the parties complained. Unlike the Provost Guard, the Bureau could get more involved in the individual affairs of the Freedmen, seeing that they were given proper housing and that schools were to be created for their advancement. However, what the Bureau could not do was serve as a police force, that duty remained with the Provost.

When it was formed in Lynchburg that July, the Bureau was ran by Captain Robert Lacey. Lacey oversaw getting the Bureau off the ground and eventually into the hands of civilian Unionists.<sup>130</sup> The Bureau's main office was in Lynchburg, and held ancillary offices in the surrounding counties. Its main goal was to help mediate matters between the Freedmen and the

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<sup>129</sup> Foner.

<sup>130</sup> Marvel. P.276.

Whites. Its office gave Freedmen a place to turn to when relations between them and their employers went south. On one instance, it was recorded that a Freedman had entered the Lynchburg office with the complaint that he had been severely beaten by his former master. When the Bureau inquired about the incident with the former master, his provided testimony was that the Freedman had acted in an insolent manner. This “insolent manner” was revealed to be that the Freedman had referred to the planter as “mister”, while the planter insisted that his title was and always would be “master”.<sup>131</sup>

In Dennett’s recordings, he wrote of how many Whites failed to grasp the responsibility of the Freedmen’s Bureau. He wrote of one instance in late July when two well-dressed White men entered the office and introduced themselves Planters from Mississippi and were looking to bring a hundred Virginia Freedmen to Mississippi to work cotton. Captain Lacey replied by stating that the Bureau had no such authority to remove Freedmen without the choice of will, and that such acts were deemed illegal. Taken aback by Lacey’s refusal, one of the men asked what kind of compulsion he would be allowed to use on the Freedmen to make them work. Lacey again had to state that deporting Freedmen was not permitted, and the sort of compulsions that the gentlemen were looking to employ were considered illegal in Virginia, Mississippi, and any other state under Federal occupation. Lacey concluded the conversation by saying “If the Negro wouldn’t work, he could be complained of. When a Northern laborer violated a contract, he was sued.”<sup>132</sup> This applied to Southern Freedmen as it did to Northern laborers. Flabbergasted, the two men scoffed at the idea of taking a Freedmen to court and stormed out of the Bureau office.

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<sup>131</sup> Dennett. P.52.

<sup>132</sup> Dennett. P.53.

While the primary mission of the Bureau was to see to the advancement of Freedmen, it was also tasked with aiding the destitute. Initially this was one of the duties that had fallen onto the Provost Guard upon their arrival in May. When it was created, it fell to the Bureau to care for the poor. However, after a week of this practice, Lacey reported that most who came to receive rations were “cheats and swindlers” and recommended that the practice to be abandoned.<sup>133</sup> Soon after, General Briscoe ordered the cessation of all ration distribution. These “cheats and swindlers” Lacey mentioned came in the form of mostly White families.<sup>134</sup> On one instance, a man in Campbell County was caught drawing rations for his family from the Freedmen’s Bureau, then along the way home would stop and spend several dollars’ worth of apple-brandy. Another was caught trying to draw rations while he was being supported by his four sons. All of whom were working a fair wage to provide for him. In another case, a lady came into the Lynchburg office to request rations. It was revealed that she was the landlord of several tenant houses in the city, and already drew a comfortable living off the rent. It was further discovered and admitted to that it had been the same woman who had stood at the entrance of the city and heckled the Provost as they had arrived earlier that summer. After confessing that she had been among the chief hecklers for the troops, she hastily withdrew from the office, swearing that she wanted no more of “the Yankee rations”, and that she “still had sons left to fight for the Confederacy if ever there should be another war.”<sup>135</sup> It was with examples such as these that provoked Lacey to cease the ration distribution in the Sub-District.

This order was widely followed in all the Sub-District’s counties, except in Appomattox, where Captain Geiser figured out a way to dodge Lacy’s orders. Geiser continued to issue rations

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<sup>133</sup> Marvel. P.77.

<sup>134</sup> Dennett. P.48.

<sup>135</sup> Dennett. P.50.



to the Freedmen and the destitute. In early August, Geiser reported that given food to six Black and six white recipients, what Geiser did not do however, was mark a date on this report. When questioned how he had given away an entire store of 1,000 army rations, Geiser stated that he had given away the rations before Lacey's order had come through. This action gained Geiser, and the rest of his company, a moderately good rapport with the people of Appomattox. It would not be until September of that year when Geiser's deception had been discovered and admitted to.<sup>136</sup>

On the 31<sup>st</sup>, Dennett stood on the banks of the James River, just on the outskirts of Lynchburg. After reflecting on how the City had largely avoided the physical ravages of war, he lamented that Lynchburg was plagued by the indirect evils that the late rebellion had brought.

“Trade is dead, the people have no money, nor is there a prospect of their soon getting any, for nothing but breadstuffs has been raised this season, and the stock of tobacco, more or less injured, which is all they have to sell, is in the hands of comparatively few men. The shelves of the shops are scantily supplied with poor goods, and several times after purchasing some small article I have been obliged to leave it untaken, because the merchant was not able to give me change for a five-dollar note.”<sup>137</sup>

While the greenback was in short supply, Dennett noted that gold and silver coins were being exchanged more often than in any Northern city he had seen. In fact, specie had become a favored replacement for printed currency in the region. Dennett observed that a freed child had sold a quart of buttermilk to a group of soldiers and had asked for either five cents in silver specie, or ten cents worth of greenbacks. This alternative pricing was seen all throughout the

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<sup>136</sup> Dennett. P.48.

<sup>137</sup> Dennett. P.46

Sub-District. Stores would list a price for a loaf of bread for printed script and include its equivalent in specie.

Dennett's report observed "General Order No. 10" which General Gregg had published months earlier in May. This order stated that merchants may accept gold and silver as a medium of currency, however their prices must be based off the exchange rate that was posted weekly out of Richmond.<sup>138</sup> "If gold is quoted in Richmond at 140," Dennet describes through example, "the dealer in small wares at Lynchburg .... deducts from the face value of a paper dollar the excess over one hundred in the price of gold, and considers the dollar greenback to be worth not seventy-one cents but sixty."<sup>139</sup> By the peak of the summer of '65, the people of the Lynchburg Sub-District were finding ways to adapt to the struggles that the end of the war had caused. However, despite these milestones, there were frequent troubles with calculating the exchange rates. This was a particular problem when it came to paying workers with specie. These disputes required the attention of the Provost and the Freedmen's Bureau, which often resulted in new labor contracts being drawn up and agreed to by the affected parties.

Dennett described Lynchburg as a "tobacco metropolis", that the city's great wealth had been built on top of the tobacco market. Indeed, before the war Lynchburg had been the second wealthiest city in the nation by capita, following only New Bedford, Massachusetts.<sup>140</sup> This wealth disappeared when the market disappeared, and the market's disappearance was primarily caused by the disappearance of an unpaid workforce.<sup>141</sup> Sharecropping was seen as a temporary arrangement at best and was not expected to serve as an effective way to rebuild any sort of

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<sup>138</sup> "General Orders No. 10" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 24, 1865.

<sup>139</sup> Dennett. P. 47.

<sup>140</sup> Dennett. P. 46

<sup>141</sup> Dennett. P. 47

wealth by either of the involved parties. When interviewing local Planters, Dennet reported that many Planters still held resentment towards the Freedmen, and that they adamantly believed that the end of slavery meant the end of tobacco farming. “Free n\*\*\*\*\* labor may do on a trucking farm, or something like that, but it won’t raise tobacco. You can’t place any dependence on it. We may be able to do something with white labor by-and-bye.”<sup>142</sup> Many Planters had no faith in the Freedmen, believing them to be unmotivated and troublesome. This claim contradicted Dennett’s reports on the Freedmen, as he wrote that he found them to be industrious, orderly, and self-supporting, and he rather claimed that it was the Whites who tended to shirk from labor.

Dennett’s belief in the Freedmen is based on the ration distribution reports from the Provost Guard. Dennett recorded that during the month of June, the Provost had issued rations to 961 people in Bedford County, only 13 of these were Freedmen. In Campbell County 530 people received rations from the Provost, only 12 of which were Freedmen.<sup>143</sup> Dennett further reported that the crop sharing system that had been devised on the plantations earlier that summer had become the law of the land. While there were some instances by July where Freedmen were being paid for their labor, which was typically a salary of five dollars a month, most Planters still had nothing more to provide for their laborers but clothing, board, and a share of the harvest.<sup>144</sup>

A few days prior to the 31<sup>st</sup>, Dennett was able to observe the education that the freed children were receiving. Upon the invitation of two schoolmasters, Dennett was able to observe a class session of a Bureau-run school that had a class of 150 freed children. Both educators were enlisted men in the 188<sup>th</sup> and both had volunteered for their current assignment. The men had the children demonstrate to Dennett that they knew their alphabet, vowels, and consonants, and

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<sup>142</sup> Dennett. P. 48.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Dennett. P.51.

could also read an entire chapter of the New Testament. The class also sang a hymn for Dennett, which many of the children had memorized the lines to. During the performance Dennett noted that the majority of the children in the choir were of mixed blood, while only a small percentage appeared to be purely African. After the choir had finished, a handful of the older students stood up and read articles from a children's paper. The educators pointed out to Dennett that these selected children had been educated prior to Emancipation.<sup>145</sup>

As Dennett continued to write from his position on the riverbank, he reflected on a conversation he had with a Poor White man, whom he had met outside of the Bureau office. After reading a bill of sale to the man, as the man was hardly literate, Dennett was able to question the man on state of the land. "Why, down in Georgia they is killin' each other yet." Said the man, when asked about the relations between Whites and Freedmen. "I'm told that them secessionists make threats that they'll kill every Union man and every n\*\*\*\*\* as soon as the soldiers go away from thar."<sup>146</sup> The Provost Guard was mandated to remain in the area throughout the rest of the year, but was scheduled to leave in December, turning all remaining power over to the Freedmen's Bureau. "We Southerners will have it all to pay for. The n\*\*\*\*\*s didn't make theirselves free. 'Twas another man done that. But some do hate the n\*\*\*\*\*s." Referring to the Emancipation, the man stated that much of the Southern hostility was towards Lincoln and the abolitionists who freed the enslaved rather than towards the Freedmen themselves. "You mark me, thar'll be a heap o' trouble when Christmas comes, when the end o' the year comes, and the n\*\*\*\*\*s' time's out that they's hired for."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Dennett. P. 57.

<sup>146</sup> Dennett. P.56.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

July served as the pinnacle of the Provost Guard's involvement in the region. It was by this point where many Central Virginians were coming to accept the presence of these soldiers. However acceptance did not mean welcoming. Tensions between the soldiers and civilians were still apparent, as seen by the picnic in Lynchburg. The month also brought with it many great changes in the Provost's leadership. The Sub-District was reformed into part of a larger military district. This solidified the authority and control that the Federal government held in the region. The arrival of the Freedmen's Bureau only furthered that. With the presence of the Bureau, the Federal government was able to extend its outreach to assist individual Freedmen. Upon its establishment, the Bureau was ran by the Provost Guard despite the two groups acting independently of one another. As 1865 went by, there would be an increased civilian presence in the Bureau and the military would gradually withdraw from the region.

It should also be noted that it was at this point where individual counties were beginning to consider their place in the reformed union, and by July were making plans to accept their part in it. This was seen by the proclamation issued in Franklin County. Much of this was recorded by John Dennett, who was able to offer an excellent ground-level glimpse of the reality of the situation in Central Virginia. Dennett's reporting provides a non-military insight into the hearts and minds in Central Virginia. Without his attention to detail, many critical discussions would likely have been overlooked.

*Severed Bonds:*

*August 1865*

As late summer reached Appomattox County, so did the summer harvest. Tobacco, the region's main cash crop, came up in short supply as most Planters had switched to cereal crops during the war. However, what little tobacco that had been planted was reaped in healthy stock.

Wheat had been practically annihilated in the spring torrents. But what had done exceptionally well was corn. Captain Geiser recorded that the year's corn crop had been "the finest and most abundant that has been raised for many years."<sup>148</sup> For 1865, corn had surpassed tobacco as the region's primary crop. This harkened back to the Confederate government's restrictions on planting cash crops in a time of war. In an interview with Dennett, a farmer said that he did not consider it patriotic to raise anything else but corn and wheat. "I could not plant tobacco while the country was starving for food. This year I have a few hills—an acre and a half—just to give the people what they want for chewing and smoking."<sup>149</sup>

While agriculture in the region still thrived, what Appomattox County truly struggled with was labor. Many of the county's major Planters seemed to be at an impasse with many of the Freedmen. The contracts made by the Freedmen's Bureau were often breached by one or both parties on many occasions. This gave the Provost the difficult task of diffusing the situation. More often than not, Geiser's soldiers sided against the interest of the Freedmen. One soldier recorded that the Freedmen were lazy, they shirked the responsibility of family care, and that they had no desire to continue to work. In an effort to boost labor in the county, Geiser turned to punishing the Freedmen who defied the Provost's orders to return to work. Earlier that summer, General Gregg had issued "General Order No.15", which stated that

"the freedman must recognize his responsibility to live with and support his family. He must provide them with a house and clothing; and in all his power—their comfort—must be responsible for their conduct, must compel his sons and daughters to perform such

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<sup>148</sup> Marvel.P.77.

<sup>149</sup> Dennett. P.77

work they are capable. He is entitled to receive their wages, obliged to provide for their support.”<sup>150</sup>

“General Order No.15”, along with other orders, stated that unemployed Freedmen were subject to arrest. Geiser took this order a step further and began ordering Freedmen into the fields at the point of the bayonet. To enforce the labor policy, Geiser employed the use of corporeal punishments to drive the Freedmen back into the fields. Those who Geiser deemed to be the ringleaders of labor movements were most susceptible to his punishments.<sup>151</sup>

Geiser’s reports on the Freedmen contradict what John Dennett found upon his visit to Appomattox in mid-August. Upon his visit to where the Nation reunited, Dennett reported that he found the village to be “occupied by [white] men who seemed to have no other business on their hands than to lounge in some easy attitude chewing tobacco and talking to each other, or watching across the muddy road and pools of rain water the movements of the soldiers quartered opposite in the court-house yard.”<sup>152</sup> Dennett lamented that it was the same case throughout the rest of rural Virginia. Dennett recorded that he may have seen hundreds of White men in his time in Virginia and had only witnessed maybe only ten performing any sort of labor. Contrary to the Whites, Dennett said that any available work had been thrown towards the Freedmen, as that was “the custom of the Country.”<sup>153</sup>

Appomattox was not the only county in the Sub-District that encountered labor conflicts. In Amherst County, the Provost faced the opposite situation. Earlier that summer, in May,

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<sup>150</sup> “General Orders No. 15” Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. I. Gregg. Commanding. JNO. B Maitland. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. May 15, 1865.

<sup>151</sup> Marvel. P.277.

<sup>152</sup> Dennett. P.67.

<sup>153</sup> Dennett. P.67.

Planters of Amherst County held private meetings to address the situation of the Freedmen.

These resolutions read<sup>154</sup>;

- “1st Resolved that we unanimously agree and bind ourselves under no circumstances to employ or cause in any way directly or indirectly employment to be given any Negro freed by Federal authority, without a written pass or recommendation from his former master or employer.
2. Resolved, that we will not rent or cause to be rented to any such Negro any land or House, unless such Negro has a written recommendation from his former master or employer for that purpose
- 3, Resolved, that no freedman be permitted to visit or pass through any plantation except upon a written pass from his employer, and that we will in no case give such permission at night except upon business.
- 4, Resolved that the Maximum rate of hire for no one freedman without encumbrance, shall be five dollars per month in currency and food during the time hired.
- 5, Resolved. that any person or persons in this community violating these obligations by harboring, employing or delivering any negro from the protection or assistance of his former Master against his wish or consent, shall for such conduct receive the contempt of all good Citizens.
- 6, Resolved, that these resolutions be signed by those present, at this meeting and that they be presented to the farmers of the Neighbourhood not present for their approval and signature.”<sup>155</sup>

What these resolutions stated was that if Freedmen were to relocate in any shape or form, they would need the blessing of their former master. General Gregg, who was the acting District Commander at the time, had been made aware of this, but it is unclear if he took any action

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<sup>154</sup> Hahn, Steven, Steven F. Miller, Susan E. O’Donovan, John C. Rodrigue, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds. “Coming to Terms.” In *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867*, Series 3, Volume 1: Land and Labor, 1865. University of North Carolina Press, 2008. P. 336-337.

<sup>155</sup> Terry, Alfred H. *Report to Secretary of War E.M. Staunton*. July 7, 1865. Freedman’s Bureau Records. Appomattox Court House National Historical Park.



against them. However, by August, the Freedmen's Bureau was sending in Provost soldiers to report on these meetings.<sup>156</sup>

In Appomattox County, a wedge continued to drive Captain Geiser's Provost Guard apart from Captain Lacey's Freedmen's Bureau. Lacey's orders to confiscate government animals counteracted Geiser's mission to distribute the supplies. As Lacey cracked down on distributing supplies, Geiser seemed driven to hand out more. This back and forth between the two officers lead to confusion for the soldiers manning the Bureau. The Bureau officers in Appomattox were soldiers in Geiser's company, who had been appointed by their captain to work in the county's Bureau office, which in turn answered to Captain Lacey.<sup>157</sup> To alleviate the tension between himself and Geiser, Lacey appointed Lieutenant Henry Cogan of Geiser's company to serve as the assistant superintendent of the Bureau in Appomattox County. This solution seemed to work best for everyone, as Cogan's appointment technically made him independent of the Captain, but due to their previous association they were able to maintain a warm relationship. Despite the change in management, the county was still plagued by labor struggles. Even with the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau, who encouraged Freedmen to sign contracts that kept them on for a full year, many Freedmen insisted on signing on for only the current harvest. These reasons ranged from the continued belief that the Federal Government was going to appropriate land to the Freedmen, to fears that retribution may be taken against them should they try to leave.<sup>158</sup>

Meanwhile Dennett, having seen all there was to see of Appomattox Court House, travelled west of Lynchburg to the village of Liberty, which acted as the seat of Bedford County. Having observed how the Bureau operated in the city, Dennett sought to witness its function in a

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Marvel. P. 278.

<sup>158</sup> Marvel. P. 281.

rural setting. Dennett found the Bureau located on the ground floor of the courthouse. There he witnessed a White farmer echo the same complaint heard in Appomattox County. The two of the freedmen on his farm had refused to continue working. When the Provost sergeant at the desk inquired if he had been paying his Freedmen, the man responded, “I a’n’t payin’ great wages this year, an’ I a’n’t doin’ any great work—makin’ a little corn’s about all. But they’d ought to be whar their fahmly is. One o’ the women’s no good to me, and they’ve both got children to feed, an’ they can’t take care of ’em without the men. The men agreed to stay on the place.”<sup>159</sup> Indeed while the men had refused to continue to work, they had chosen to stay on the farm with their families, who were still receiving food from the farmer. The sergeant appeared unsure what to do, a nearby soldier who was in the room at the time volunteered to go with the farmer to convince the freedmen to go back to work.

Following the case of the farmer, a Planter entered the room and presented a similar dilemma to the sergeant. The Freedmen on his plantation were also not working to his level of satisfaction and he inquired, since he was no longer able to punish his workers, when was the government going to take care of them. The sergeant replied, “You’ll have to keep them on the plantation, sir, for the present. We can’t take them until we get different orders in reference to this whole matter. The Government has no place for them, and if they’ve worked on your crops all the year so far, I guess they’ve got a claim on you to keep them a while longer. At any rate, I can’t do anything about it. We’ll do what we can to make them work for you while they stay, but they can’t be moved.”<sup>160</sup> With that answer, the man left. Dennett heard more cases pertaining to labor struggles. In one case the sergeant had to deny a rumor that the government was handing

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<sup>159</sup> Dennett. P. 70-71.

<sup>160</sup> Dennett. P.72

out free land and mules to Freedmen.<sup>161</sup> In another case Dennett heard a Freedman report his current employer for beating him, a matter in which the sergeant told the man to return to his plantation and come back if it were to happen again.<sup>162</sup> What Dennett may have been witnessing was many of the Freedmen realizing that real change was going to come slowly. These labor conflicts in the area reflected the attitudes of both Whites and Freedmen, as both parties began to see the cracks in the system that the Federal Government had hastily put together.

Dennett stayed the night in Liberty. In doing so, he was given the chance to converse with his landlord over dinner. Throughout the dinner conversation, the man complained how the Provost were giving legal representation to the Freedmen. What upset the man the most was how the Provost were letting Freedmen testify against Whites. Referring to an incident that had happened earlier that month, the man said, “But I know if that captain over there is going to do that, if he’s going to listen to n\*\*\*\*r evidence, he’ll have his hands full. Why, we’d never let a n\*\*\*\*r give evidence against anybody but people of his own color. They never gave evidence against a white man in no court in Virginia. But this captain lets ’em, and it would make you laugh to see the way they flock in to him with complaints. Always a crowd.”<sup>163</sup> This man was not alone in his sentiments; others came who also balked at the idea of giving Freedmen legal testimony.

By late August, the Provost Guard had been present in the region for three months, and the war had been over for four months. However, this passage of time was still too soon for any of the tensions to thaw. Dennett recalled an evening when he had gone for a stroll with one of the Provost officer’s based in Liberty. They had walked by a town house when the women inside

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<sup>161</sup> A variation of the 40-acres and a mule rumor.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Dennett. P75.

took to singing a Southern patriotic ballad. When asked to stop, the women went inside. After the incident, the soldier recalled a time when he attempted to join a Sunday service in a local church. When the soldier had tried to sit in a pew, a woman threatened to leave the church, as she refused to share a church pew with a Yankee. The minister had seen the interaction and invited the soldier to share his pew. The minister, in turn, went before the congregation to deliver a sermon about the folly of clinging to bygone beliefs and the biblical message of loving your neighbors.<sup>164</sup>

These tense and often awkward situations were not remedied by the events in Lynchburg. Earlier that month, three citizens of the city were arrested. The first two, D.K. Tuttle and Wm. M. Black, were charged with “conspiring to defraud the United States”, and “fraudulently receiving and using the property of the United States”, and violating orders given by a Provost Marshall.<sup>165</sup> However, the third prisoner, Dr. R.C. Craig, was charged with murder. While *The Daily Virginian* did not specify the details of this case, there was a high possibility of it being linked to illegal profiteering of contraband. The trial was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> and all three men were found not guilty, with Tuttle and Black being forced to pay \$200 in silver to the Provost in damages to government property.<sup>166</sup>

By the time the sun had set on the 29<sup>th</sup>, it had also set on John Dennett’s time in the Virginian Heartland. He recorded that he had left the city on horseback just before noon that day to head southward towards North Carolina to continue his quest to experience the “South as it is”. It would take several more months for him to complete his southbound pilgrimage, a journey

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<sup>164</sup> Dennett. P.76.

<sup>165</sup> “General Orders No.9” Office of Brevet-Maj. General N.M. Curtis. Commanding. A.R.S. Foote. A.A.A. General. Headquarters of District S.W. Virginia, Lynchburg, Va. September 24, 1865.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

that would take a heavy toll upon his health. Upon his return to Northern soil in the Spring of 1866 he began to show the earliest signs of consumption, the illness that would take his life eight years later. His writings were published in the first edition of *The Nation* in 1866 and were widely read among Northern readers.<sup>167</sup>

The month of August demonstrated the full impact of the Freedmen's Bureau, and how its responsibilities often overlapped, and at times conflicted with the Provost Guard. When the Bureau had first arrived, the two groups were essentially one and the same. But it is by the end of August when the military and the Bureau begin going in different directions. This is evident with Lieutenant Cogan's appointment by Captain Lacey. While Cogan, and Lacey, were still a part of the military, they answered to the Bureau and worked for its interests. August also shows the lack of faith that the three groups, Freedmen, Planters, and the military, had for each other. Planters accused the Freedmen of laziness and accused the Provost of giving the Freedmen too much agency. The Freedmen accused the Planters of treating them as enslaved and the Provost of not holding up to the promise of emancipation. Varying on county, the Provost found both groups difficult to handle in one form or another. It was a fickle situation where appeasing one typically meant upsetting the other.

*Reforging the Ties that Bind:*

*September 1865*

As 1865 began to wane, the people of Central Virginia turned their attention to the upcoming election. With the nation's attention focused on reconstructing the South, the Federal government determined that elections were to be held on October 12<sup>th</sup> so that state and local governments could quickly resume in 1866.<sup>168</sup> With the presence of a civilian government that

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<sup>167</sup> Janney, Caroline E. Introduction to *The South As It Is*. University of Alabama Press. (2010)

<sup>168</sup> "The Election-Who Are Voters?" *The Daily Virginian*. October 10, 1865.

was loyal to the United States, there would be little need for the Federal occupation, and the legions of U.S. soldiers, whose enlistments were rapidly expiring, could be finally be mustered out. In Liberty, Bedford County, a man had announced his attempt to run for National Congress. His platform read,

“I shall favor and encourage the emigration and colonization of the Negro population as a measure calculated, under present circumstances, to promote the interest of both races, as well as the repeal of all laws for the confiscation of the property of those who cooperated with the South in the late terrible struggle between the two sections of this country. . . . I shall oppose any law or amendment of the Constitution of the United States having a tendency to give to the Negro the right of suffrage, or to so change his status as to place him upon terms of equality with the white man.” He can see “no necessity for continuing in the limits of the State armed forces of the United States, and will do all he can to effect their removal.”<sup>169</sup>

Dennett, who had written on this candidate during his visit to Liberty the previous month, had remarked that this candidate will likely do well in that region of Virginia.<sup>170</sup> In accordance with Congress and President Johnson’s Oath of Amnesty, candidates must be a free white male of at least twenty-one years old, lived in the Commonwealth for at least a year and at least six months in the county which he is running for, have taken the Oath of Allegiance to both the United States government and the reformed government of Virginia, and that the candidate must have a pardon from the President.<sup>171</sup> When it came to taking the Oath, many candidates seemed reluctant to do

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<sup>169</sup> Dennett. P.76.

<sup>170</sup> While Dennett never specified who this candidate was, it can be speculated that the person in question was likely Robert Ridgeway.

<sup>171</sup> “The Election-Who Are Voters?” *The Daily Virginian*. October 10, 1865.

so, believing it to cater to Republican wishes. As the election season went underway, various candidates used the notion of taking the Oath to attack their opponent's eligibility to run, and their loyalties to the South.

Weeks earlier in August, Robert Ridgeway, a native of Bedford County, announced his run for the Fourth U.S. Congressional District.<sup>172</sup> His campaign debuted in *The Daily Virginian*. This came in the form of a prolonged address in which he addressed the state of disunion in the Country and the Commonwealth. In his address, Ridgeway called out the Radical Republican Congress who “still cry out for blood, for proscription, for punishment to be visited upon a brave and chivalrous people in their hour of destitution and distress.”<sup>173</sup> Ridgeway also called out Congress's amnesty requirements and limitations, calling them “a policy so cruel, so unnecessary, and so fatal to the restoration of permanent peace and harmony”.<sup>174</sup> Ridgeway stated that he would stand up to the Republican dictated Congress on behalf of all his neighbors. Continuing into the speech, Ridgeway declared that he had opposed Secession from the beginning, as he believed that it would lead to the prostration of Southern liberty and the destruction of the institution of slavery.

Regarding slavery, he stated that its abolition is one of the acknowledged results of the war, and he encouraged his fellow Virginians to accept its fate. Entertaining any thoughts of its re-establishment would only be a futile waste. In his address, he announced himself as a Unionist, and he encouraged those who sought to live in the restored Union to think of

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<sup>172</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congressional District included: Mecklenburg, Lunenburg, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Nottoway, Buckingham, Cumberland, Amelia, Powhatan, Chesterfield, Fluvanna, Appomattox, Amherst, and Nelson Counties.

<sup>173</sup>Ridgeway, Roger. “To the Voters of the Fourth Congressional District of Virginia, Comprising the Counties of Mecklenburg, Lunenburg, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Nottoway, Buckingham, Cumberland, Amelia, Powhatan, Chesterfield, Fluvanna, Appomattox, Amherst, and Nelson. *The Daily Virginian*. August 11, 1865.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

themselves as one too. Ridgeway concluded his address by affirming that he is a Virginian by birth and by education, and as such his only thoughts would only be towards upholding the welfare of his Commonwealth. Presenting himself as a Unionist, Ridgeway was attempting to appeal to the Republicans and the other powers in control, and by proclaiming his status as a Virginian, he was able to keep favor with his Democratic voting base.

Ridgeway was not the only politician in Central Virginia attempting to win favor with both groups. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, citizens of Roanoke County met in Salem to discuss their place in the reformed Union.<sup>175</sup> Former Confederate army Colonel G.B. Board chaired the meeting. Upon its adjournment, the meeting had drafted a resolution that acknowledged the supremacy of the Federal government over the land. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Bedford County held a meeting that produced similar resolutions.<sup>176</sup> It was no mere coincidence that these meetings were held just weeks before a national election. If the counties could show that they could be trusted to operate on their own, then there would be no need for the army to keep troops in their cities and towns.

On the 30<sup>th</sup>, the Lynchburg City Council held a similar meeting in Dudley Hall. With the election only weeks away, the city had to figure out how it was going to function in the new union without guidance from the Provost Guard. The meeting was chaired by the interim Mayor, W.D. Branch, and by the end of the meeting the council had passed a series of resolutions that accepted the South's defeat and the City's willingness to work with the Federal and State governments. Throughout the resolutions, they acknowledged the abolition of slavery, and stated that they had no interest in seeing its restoration in any form.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, they praised the leadership of the Provost Guard for earning the respect and confidence of the city, they expressed

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<sup>175</sup> "Public Meeting in Roanoke County." *The Daily Virginian*. September 20, 1865.

<sup>176</sup> "Meeting in Bedford." *The Daily Virginian*. September 20, 1865.

<sup>177</sup> Elson. P.188.



their confidence in Governor Francis H. Pierpont's leadership, and even pledged their complete trust and confidence in the presidency of Andrew Johnson.<sup>178</sup>

The praises the Lynchburg City Council gave towards the provost must have been given through gritted teeth. While the relationship between the Federal troops and the civilians had warmed during the past few weeks, largely in part to the vigorous citywide sanitation program that General Briscoe had implemented earlier that month, those warm feelings ended abruptly with a debilitating scandal.<sup>179</sup> The day before the City Council held their meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup>, General Briscoe was arrested and relieved of command.<sup>180</sup> He had been caught stealing Federal funds from a safe in the provost headquarters. Briscoe was to be taken to Washington to face a military tribunal, while in Lynchburg, General Curtis appointed Major H.J. McDonald of the 11<sup>th</sup> Connecticut to temporarily take Briscoe's place.

Charles Button, the editor of *The Daily Virginian*, who had by this point come to respect the Provost Guard, wrote rather bitterly on the subject. The scandal even made national headlines in New York and Washington. In late August, General Briscoe and a colleague of his, a man referred to as Lackey, approached Colonel Alberger, the Quartermaster for the 188<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania in the region. The two men informed the Colonel on a scheme they had devised on moving funds from a safe that had belonged to Alberger, who promptly turned them away. Briscoe's original plan was for Lackey and Alberger to steal the money and blame it on a robbery. Alberger would have been placed on a Court Martial, which Briscoe himself would have

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Special Orders No. 36" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J. C. Briscoe. Commanding. J.H. Jewett. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. September 7, 1865.

<sup>180</sup> Special Orders No. 46" Office of Brevet-Maj. General Curtis. Commanding. J.H. Jewett. A.A. General. Headquarters Military Sub-District of Lynchburg, Va. September 29, 1865.

chaired and have acquitted Alberger, and the blame would have been pressed on a former Rebel officer who was native to Lynchburg.<sup>181</sup>

Suspicious of the General and his accomplice, Colonel Alberger recruited a pair of detectives, who were from the War Department's detective force, to investigate Briscoe and Lackey. According to the detective's investigation, when Alberger refused their scheme, Briscoe sent Lackey to Philadelphia to have a key made that would fit Alberger's safe. When the key was acquired, the pair stole over \$82,000 in gold and silver from the Quartermaster's safe. When Lackey and Briscoe had returned to Briscoe's office, they had placed the money on the desk and had locked the door behind them, only for the door to be kicked down by the two detectives. During the confrontation Briscoe was caught holding a bundle of rags soaked in combustible fluid, this was registered as an attempted arson and to cover up the burglary. When the two men were placed into custody by the Provost, Briscoe claimed that he had only taken the money to prevent Lackey from stealing it. Upon their arrest, the pair were sent directly to Washington to be held in the Old Capitol Prison, much to the city's satisfaction.<sup>182</sup> Their trial was set for early October.

In Appomattox County, the tensions between the soldiers and the populace came to a boil. At the beginning of the month, the Provost evicted a family from their farm. While the incident saw no bloodshed, another one that same week did. A handful of soldiers, assumably part of the Provost, attacked Wilson Franklin, a farmer that lived on the outskirts of the village of Appomattox Court House. The soldiers had tied Franklin to the ground and instructed a nearby freedman to flog him. Following the flogging, the soldiers shot him. It was believed that what

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<sup>181</sup> "More About the Briscoe Robbery." *The Daily Virginian*. September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1865.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

caused the assault was Franklin's marriage to a freedwoman, but this was never proven. When the attack was discovered, Briscoe had sent Geiser orders to arrest the attackers, but any investigation into the matter was quickly dropped.<sup>183</sup> A few days later, the crime spree continued when a freedman shot his former overseer during a heated argument. The suspect fled to Lynchburg but was quickly apprehended and taken to Buckingham County jail, as the jailhouse in Appomattox County was not functional.

While the Provost Guard grappled with keeping law and order in the County, the County itself sought to join its neighbors in rejoining the Union by holding an election. Unlike its neighbors, Appomattox seated its officials within the first week of September rather than waiting until October, when the Congressional and General Assembly elections were held. George Peers, who had served as county clerk during the war, was allowed to return to his post, while Lewis Isbel continued his position as the county attorney, while a new judge and sheriff were elected.<sup>184</sup> More pressing were the National and State elections that were to be held the next month. Former Whigs and proclaimed Unionists such as Charles Button, who was campaigning for another person, and Benjamin Walker campaigned for seats in the remade House of Delegates while others such as William Hannah, a well-known secessionist, and E.P. Walker dared to chance their luck towards the state senate.<sup>185</sup> As the county officials resumed their duties, the people of Appomattox could finally feel a glimpse of the new definition of "normal."<sup>186</sup>

September saw many of the Whites in Central Virginia finally accept their place in the Union as they looked to create governments that answered to the U.S. government. A common

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<sup>183</sup> Marvel. P.282.

<sup>184</sup> Marvel. P.283.

<sup>185</sup> Marvel. P.283.

<sup>186</sup> "To the Voters of Appomattox and Prince Edward Counties." *The Daily Virginian*. September 30, 1865.

theme with the candidates was that they openly acknowledged the legality of the Emancipation. Regardless if this was something they believed personally or not, it was likely that they were trying to appease the Provosts, who were the ones monitoring the election campaigns. Many of the candidates platform's were similar. While they urged their fellow Southerners to accept the outcome of the war, they pledged themselves to challenging Republican rule in Congress. Furthermore, many voices support for the African Colonization Society, a Northerner based emigration society that settling the West African coast with Freedmen to be the best answer to the issues involving Race in the South. The scandal surrounding Briscoe, and the killing of Wilson Franklin, lead to a fallout of relations between the Provost and the civilians. It was up to September that Briscoe had established a relatively cool rapport with the people of Lynchburg and the surrounding Sub-District. The civilian's attitude towards him was a far cry from the attitude they held towards General Gregg earlier that summer. Briscoe's arrest placed a black mark on the reputation of the Provost.

*Kicking Up Dust:*

*October 1865*

As the crisp autumn air turned the countryside into shades of orange and gold, the month of October was greeted with excitement and nervous anticipation. Every Northerner and Southerner in the Old Dominion looked to see who had been chosen to rebuild the Commonwealth. For Republicans and Unionists alike, there had been a mounting fear that their neighbors were going to be quick to reinstate Confederate leaders. This had been seen months earlier in July when Richmond elected former Confederates to the positions of mayor and

commonwealth attorney.<sup>187</sup> The July election had been a major upset to Republicans and many Northern papers used this as evidence that the Southern states were not yet worthy to rejoin the Union.

Many Unionists feared that if Confederates were to retake office, they would take bloody retribution against those who had opposed the Confederacy. One Unionist who wrote to Governor Pierpont asked "if loyal men who have suffered all manner of persecution for the sake of their principles are to be ruled by the same men who inflicted these persecutions"?<sup>188</sup> In Lee County, in Southwest Virginia, a report came to the Provost office that "deadly enemies of the Union" were being returned to power "and the very best recommendation is to be minus an arm or leg, occasioned in some great effort to destroy the government."<sup>189</sup> A complaint to General Terry, the new military official in charge of Virginia read "'a Union man could not obtain justice in the County Court, and . . . neither his life nor his property would be safe."<sup>190</sup> To ease the fears of the Unionist, the military officials monitored the election closely and Pierpont issued a proclamation that individuals who had served the Confederate government or military were barred from campaigning.

Candidates were required to have taken the Oath of Allegiance. Despite the requirement, many candidates liked to use the Oath as a means of political slander. They would claim that the acceptance of the Oath was a betrayal of Southern loyalty. Also common among candidates was their denial or refutation of Secession. Many claimed to have opposed it from the start, while a few others, such as James M. Cox of the fourth district, publicly regretted their previous feelings

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<sup>187</sup> Alan B. Bromberg. "The Virginia Congressional Elections of 1865: A Test of Southern Loyalty." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 84, no. 1 (1976): 76.

<sup>188</sup> Bromberg. 77

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

towards it. A final commonality in the platforms of this particular election was the candidates' urgency to their fellow Virginians to accept the outcome of the war and to "move on."<sup>191</sup> Given that many Democrats and any other voices of dissent were barred from the election, this language was commonplace on platforms across the Commonwealth.<sup>192</sup>

The main thing that divided the candidates were the issues regarding Freedmen. While nearly all candidates called for their fellow southerners to accept the death of slavery, there were mixed opinions on how their legal status should be handled. Some harkened to the Colonization Society's message, that the best course of action was to send them to the African colony of Liberia, and that their extinction in the United States, as John S. Pendleton from the third district bluntly stated, was just a "mere question of time."<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, the candidates were divided over the idea of enfranchising the Freedmen. While Unionists near Alexandria ran in favor of the idea, and even attempted to convince Frederick Douglass to get involved, candidates in the lower half of the Commonwealth dismissed the idea as Radical Republican fearmongering.<sup>194</sup>

Lynchburg and Danville were both included in the fifth district, where the race was particularly hard fought and confusing to many outside spectators. The confusion was largely due to the lack of a popular front runner. The five declared candidates included; Robert Withers, a Danville-based physician and a former Rebel colonel, James Johnson from Bedford County who had served as a State senator during the war, Jonathan Stovall from Halifax County, Thomas Grasty from Pittsylvania County, both Stovall and Grasty had been state legislators before the war, and Beverly A. Davis from Patrick County, who was a methodist minister had no experience

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<sup>191</sup> "Voters of Nelson County." *The Daily Virginian*. October 5, 1865.

<sup>192</sup> Bromberg. 79.

<sup>193</sup> Bromberg. 80.

<sup>194</sup> Bromberg. 78.

in the political arena.<sup>195</sup> There was a sixth candidate, Nathaniel Davidson, but he was seen as a minor opponent due to being viewed by many as a carpetbagger.

Four of the candidates, Withers, Johnson, Stovall, and Grasty, all shared the view that the idea of Freedman enfranchisement was ridiculous and that the best course of action regarding Freedmen was the colonization effort. All four of these candidates were ineligible to take the oath but continued to fight amongst themselves over who was “really” ineligible to take the oath and would be the greater nuisance to northern politicians. While his candidates struggled to distinguish themselves, Davis, the only candidate who was eligible, went from town-to-town campaigning as a politician, and holding funeral services as a minister.

To make the campaign in Central Virginia even more convoluted, Charles Button used his role as editor for *The Daily Virginian* to play kingmaker and nominated Charles L. Mosby from Lynchburg to run for the same office. Mosby was a lawyer, a Whig, and a Unionist who had remained uninvolved in the war, which made him eligible for the Oath. In an article detailing the importance of the upcoming election, Button, after repeatedly stating the importance of a qualified candidate, wrote “to this end, we repeat what we have frequently said, that we hope that people of this District will unite in securing the election of Mr. C.L. Mosby, who, we confidently believe, would be acceptable to the Government and be permitted to take his seat.”<sup>196</sup>

The only hitch in Button’s scheme was that Mosby would only run if Robert Withers withdrew. When Withers refused to withdraw, Mosby held to his word and remained out of the race, but this did not stop Button from continuing to advocate for Mosby and slandering Withers. Withers retaliated by saying that he would only withdraw if a candidate who had already taken

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<sup>195</sup> Bromberg, 87.

<sup>196</sup> “The Election-Who Are The Voters.” *The Daily Virginian*. October 10, 1865.

the Oath would run, which was something that Withers claimed Mosby said he would never do. That only encouraged Button to fire back and campaign for Mosby even harder. The waters only continued to muddy when a group of residents in the fifth district started a campaign to write-in a gentleman named John Minor Botts. Not much was known about Botts' platform, but one major problem with Botts was that he was not a part of the fifth district. Despite his ineligibility, Botts' name became popular in the fifth district which worried Button. Fearing that Botts would take away votes from Mosby, Button launched another slander campaign that was directed against Botts. In an article defending Mosby's virtue from Withers, Button lashed out at Botts. Button stated that "Mr. Botts, a gentleman not resident in the District, to be candidate, shows the wisdom of the policy that has been suggested by this journal, and the dissatisfaction that exists respecting the position of that excellent and gallant gentleman. [Mosby]."<sup>197</sup>

After election day had come and gone, the results of the election felt dubious. The results bounced from candidate to candidate until it finally landed on a candidate that was eligible to take the Oath, but to Button's dismay (and likely to Moseby's relief) it was not Moseby.<sup>198</sup> Reverend Beverly A. Davis had won the seat of Virginia's fifth congressional district by 1,718 votes. He was closely followed by Stovall with 1,679 votes. Moseby, who had carried Lynchburg and its surrounding counties despite never announcing his candidacy, came in third with 1,187 votes. Withers came in fourth with 958 votes, and Botts only had 294 votes, proving Button's fears unfounded.<sup>199</sup> Johnson and Grasty had withdrawn from the race weeks earlier. Reverend Davis' victory was the best outcome for the Unionist who now had a representative who could take the Oath and had a record clean of rebel involvement.

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<sup>197</sup> "Mr. C.L.Mosby." *The Daily Virginian*. October 10, 1865.

<sup>198</sup> Bromberg, 88

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.



As the dust from the election began to settle, a new wave of excitement swept through the area. News of Briscoe's trial had been released. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, during the height of the election madness, word had trickled through the Briscoe was being charged with larceny and the conspiracy to steal.<sup>200</sup> As the election came to a close, Briscoe's court martial dragged on.<sup>201</sup> By mid-October, the people of Lynchburg, and even those who were under Briscoe's command, were convinced that the General was a crook, despite his repeated claims in court that the whole trial was an elaborate "conspiracy to ruin him."<sup>202</sup> The trial continued into the later part of the month, all the while Button reported that Briscoe was being held in a cell in the Old Capitol Prison, adjacent to Henry Wirz, the infamous director of Andersonville. Button wrote that Briscoe was "plentifully supplied with reading matter and cigars, and is under the consoling influence of a well-stocked whiskey chest."<sup>203</sup> As October finally waned, the verdict of Briscoe's trial was released. Briscoe's defense argued that Briscoe's defense of the United States proves him incapable of stealing from it.<sup>204</sup> When the tribunal reviewed Briscoe's war record, which was considered exemplary, the court moved to find him not guilty.

Hearing the court's decision to acquit Briscoe frustrated, but did not surprise, the people in Lynchburg, who had by that point given up on Briscoe's innocence and held little liking for the man. Following his acquittal, Briscoe celebrated his freedom by playing billiards in Washington D.C. with other high ranking military officers and congressmen. When word had gotten out the Briscoe was looking to return to Lynchburg to pay a visit to his old command, Button was quick to publish a reply. Referring to Briscoe as Lynchburg's "gay and festive

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<sup>200</sup> "Trial of Brevet Brigadier General Jos. C. Briscoe for Larceny of United States Monies." *The Daily Virginian*. October 4, 1865.

<sup>201</sup> "The Trial of Gen. Briscoe—Later—Evidence of a Detective." *The Daily Virginian*. October 12, 1865.

<sup>202</sup> "The Briscoe Trial." *The Daily Virginian*. October 15, 1865.

<sup>203</sup> "The Case of Gen. Briscoe." *The Daily Virginian*. October 24, 1865.

<sup>204</sup> "The Trial of Gen. Briscoe." *The Daily Virginian*. October 18, 1865.

brigadier by brevet” and warns Briscoe to stay away from his former post. ‘But we see that Briscoe is coming South “where he has property.” --- Where? What? More cribbage from the government buried away in the ground? He will find more congenial society where he is. People wont play billiards with him down here. Don’t come, General.’<sup>205</sup>

The month of October essentially brings an end to the Provosts Guard in the region. While the Provost do not fully withdraw from the Sub-District until December, the establishment of civil government, expiring troops enlistment, and the increased power of the Freedmen’s Bureau were steadily pushing the Provost from the region. If there were any kindred feelings between the Provost and the Civilians, the Briscoe’s scandal and trial had seen and them.

*Hard Times Come Again No More:*

*November 1865*

On Saturday, November 4, 1865, the United States schooner, *Henry P. Russell*, captained by a veteran sailor named Nickerson, departed from Smith’s Wharf in Baltimore Harbor<sup>206</sup> at four o’clock that afternoon with its destination set for Monrovia, Liberia. Its grand voyage had been christened by a Bible service just before its departure.<sup>207</sup> Its main cargo were passengers looking to emigrate to the colony, and 174 of them were from Central Virginia.<sup>208</sup> These passengers included farmers, blacksmiths, bakers and butchers, mechanics, laborers, and shoemakers. Everything that the American Colonization Society deemed to be the essentials to building a new land. Every family aboard the ship was to be granted ten acres of land, while single adults were granted five acres.<sup>209</sup> The voyage itself was furnished by the Colonization

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<sup>205</sup> “Briscoe.” *The Daily Virginian*. October 30, 1865.

<sup>206</sup> “Our Emigration to Liberia.” *The Daily Virginian*. November 12, 1865.

<sup>207</sup> “Sailing of the African Emigrants.” *The Daily Virginian*. November 8, 1865.

<sup>208</sup> Marvel. P.285.

<sup>209</sup> “The Lynchburg Emigration Society.” *The Daily Virginian*. November 1, 1865.

Society, and even paid in advance for six-month lodging in the colony's capital for each of the passengers upon the vessel's arrival. The voyage was estimated to take roughly five weeks. The passengers aboard the ship were freedmen, and they had been told by the American Colonization Society, and by their neighbors, that African emigration was the best option for them. As foretold by many of the political candidates during the previous months, this was, in their minds, the best answer to Emancipation and all the issues that had arisen from it.

While Liberian emigration was the one thing that many Northerners and Southerners agreed would be the answer to the question of race in the reformed Union, the colony-bound ships certainly did not have the desired turn out that the ACS anticipated there would be. Freedmen considered themselves no more African than their White counterparts. In fact, 1865 may have been the first time in American history where Freedmen considered themselves more "American" than anything, or anyone, else.<sup>210</sup> While the ACS continued to encourage Freedmen to emigrate, many more chose to stay and continue to work their claim. They believed that one day soon their citizenship would come, and soon after, their vote.

In Central Virginia, life was finally beginning to settle and the "new" meaning for normal was finally starting to take shape. After almost a year of intervention from the Provost Guard, and several months of assistance from the Freedmen's Bureau, the system that Dennett had described as "sharing the crops"<sup>211</sup> had become the normal in Central Virginia. While this was by no means a perfect system, it did see to it that each party was compensated for their efforts. The need for the Freedmen's Bureau was still evident, and there was even talk of additional Freedmen schools expanding into more rural areas such as Appomattox County.<sup>212</sup> If there was

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<sup>210</sup> Foner. P.418.

<sup>211</sup> Dennett. P. 51.

<sup>212</sup> Marvel. P. 296.

any indication of change in the area, the case in Amherst County could serve as one. Since May, the Provost and the Bureau had kept careful watch on the planters of that county, fearing that planters were actively forming what could be described as an employer's union that were engineered towards controlling the Freedmen.<sup>213</sup>

On November 12<sup>th</sup>, a letter addressed for Captain Lacey passed through the Lynchburg Bureau office from the office in Amherst. The letter read,

“Captain, I have the honor to report that the resolutions passed at a meeting of the citizens of Amherst Co. Va May 31, 1865, have never been enforced and that the feelings of the people have changed since the passage of the resolutions. These resolutions have not been repealed but have been dropped and are unnoticed by the people.”<sup>214</sup>

The letter went on to explain how the resolutions had been passed at a time when emotions concerning the Emancipation and the war's end ran high, and they were passed in at a time when there was “considerable excitement” with the arrival of the Provost Guard, and that the provost had monitored the situation all summer for any indication of these resolutions being carried out. What the author claimed was that many of the planters who had signed the resolutions at the beginning of the summer, turned out to be among the most accommodating to the Freedmen in Amherst County. While this letter may not speak for the situation of every county in the Sub-District, it does show that the Provost Guard's presence had served as a guide to a new kind of normal.

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<sup>213</sup> Hahn, Miller, O 'Dónovan, Rodrigue, Rowland. P. 336-337.

<sup>214</sup> “Letter for Captain Robert Lacey.” Office of Freedmen's Bureau. November 12, 1865.

*A Farewell to Arms:*

*December 1865*

As the last of the autumn leaves fell to the barren ground, the remaining Federal troops packed away their camps and boarded trains to Lynchburg, where they would be officially mustered out of the army and sent to their homes to live a life of hard-won peace. Brevet Brigadier General J.H. Hill, who had been given command of the region following his predecessor's dismissal, oversaw turning over authority and aide to the Freedmen's Bureau, which was now taking on a civilian operated role.<sup>215</sup> Since October, enlistments rapidly ran out, and the autumn months saw Lynchburg flocked with Federal troops being mustered out and boarding trains to head eastward with high hopes to get back home in time for Christmas.<sup>216</sup> On December 14<sup>th</sup>, the last of Company D of the 188<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania cleared their camps and made their way east and homeward bound.<sup>217</sup> All power that was held by the military had been turned over to the civilian government or to the Freedmen's Bureau. By New Year's Eve, U.S. troops had completely withdrawn from the region. Southern Whites had finally gotten what they wanted; the Yankees were finally going home. Freedmen could only stand aside as their blue-clad liberators marched away. It can be said that the troops of the 188<sup>th</sup> Pa. had left the Virginian Heartland in a better state than they found it, but the question on everyone's mind was just how permanent this new normal was going to be.

As Federal power was pulled from Central Virginia, newly elected Congressmen flocked into the scaffolded Capitol Hill. Many Southern congressmen were shocked to learn that despite taking the Oath, they were still being denied their seats by their Republican counterparts. The

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<sup>215</sup> "General Orders No. 13" Office of Brevet-Brigadier General J.H. Hill. Headquarters, District of S.W. Va. Lynchburg, Va. October 22, 1865.

<sup>216</sup> "The Arrival of Troops." *The Daily Virginian*. October 24, 1865

<sup>217</sup> Marvel. P.286.

39<sup>th</sup> Congress was to be held that month. The issues on the table included Black Citizenship, Black Suffrage, War Reparations, and President Johnson's "generous" amnesty plan. The Republican Party had big plans for 1866, plans that their Democratic counterparts needed to not interfere with.<sup>218</sup>

*A Land Unknown:*

*January 1865*

As New Years Day dawned on the Virginian Heartland, Southerners, both White and Black, walked out into a truly new year. As of December 6, 1865, the Constitution stated,

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."<sup>219</sup>

For the first time in American history, the term "Freedmen" meant something that did not need to be legally defined. True legal equality did not come until a century later. However, as made clear to all Southerners during the previous year, the old normal was finished and that there was now a new normal that they had learned, and had to continue to learn, to get used to. To the people who lived in Central Virginia, life itself may not have seemed to differ. Freedmen were still working as sharecroppers, and those who were in power before the war mostly still held onto it. What did change was the social dynamic in these communities. As the Freedmen's Bureau continued their presence in the region, they established schools to provide education for Black children, and ensured that Freedmen were granted protection under the law.

Within weeks of being mustered from the army, former Captain James Geiser and his former Lieutenant Henry Cogan returned to Appomattox Court House to wed their sweethearts

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<sup>218</sup> Foner. P. 286.

<sup>219</sup> National Archives. "13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Abolition of Slavery (1865)."

whom they had courted all summer long. Both men would settle in the village. Geiser was elected to the role as the new sheriff in Appomattox County, while Cogan took on the role as the village Postmaster.<sup>220</sup> Charles Button continued to serve as the faithful editor of *The Daily Virginian* until selling it years later. Thomas Boccock would move on to serve in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1877-1879, before passing away in 1891 at his home in Appomattox. As for John Dennett, the travelling reporter for *The Nation*, he continued his trek through the war-torn South, providing faithful firsthand accounts to Northern readers until late spring of 1866, when he returned to New York City. As the year went by, more Northerners came into the region, either for matters pertaining to the Freedmen's Bureau or to invest in the rehabilitation of Southern businesses. The ties that once bound American society together were slowly being remade, however as time went by, they would resemble in an all too familiar pattern. By the end of the next decade, Southern Democrats would return to office and created what they called the "New South", a world dominated by Jim Crow and the mythology that surrounded the War. A new world that seemed little different from the one they left behind in 1865.

1865 was a crucible year for Southern society, particularly in Central Virginia. Within the course of a single year, the citizens of the Virginian Heartland witnessed the collapse of their entire world. They had lost faith in the leaders whom they had rallied behind years prior. They had seen soldiers come and go, and the ones that came back were wearing a different uniform from the ones that had left. The ones that never returned now lay in somber rows of granite stone. In the Spring, their cities had burned, and their livelihoods had crashed. By the Fall, the same bitterness and hatred from before the war had started creeping back. For the ones that the war was waged over, their saviors had become regulators, and the promises that had been made

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<sup>220</sup> Marvel. P.286.

hundreds of miles away always seemed to be delayed. While the new birth of freedom may not have been all that it had been foretold to be, the liberated could now rest with the knowledge that things had indeed changed. For the ones who brought that change, they could only question how permanent that change was to be.



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