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# Unionism in Civil War North Mississippi

*Thomas D. Cockrell*

One would think the voluminous literature on the American Civil War would have long exhausted every conceivable area of study, but very little has been written on the role southern Unionists played in the nation's greatest tragedy. In recent years, a small group of historians has given more attention to the subject and the activities of Unionists in the southern states thereby compensating for the dearth of published information region-wide by previous generations of scholars. For decades Georgia Lee Tatum's *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (1934) provided one of the best guides for a general account of the topic. Recent studies have given more insight into Unionist activities in individual states. Without attempting to exhaust every aspect of Unionism in Mississippi, this study only tries to cover the northern part of the state where loyalty to the Union or resistance to the Confederacy was more prevalent. Defining Unionist is difficult since those who opposed secession, or came to support the Union during the war, may not be classified with those who were "disloyal" Confederates, although both resisted Confederate control. In Mississippi, as in other southern states, Unionism's greatest challenge came with the secessionist movement after the Compromise of 1850. When John A. Quitman, the leading "fire-eater" in the state, dropped out of the gubernatorial race in 1851, Jefferson Davis replaced him on the States' Rights ticket. However, Davis lost the election to Unionist Henry S. Foote. While Unionists' seats in the state senate outnumbered States' Rights Democrats 21 to 11 and in the house of representatives by an impressive 63 to 35, these victories proved to be short-lived.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James L. Hutson, *Southerners Against Secession: The Arguments of the Constitutional Unionists in 1850-51* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2000), 285; James W. Garner, "The First Struggle over Secession in Mississippi," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* [hereafter cited as *PMHS*], IV (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Harrisburg Publishing Company, 1901), 102; Victoria E. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 5.

As the decade moved forward, the average citizen in Mississippi believed unrestricted expansion of slavery to be the only means to preserve southern interests since one newspaper columnist wrote, it was “so often sounded in their ears that they had become somewhat accustomed to it.” As a result, a “fire-eater,” John J. Pettus of Kemper County, won the governor’s seat in 1859 because most Mississippians accepted the belief that if slavery were threatened, they along with all other southerners would suffer from impending economic and social consequences. When Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election of 1860, they were convinced to leave the Union.<sup>2</sup>

The delegates from the northeastern hill counties joined those from the old Whig areas along the Mississippi River mounting the strongest opposition to disunion in 1860 and 1861. This strange coalition of poor upcountry non-slaveholding farmers and large slaveholding planters in the Natchez district indicated that Mississippians viewed Unionism differently. Many poor subsistence farmers saw secession as unnecessary since their plight would be the same in or out of the Union. The large planter saw his slaves protected by the Constitution and feared losing everything if the South left the Union. On January 7, 1861, delegates to the state-wide convention that would decide Mississippi’s fate met in Jackson. Of the one hundred delegates, fifty-six were middle class professional men, small slaveholders, or non-slaveholders. Forty-four were of the planter class, but only ten owned over one hundred slaves. The vote of eighty-four to fifteen to secede on January 9 suggests that instead of the large planters leading the state out of the Union, it was the middle class. Believing in the “righteousness of slavery,” they mistakenly thought it could be done peacefully. Events throughout the state led to this decision.<sup>3</sup>

The anti-Unionist middle-class also inflamed the secession fervor. A typical delegate was a young man whose “real hopes lay in the future.” In other words, he aspired to be a wealthy slave owner, the standard by which the white South measured success. The Vicksburg

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<sup>2</sup> Ben Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War: A Narrative History* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2006), 17–18; (Jackson, Mississippi) *Mississippian*, March 7, 1851; Percy Lee Rainwater, *Mississippi: Storm Center of Secession, 1856–1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1938), 177–96.

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. McLemore, ed., *A History of Mississippi*, 2 vols. (Hattiesburg, Mississippi: 1973), 1: 442; Ralph A. Wooster, “The Membership of the Mississippi Secession Convention of 1861,” *Journal of Mississippi History* [hereafter cited as *JMH*], XVI (1954): 248, 257.

*Sun* said in 1860, "A large plantation and [slaves] are the [ultimate goal] of every Southern gentleman's ambitions."<sup>4</sup>

The population in the northeastern counties of Tishomingo, Tippah, and Itawamba was made up of 66 percent non-slaveholders, but the delegate vote on secession lacked cohesion. Tishomingo was divided, Tippah voted for secession, and Itawamba voted against it. As one observer wrote, "Unionism in northeast Mississippi in 1860 was not prepared to oppose the secessionists with force." Nevertheless, their delegates "believed that secession would be but another grievance and no remedy."<sup>5</sup>

While the debate raged, threats and intimidation by the secessionists against citizens in most areas of the state were commonplace, and north Mississippi was no exception. For example, Matthew J. Babb of Tishomingo County while "talking against secession" feared arrest if he failed to stop. Both sides had the opportunity to be heard when Mississippi's secession convention met in Jackson. Unionists or cooperationists (those who wanted to secede only in cooperation with other southern states) offered three propositions that would have delayed action, but none were approved. A request that the ordinance be delayed until it was ratified by the voters failed to pass by a vote of seventy to twenty-nine. Unionists in the state were outvoted and their pleas for loyalty ignored.<sup>6</sup>

When cooperationists finally acquiesced and signed the document, a pro-Unionist newspaper prophetically warned, "It may prove a fatal, an [ir]retrievably fatal error" to interpret such as submission to blindly following the secessionists into the pending catastrophe. Loyalists chose to either remain silent or reluctantly gave in. Dr. J. J. Thornton of Rankin County, who refused to sign the secession ordinance, accused fire-eaters of "buying votes, trickery, and false promises."<sup>7</sup>

When Mississippi, the second state to secede, joined the Confederate States of America on March 29, 1861, Unionists faced the dilemma of how to react and what course to take. Many Unionists linked their

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<sup>4</sup> Vicksburg *Sun*, April 9, 1860.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Floyd Summers, "Politics in Tishomingo County, 1836–1860," *JMH*, XXVII (1966): 151.

<sup>6</sup> M. Shannon Mallard, "I Had No Comfort to Give Thee," *North and South*, 6 (May 2003): 79, 83; McLemore, *History of Mississippi*, 1: 443; Thomas H. Wood, "A Sketch of the Mississippi Secession Convention of 1861-Its Membership and Work," *PMHS*, VI (1902): 100.

<sup>7</sup> William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 323; *Mississippi Journal of the State Convention* (1861), 86–88; Vicksburg *Daily Whig*, December 25, 1860; Natchez *Weekly Courier*, December 27, 1860.

fate with that of the South, as the editor of the Vicksburg *Daily Whig* predicted in January 1861, saying he would “abide its fate, be it for weal or be it for woe.” Others accepted the inevitability saying, “It was manifest to the most superficial observer that the die had been cast already, and that civil war was upon us.”<sup>8</sup>

Some Unionists vocally expressed their sentiments whereas members of the clergy used the pulpit as a forum often paying a high price for their loyalty. Reverend James A. Lyon, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Mississippi, rebuked what he called the “wicked unprincipled demagogues, who have brought the country to its present ruin.” His public prayers for the success of the armies without specifying for which side he was praying, created a problem for critics. Local Confederate extremists dubbed him an “abolitionist,” “Black Republican,” and “traitor” and in February 1862, they moved against the minister’s family and the church leadership. Theodoric Lyon, an officer in the Confederate Army, suffered the humiliation of a court-martial in the fall of 1863 as part of the campaign against his father.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise another minister, James Phelan of the Presbyterian Church in Macon received threats of lynching if he continued his anti-Confederate tendencies. Failing to heed the warnings, would-be assassins shot him near his home. Phelan recovered, only to have the assailants burst into his residence where they shot and killed the minister in the presence of his wife. Drawing their weapons, they shouted, “we want . . . to kill you, you infernal Unionist and abolitionist.”<sup>10</sup>

Greenwood LeFlore, the Choctaw chief who earlier saw his people removed by the Federal government, had remained in the state and lived in Carroll County. Although the United States rarely held

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<sup>8</sup> Vicksburg *Daily Whig*, January 23, 1861; Wood, “Sketch of the Mississippi Secession Convention,” 93.

<sup>9</sup> McLemore, *History of Mississippi*, 1: 516–17; Z/0176: Lyon (James A.) Journal 1861–1870, type-script copy, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 30–31; David B. Chesebrough, “Dissenting Clergy in Confederate Mississippi,” *JMH*, LV (1993): 125; John K. Bettersworth, ed., “Mississippi Unionism: The Case of the Reverend James A. Lyon,” *JMH*, I (1939): 45–47; James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Chesebrough, “Dissenting Clergy,” 119; Mallard, “I Had No Comfort to Give Thee,” 80–83; Timothy B. Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 182–84.

to agreements with Native Americans, LeFlore remained loyal. When Federal troops approached his property, he offered them all the assistance they required and said he was happy to see the “old flag again carried by United States soldiers.”<sup>11</sup>

A few Mississippi Unionists joined Federal military units and fought for the preservation of the Union. Records indicate that over a hundred thousand white southerners fought in Union military units. Mississippi provided a regiment of white Unionists called the First Regiment Mounted Rifles, organized in Memphis, which served from March 1864 to June 1865 in northern Mississippi, western Tennessee, and northwestern Alabama. William Franks and several of his neighbors enlisted in another regiment at Glendale, Mississippi, on December 15, 1862. At some time during the war, more than two thousand southern hill country men joined the First Alabama Cavalry Volunteers under the command of Union General Grenville M. Dodge. They participated in scouting expeditions in northern Mississippi and later fought against the Confederates at Bear Creek in Alabama. They also accompanied General William T. Sherman to Atlanta in 1864. Franks left the service in 1863 to take his family to Cairo, Illinois, for their protection since several Unionists had been shot or hanged in north-east Mississippi. During Reconstruction, the Franks family returned to their home state.<sup>12</sup>

Other Unionists chose a more discreet role. Throughout the military campaign in northern Mississippi, Union generals relied heavily on information provided by Unionists in the area. Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck wrote Brig. Gen. W. S. Rosecrans from Corinth on June 23, 1862, saying, “a citizen from Columbus reports a rebel force is moving north toward Rienzi or Kossuth with the intention of surprising and capturing your outposts.” Records show white Unionists, free blacks, and slaves regularly aided in military intelligence around Corinth.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, 130.

<sup>12</sup> “Unionists,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, June 18, 2010, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-3753>; Terry Thornton, “Hill Country Unionism: Civil War Revisited,” *Itawamba History Review*, January 20, 2008; Frank Moore, *The Rebellion Record* (New York: Putnam, 1863), 400; Smith, *The Home Front*, 62; Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, three volumes (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1908), 3: 1343–44.

<sup>13</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* [hereafter cited as *OR*], 130 vols. (Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, vol. 17 (2): 2, 26.

On June 29, 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant informed Halleck that he had forwarded to him a statement of “a man from Okolona, who has fled from there with no intention of returning until he can go under the Federal flag.” Grant saw pro-Union sentiment in north Mississippi as something worth cultivating and attempted to rectify the “poor job of reaping sympathy for the Union” that his troops had demonstrated among potential Unionists. Likewise, President Lincoln desired a united and coordinated resistance against the Confederacy by southern Unionists. However, widespread support never came to fruition because loyalists often kept quiet or even changed sides for fear of reprisals by Confederates as one Unionist said of his friends, “I am sorry to state that many professed Union men changed their politics and became sadly adulterated with the fire of secession.” Organizing uniform resistance was never easy for the Unionists of Mississippi.<sup>14</sup>

Confederate vigilance committees operated in virtually every county during the war adding even more threats to Unionists. These vigilantes often performed extralegal interrogations of anyone suspected of pro-Unionist or anti-Confederate sympathies. The leadership at the secession convention encouraged them to “use a stiff limb and a strong rope.” Reverend John H. Aughey of French Camp appeared before a committee and became a target for more aggressive behavior having failed to satisfy them. Aughey wrote, “self-constituted vigilante committees sprang up all over the country, and a reign of terror began.” After two attempts on his life, he decided to flee to the north Mississippi county of Tishomingo where he expressed his belief “that the great heart of the county still beat true to the music of the Union” when one hundred Unionists flocked to the banks of the Tennessee in February 1862 to welcome Union gunboats cruising down the river. Five months later, while in the Central Military Prison at Tupelo after Confederates arrested him,

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 47; U. S. Grant to Colonel J. C. Kelton, July 6, 1863, Grant Papers, 8: 485 in William B. Feis, *Grant's Secret Service: The Intelligence War from Belmont to Appomattox* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 145; Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *Chickasaw, A Mississippi Scout for the Union: The Civil War Memoir of Levi H. Naron* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 10; Mark Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142–43; John K. Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi: The People and Politics of a Cotton State in Wartime* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1934), 223.

he wrote a petition to United States Secretary of State, William H. Seward, dated July 11, 1862, complaining of bad treatment. Since there was obviously nothing Seward could do, escape was Aughey's only hope, which he accomplished. After making his way to Federal lines, he provided intelligence to General Rosecrans about Confederate strength and activities at Tupelo.<sup>15</sup>

Levi H. Naron of Chickasaw County also faced encounters with a vigilance committee because of his Unionist views. Upon stabling his horse one night, Naron said, "I found myself surrounded by a body of men, who ordered me to accompany them . . . stating that I should appear before the vigilance committee." Naron was released after a heated and terrifying exchange of words and later made his way to Corinth where he continued on to Pittsburg Landing across the Tennessee border. Federal troops were gathering prior to the Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, 1862, and there he met General William Tecumseh Sherman. "It was he who gave me the name of Chickasaw, by which I am so well known in his army," Naron recalled after the war.<sup>16</sup>

A significant number of southerners assumed a more covert role in the war. By day they appeared to be loyal Confederates, but at night they changed allegiance and supported the efforts of people like Naron who had joined the Union Army as a spy. Naron said there were "good Union men residing in the South, without whose assistance many of my plans would have proved failures." He added "while laying in the woods, waiting for my scouts to report, my meals were brought to me by a young lady, and I promised that . . . her services would be greatly rewarded." He fulfilled his promise later at Corinth saying he "knew of no better way to remunerate her than to offer her my heart and my hand, which she at once accepted." This was Naron's second wife, Mary Hannah Lee, a native of Alabama. His first wife, Sarah Kellum, had died in 1863 in Girard, Illinois, shortly after Naron took his family there for safety.<sup>17</sup>

During Reconstruction, Naron remained in Mississippi, but when Federal troops left, he and his family moved to Pratt County, Kansas, in 1878. There he purchased land and became a politician, but by his own acknowledgement, his most prized accomplishment was indicated

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<sup>15</sup> McLemore, *History of Mississippi*, 1: 519; John H. Aughey, *Tupelo* (Lincoln, NE: Rhodes and McClure Publishing Co., 1888), 47, 280–81; Chesebrough, "Dissenting Clergy," 121–22.

<sup>16</sup> Cockrell and Ballard, *Chickasaw*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.



by the inscription on his tombstone: "Served 3 years and 8 mos. as Chief of Scouts."<sup>18</sup>

Learning of his death, Union generals were quick to comment on Naron's service to his country. General Benjamin H. Grierson proclaimed Naron had "proven his loyalty and devotion to the cause of our country by his acts, and the sacrifices of property which he has made." General William S. Rosecrans recalled Naron's service as that which "became an honest, brave, loyal and reliable citizen of the United States," and General Grenville M. Dodge described Naron as "daring, bold and shrewd, he rendered me most valuable services." Naron sacrificed greatly for his service. He was ostracized by his neighbors, lost his first wife, suffered from several wounds, lost his home and property, and suffered alienation from his brother George, a captain in the Confederate Army.<sup>19</sup>

General Grenville M. Dodge employed large numbers of operatives, mostly southern Unionists, to gather intelligence, granting some spies the discretion to "go right in and get to General Grant at Vicksburg instead of coming to me." Loyal women like Mississippians Jane Featherstone and Mary Malone supplied valuable information. Dodge often referred to his spies as "his boys" and "felt a fatherly duty to protect [females] in this dangerous line of work." In order to secure the release of one of his captive female operatives, the general entertained the idea of "abducting a Confederate officer's wife and holding her hostage until the enemy released his spy." Scouts made an average of \$50 for their services, but because of the hazardous nature of their service, spies made from \$250 to \$500, depending on the value of the information obtained.<sup>20</sup>

Union generals also took advantage of Unionist sentiment when possible. In the summer of 1862, General U. S. Grant enlisted the aid of several known Union men such as J. W. Causey, owner of a saw mill on the Old Tuscomb Road, east of Corinth. Since Causey was a Republican and Unionist, Grant offered to either take possession of

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<sup>18</sup> Wesley M. Naron, *The Narons: A 202 Year History, 1779-1981* (Houston, MS: M.W. Naron, 1981), 76-79, 199.

<sup>19</sup> Cockrell and Ballard, *Chickasaw*, 171-72; Mallard, "I Had No Comfort to Give Thee," 84; James R. Atkinson, "Levi H. Naron: An Uncompromising Unionist from Mississippi," unpublished essay, Atkinson Papers, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi.

<sup>20</sup> Feis, *Grant's Secret Service*, 166-68.

the property for which Causey would be compensated at the end of the war or Causey could operate the mill and Grant would receive the entire production of lumber for which Causey would be paid a sum of \$10,000 cash. Grant needed the lumber to build barracks, hospitals, and other buildings, and Causey was eager to continue to run the mill. Federal troops guarded the mill for some time but eventually withdrew to Causey's dismay. In their absence, Confederate Major I. N. George confiscated ten Federal wagons at the mill. In March 1865, Causey was rewarded by Reconstruction officials in Corinth when he was commissioned to oversee the rebuilding of the railroad lines coming into the city. Another Tishomingo resident, Judge R. A. Hill, was a strong advocate of cooperation with the Federals and by early 1865, the locals were rewarded with permission to conduct regular government business and operate the railroads in the county.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the war and even during Federal occupation in northeastern Mississippi, Confederate sympathizers persistently intimidated Unionists. E. J. Sorrell of Tishomingo County stated that "all Union men were threatened in a general way." Terry Dalton claimed Unionists in the county suffered personal or property damage as a result of their loyalty. M. A. Higginbottom, a resident of Corinth, said "it was a common expression that every man who would not side with the Confederacy 'ought to be hung.'" Higginbottom volunteered for service and later joined the Federal Secret Service as a spy in 1864. A Tip-pah County farmer, Samuel Beaty, complained of losing his property and his right to vote because of his pro-Union beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

Faithful allegiance to the Union persevered even amidst threats and intimidation evidenced when locals warned who they assumed were Union soldiers of Confederate cavalry operating in and around Holly Springs in December of 1862. They had mistaken Earl Van Dorn's Confederates for Union troops.<sup>23</sup>

Southern women often played direct roles in the Union effort, as experienced by Union sergeant Richard W. Surby, who participated

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<sup>21</sup> "Source Material for Mississippi History," Alcorn County, vol. 2, part 1, compiled by WPA State-wide Historical Research Project (Susie V. Powell, Supervisor, 1936-1939), Corinth Public Library, Corinth, Mississippi, 194; Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle, Occupation* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 301.

<sup>22</sup> Mallard, "I Had No Comfort to Give Thee," 79, 83.

<sup>23</sup> Ballard, *Vicksburg*, 123.

in Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson's raid through Mississippi in 1863. After learning they were Yankee soldiers, the women fed them while proudly displaying a U. S. flag and berating Confederate conscription laws. Women often found themselves leading social unrest, protesting inflation, and encouraging their men to return home. Judge Robert S. Hudson wrote to both President Jefferson Davis and Mississippi Governor Charles Clark in 1864 about female disloyalty. He urged the use of the "most radical and severe treatment" for "women and noncombatants." He believed these women to be "rotten hearted" and "far worse than the men."<sup>24</sup>

Female disloyalty often resulted from hunger and abuse caused by Confederate soldiers. Albeit from a more personal than political motivation, these women often encouraged their husbands and sons who needed little encouragement to desert. During the war, as many as fifty-six officers and over 11,600 enlisted men deserted from the Confederate Army.<sup>25</sup>

Another group of Unionists often overlooked is African Americans. Numerous accounts of slaves or former slaves (contraband) informing Union officers of Confederate movements reveal significant contributions to the war effort. Generals Rosecrans, Halleck, Hurlbut, and Sherman all benefitted from intelligence reports from blacks reporting troop movements toward Rienzi, Coldwater, and other places in the summer of 1862 prior to the Battle of Corinth. General Dodge frequently used slaves in a widespread intelligence operation in north Mississippi and western Tennessee. Dodge's interest in the welfare of the contrabands led to the organization of the contraband camp at Corinth in December of 1862. After emancipation changed the status of former slaves from "contraband" to "freedmen," President Lincoln wished to establish the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas accepted the challenge to enlist these new recruits reducing the inordinate numbers of freedmen who followed and burdened Union armies. His task was not an easy venture. General Andrew Jackson Smith said he would hang Thomas if he

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<sup>24</sup> Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, 3-4; R. S. Hudson to Jefferson Davis, March 14, 1864, *OR*, series 1, vol. 32: 626; R. S. Hudson to Governor Charles Clark, June 25, 1864, *Governors' Papers*, MDAH, Jackson, Mississippi, 94-95.

<sup>25</sup> Ella Lonn, *Desertion during the Civil War* (Gloucester, MA: American Historical Association, 1928), 231.

mentioned such an idea in his camp. He also revealed his opposition to abolition, saying, "If Jesus Christ was to come down and ask [me . . . to] be an abolitionist. . . . I would say no! Mr. Christ, I beg to be excused . . . I would rather go to hell." Thomas found a warmer reception in other quarters in Corinth. In May of 1863, he delivered an eloquent speech, after which one soldier commented, "He came here to organize Negro Regiments. We shall have at least one and I think two . . . in a very short time."<sup>26</sup>

General Dodge was eager to oblige Thomas and recruited blacks in the Corinth contraband camp quickly forming the First Alabama Infantry Regiment (African Descent) that was organized in Corinth on May 21, 1863. The unit served in various capacities in north Mississippi, drilling and standing guard on the eastern approach to Corinth. Companies of the regiment went into Tennessee as guards of bridges and railroads.<sup>27</sup>

In January 1864, the First Alabama transferred to Memphis and was designated the Fifty-Fifth Regiment Infantry (USCT) in March. Serving guard duty finally changed to a combat role in June as part of the Third Brigade of General Samuel Sturgis's Mississippi expedition at the Battle of Brice's Crossroads on June 10, 1864. The Fifty-Fifth helped provide cover for the escape of retreating Union troops from Ripley back to Memphis.<sup>28</sup>

With a tint of irony, the Fifty-Fifth later joined in General Andrew Jackson Smith's raid on Oxford in August 1864 as part of the First Colored Brigade, District of Memphis. This action ended combat for the Fifty-Fifth, which transferred to Louisiana in April 1865. Its members were mustered out of service on December 31.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *OR*, series 1, vol. 17 (2): 26; David Slay, "Abraham Lincoln and the United States Colored Troops of Mississippi," *JMH*, LXX (2008): 68–72; *OR*, series 1, vol. 4: 734; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964, 1992), 502–3.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph E. Brent and W. Stephen McBride, "Conflict, Occupation, and Contraband: Corinth, Mississippi in the Civil War," Corinth Public Library, Special Collections, Corinth, Mississippi, 9; Company A Muster Rolls, July–August, 1863, Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Volunteer Union Organizations, M594 Roll 211, Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780–1917, National Archives, Washington, D. C.; Dyer, *Compendium of the War*, 3: 1213–14; Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, 154; Cam Walker, "Corinth: The Story of a Contraband Camp," *Civil War History*, 20 (March 1974), 14.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph E. Brent, *Occupied Corinth: The Contraband Camp and the First Alabama Regiment of African Descent, 1862–1864* (Corinth, Mississippi: February 1995), 20–22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

The First Alabama Regiment Siege Artillery (African Descent) was another unit formed from residents of the contraband camp in Corinth. Formed in June 1863, the unit saw activity in the Memphis area. According to some sources, possibly another black regiment, the Second Alabama (African Descent) officially organized in Pulaski, Tennessee, in the autumn of 1863 actually had its beginning in Corinth as early as July. Of the 180,000 black troops serving the Union, 1,800 of them were Corinth recruits.<sup>30</sup>

An estimated 25,000 African Americans from Mississippi including at least nine regiments and two artillery companies served in northern military units including at least nine regiments and two artillery companies. Happily surprised, Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, wrote Thomas of his "great pleasure" with his success. These black troops fought out of pride and for the release of those still in bondage.<sup>31</sup>

Unionist activity in Mississippi varied in both scope and scale exhibiting more activism in northeastern Mississippi than in other areas of the state. Unionists never united because of the differences in their motivations and agendas. Nevertheless, these patriots diligently worked for the Union cause. Among these were the poor, male and female, who gave aid and comfort to federal agents and spies often at great personal sacrifice. Many were subsistence farmers who realized they would probably fare no better under either of the belligerent powers. Middle class professionals and yeomen class farmers were torn between loyalty to the Union and loyalty to their secessionist friends, but many aided the Union. Large planters were not very prevalent in north Mississippi, but their loyalty was often contingent upon securing their property. African Americans who served in the military did so without promise of equality as reward for their efforts. A general consensus regarding Unionist motivation is difficult to summarize. Their efforts will probably always remain under-estimated, but a significant number of people from all classes in Mississippi aided the Union cause.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 24; Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, 154; Dudley T. Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (Pittsburg, Kansas: 1956, reprint Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 114.

<sup>31</sup> John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 258; Edwin Stanton to General Lorenzo Thomas, May 15, 1863; *OR*, series 2, 3: 214.

They had a significant impact on raising the morale of the Federals while diminishing that of the Confederates. In addition, their efforts gave immeasurable support to the Union. Their sacrifices empowered and strengthened Union military campaigns indicating that Mississippi Unionists were patriotic to the United States. What they did should be remembered.

