Flaws in the Armor of the Grand Illusion: Dissent, Reluctance, and Disaffection Toward the Confederate Cause in the Central Shenandoah Valley - A Study of Page County Virginia

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ABSTRACT

FLAWS IN THE ARMOR OF THE GRAND ILLUSION: DISSENT, RELUCTANCE, AND DISAFFECTION TOWARD THE CONFEDERATE CAUSE IN THE CENTRAL SHENANDOAH VALLEY – A STUDY OF PAGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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The Shenandoah Valley of Virginia was critical to the Confederacy, not only for its strategic importance, but also as a supplier of food and manpower. Due to its agricultural productivity, the area was known early on as the “Breadbasket of the Confederacy.” Additionally, many of the units formed from this area were considered among the elite of General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia and included the famed “Stonewall Brigade.” Thus, it has long been assumed that the great majority of the Valley’s white residents strongly supported the Confederate cause.

However, in stark contrast to these assumptions, this paper will examine Page County, Virginia, which is located in the central Shenandoah Valley. Through an in-depth examination of Southern Loyalist Claims, postwar newspaper accounts, military records and wartime letters, the combined findings demonstrate that nationalistic feeling in regard to the Confederate cause in this area was precarious at best. Although studies of “Southern Unionists,” “reluctant Confederates,” and “disaffected Confederates” are not new to contemporary academic studies, the Shenandoah Valley is one area where these groups have not been thoroughly examined, most especially as factors in disputing Lost Cause mythology.
Ultimately, while some contemporary works examine the reasons why Confederates fought, an even more compelling question is why Confederates did not fight. A detailed examination of Southern Unionists, “reluctant rebels” and “disaffected Confederates” severely compromises the myth perpetuated by Lost Cause ideology. Contemporary Confederate heritage groups would like everyone to believe that, as in the time of the Civil War, Southerners should once again stand united against attacks on Southern heritage. Inevitably, in order to preserve the truth in history, especially in a society that devours more popular history than scholarly history, there is a need to dispute such misguided historical perceptions and the modern arguments to which they contribute. This effort to thwart what is essentially revisionist history, therefore, leads us back to a reexamination of Southern society in the Civil War era.
Dedicated to the Southern civilians in the American Civil War who cared little for Confederate nationalism and wanted nothing more than to find ways for the preservation and survival of their families in a very turbulent time.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After nearly two decades of examining the history of Page County in the Civil War, only within the last year have I been able to realize the treasure trove of information that has been sitting quietly within the pages of the local newspaper, revealing a very different side of the war. For permitting me full access to the many issues of the *Page News*, the *Page Courier* and the *Page News and Courier* that ran from 1867 to 1940, first and foremost, I owe a great deal of thanks to former editor Jeb Caudill. While other sources played a critical part in developing this paper, without the many letters written to the newspaper over so many years, the more complicated story of a Shenandoah Valley county in the Civil War would never have been fully understood.

Additionally, for having to put up with me and my work on this paper for what must have felt like centuries, I want to extend a very special thank you to my wife and two daughters. My daughters, Rhiannon and Laurel, bore witness to “daddy’s” many hours hammering away at the keyboards until the final product was realized, while my wife, Danette, proved always supportive and pushing me to the successful completion of the M.A. degree.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Shenandoah Valley of Virginia was critical to the Confederacy, not only for its strategic importance, but also as a supplier of food and manpower. Due to its agricultural productivity, the area was known early on as the “Breadbasket of the Confederacy.” Additionally, many of the units formed from this area were considered among the elite of General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia and included the famed “Stonewall Brigade.” Thus, it has long been assumed that the great majority of the Valley’s white residents strongly supported the Confederate cause.¹

However, in stark contrast to these assumptions, this paper will examine Page County, Virginia, which is located in the central Shenandoah Valley. Through an in-depth examination of Southern Loyalist Claims, postwar newspaper accounts, military records and wartime letters, the combined findings prove that nationalistic feeling in regard to the Confederate cause in this area was precarious at best. While the discovery of such groups labeled as “Southern Unionists,” “reluctant Confederates” and “disaffected Confederates” plays a significant role in this examination, these are not new to contemporary academic studies.² The Shenandoah Valley is one area where these

¹ The assumption of dedicated support of the Confederacy is a belief held by many current residents who are descended from people who lived in Page County at the time of the Civil War.
groups have not been thoroughly examined or even considered as factors in disputing
Lost Cause mythology.³

On paper, Page County provided more than 1,500 men to the service of the
Confederacy in artillery, cavalry, infantry, militia, and reserve companies, most serving
under the command of General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson.⁴ Furthermore, the
county voted almost unanimously in favor of secession during the public referendum of
May 1861, quickly organized committees to raise funds for their troops through county
bonds, and a number of its most prominent civilian citizens became the subject of some

“disaffected Confederate” and Crofts used the “Reluctant Confederate” label in his title.
References have also been found pertaining to “Reluctant rebels.”³
³The only works published to date examining Unionist activities in the Shenandoah
Valley at length are the three volumes of Unionists and the Civil War Experience
published by the Valley Research Associates and the Valley Brethren-Mennonite
Heritage Center in Dayton, Virginia. The goal of these volumes, and subsequent volumes
to follow, is to compile the Southern Loyalist Claims records for Rockingham County,
Virginia.
⁴Richard L. Armstrong, 7th Virginia Cavalry (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, Inc.,
1992), 102-251; Roger U. Delaughter, Jr., 62nd Virginia Infantry (H.E. Howard, Inc.,
Lynchburg, Va., 1988), 56-117; John E. Divine, 35th Battalion Virginia Cavalry
(Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1985), 83-109; Robert H. Moore, II, The Danville,
Eighth Star New Market and Dixie Artillery (H.E. Howard, Inc.: Lynchburg, Va., 1989),
99-103; Terrence V. Murphy, 10th Virginia Infantry (Lynchburg, Va., H.E. Howard, Inc.,
1989); Lowell Reidenbaugh, 33rd Virginia Infantry (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, Inc.,
1987), 111-147; Jeffrey C. Weaver, Reserves: The Virginia Regimental Histories Series
(Appomattox, Va.: H.E. Howard, Inc., 2002), 323-335, 515-525, 629-631; Compiled
Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of
Virginia, Record Group 109, Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia. The figure of 1,500 men is
based on a review of the number of men counted in the rosters of the companies formed
specifically of Page County men during the Civil War, to include Captain John K.
Booton's/William H. Chapman’s Dixie Artillery, Captain James W. Modesitt’s Company
C, Third Battalion (Major George Chrisman’s) Virginia Reserves, the “Massanutten
Rangers” of Company D, Seventh Virginia Cavalry, Company B, Eighth Battalion
Virginia Reserves, the “Page Volunteers” of Company K, Tenth Virginia Infantry, the
“Page Grays” of Company H, Thirty-third Virginia Infantry, Company E, Thirty-fifth
Battalion Virginia Cavalry, Second Company M, Sixty-Second Virginia Mounted
Infantry, Captain Thomas M. Keyser’s Boy Company of Reserves and Companies E, F, I,
K, L, and M of the Ninety-Seventh Virginia Militia.
rather harsh treatment during the Union occupation of the summer of 1862. Likewise, in part due to the terrain, the county was notorious for the number of Union patrols that were bushwhacked within its borders. All of this reinforces the assumption the characterization of Page County as overwhelmingly supportive to the Confederate cause.

These same beliefs helped to create the armor of support which, over time, has hardened in public memory to stand unaltering as the defense of the grand illusion, otherwise identified as an important part of the Lost Cause of the Confederacy. Thus, the grand illusion as a “Cause” was justified and honorable in all respects. Furthermore, under this illusion, the “Yankees” were the “bad guys” and the Confederates, soldiers and civilians, were upstanding and pristine examples of Southern gentlemen and ladies, true to the “Cause” without fault and the victims, never the perpetrators, of anything vile or distasteful. Men and women alike in the county were committed to the “Cause” without question and ever faithful to the end.

These assumptions have been challenged by Alan T. Nolan in The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History. Nolan points out that Lost Cause mythology continues to thrive for the fact that so many modern Southerners have become lost in the “moonlight and magnolias” concept of life on the Confederate home front and also misguided in believing that almost all Confederate soldiers stood as examples of unaltering patriotic advocates for the Confederacy.5

In 1952, with the publication of the only full-length history of Page County, Harry M. Strickler continued to promote the idea that Page County’s support for the Confederacy was absolute and unconditional. Despite the slew of letters that had

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appeared in the local newspapers which attested to an all too imperfect support for the Confederacy, Strickler made no mention of anything that disputed the “Lost Cause.” Instead, he sustained the more “glossed-over” side of the story and proves to be an excellent example of the persistence of the Lost Cause mythology.\(^6\)

Perhaps then, a comparison could be made between Page County and the “Free State of Jones” in south-central Mississippi. In her analysis of Jones County, Mississippi, Victoria E. Bynum wrote that former Confederates insisted that every Southern man, woman and child had been loyal to the Confederacy, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.\(^7\) In comparison and as an extreme example, in Page County, there are some today who claim that their ancestors were loyal Confederate soldiers, and yet, upon examination of military records it is found that those same “loyal Confederates” were actually Union soldiers.\(^8\) Seemingly, to be a good Southerner entails having

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\(^6\) Harry M. Strickler, *A Short History of Page County, Virginia* (Harrisonburg, Va.: C.J. Carrier Company, 1952), 169. Strickler’s book places emphasis on a population that was extremely enthusiastic for the Confederacy. In the brief chapter that dealt with the war in the county, Strickler started immediately with the story of how the county government moved quickly to appropriate $600 for the “uniforms and equipping [of] any volunteer companies which may be hereafter formed in Page county, for the purchase of horses for any cavalry companies or for the supporting of the families of such persons who have volunteered or hereafter may do so.” The closest Strickler even came to touching on Unionist activity in the county was when he concluded his chapter with the story of an incident in which two local Confederates were executed by Union soldiers at the end of the war without the benefit of trial. While a local Unionist played a critical part in the execution of these men, Strickler focuses more on the atrocity of the event and yet mentions nothing of the Unionist, though the event signaled the culmination of hostilities in an otherwise obscured internal war within the community.


\(^8\) In researching this paper, the author encountered at least two persons who believed that their ancestors were Confederate soldiers, when, in fact, after further research, I found that they had served for the Union army.
ancestors who were good Confederates, no matter how convenient memory has distorted the truth.

Despite the distortions of memory over time, evidence to the contrary can be found in the Southern Loyalist Claims, letters to the local newspaper, military records and wartime letters. When combined, these sources not only paint a very different picture of life in the coveted “Breadbasket of the Confederacy” but also outline the oppressive and heavy-handed measures taken by secessionist civilians and Confederate soldiers to exploit and justify the virtues of the Confederate cause.

Southern Loyalist Claims reveal a number of hesitant and reluctant people in the community as well as the fact that people had to take care what they said in regard to Unionist sentiment, frequently making community members suspicious of one another. Loyalist claims describe the brutality encountered by Unionists at the time of the public referendum on secession, following Union occupation, and in their efforts to conceal those who wanted no part in the war. Even taking into account that loyalist claims cannot be taken at face value, and that a few claimants lied to obtain funds from the Federal government, there is still substantial information contained in the claims that reveals the hazards of life in an unforgiving Southern Confederacy. Quite possibly the strongest portions of the Loyalist Claims are the affidavits taken from others who stood to gain nothing in support of the claimants.

Letters to the local newspaper from the 1880s through the early 1940s also prove critical in challenging Lost Cause mythology. While not all of these letters focused on the topic of Unionist sentiment or Confederate reluctance, or even the threat of violence against those whose sentiment was with anything but the Confederate cause, morsels of
information in the letters portray a very turbulent time. Southern Loyalist Claims show that not only were local Unionists present, but that there were both those who openly resisted the secession movement and those who hesitated in committing to the Confederate Cause, some wanting nothing to do with either side in the war.

Lastly, letters to the newspaper and a few existing wartime letters, combined with information found in Confederate military records, further explain not only reluctance but also waning support for the Confederate Cause, even amongst those who were "secesh" in spirit at the opening of the war. Furthermore, careful examination of the dates of enforcement of the three Confederate Conscript Acts as well as numerous desertions help to present a more complex story, especially when combined with the information taken from letters to the newspapers.9

With Page County used as a case study and setting a model for expanded study of all of the counties of the Shenandoah Valley, a more complete description of life in the Shenandoah Valley begins to unfold and includes stories about peer pressure, threats, violence and even murder when it comes to fully understanding the darker, more brutal and unforgiving aspects of the Confederate war effort. Likewise, in considering this, it is only appropriate to reevaluate the comment made in 1861 by Confederate General

Though Confederate service records are frequently incomplete and often do not mention that several of the soldiers were conscripts, whether that meant they were outright involuntary enlistees or enlistees that only enlisted out of fear of being embarrassed in the event that they only entered the service as conscripts, the military records, combined with information gleaned from letters, newspaper accounts and the loyalist claims, help in setting a standard by which other enlistments and desertions can be gauged as to Unionist sentiment or waning sentiment toward the Confederate Cause. Many men in Page County enlisted only before the respective Conscript Acts began to be enforced. While some may have been exempt from service up to that time, it is difficult to believe that the all fell within that category and therefore raises questions in regard to true nationalistic sentiment and the concern over perception in the community in the event a man waited to be drafted and taken in by conscript hunters.
Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson when he said, "If this Valley is Lost, Virginia is Lost.”

While keeping Union armies out of the Valley has long been understood as the central reasoning behind this statement, it should also be strongly considered that he was also referring to keeping both the Unionists and less than enthusiastic residents under heavy-handed control.10 With the area never firmly within the holdings of the Confederacy in the first place, such a statement would also be critical in beginning to redefine the Shenandoah Valley more appropriately as a border region.

Ultimately, the first area to be considered in this case study is Unionist sentiment in Page County. A prevalent sentiment throughout the Shenandoah Valley and Virginia before April 1861, it too was as precarious as support for the Confederacy would prove to be in the Valley as the war progressed.

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While there have been studies in regard to the division in sentiment in the West Virginia counties that border the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, the importance of the Unionist experience in the valley has been greatly neglected in academic studies. Furthermore, the violent manner in which the Unionists were dealt with in the area contrasts sharply with Lost Cause mythology, which proves remarkable considering that Lost Cause mythology frequently portrays Confederate civilians as innocent victims of war and not perpetrators of fear and violence.

Utilizing Southern Loyalist Claims and the assorted letters written to the local newspapers during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this chapter will examine the Unionist experience in Page County, Virginia. Furthermore, this chapter will challenge the armor that makes up the grand illusion, also known as the Lost cause myth, and show that not only was the population divided but also that many residents, through Unionist sentiment threatened the Confederate war effort, challenged the idea of a unified Confederate nation.

Before such an examination is made, however, there is a need to distinguish between Unionist sentiment as it existed both before and after President Abraham Lincoln’s call for 75,000 troops to help suppress the rebellion. In the Shenandoah Valley, prior to Lincoln’s call for troops, local newspapers and politicians largely opposed the idea of secession and the dissolution of the Union. The 4 January 1861 issue of the Staunton Vindicator condemned the actions of South Carolina fire-eaters in their move to secede.
from the Union. The article stated that "We are far from justifying the erratic, senseless, ill-digested, childish, peevish, and miserably foolish actions of the State of South Carolina." Historian John C. Inscoe recognizes those who shifted in their loyalties from Unionists to secessionists as "'conditional' rather than 'unconditional' in their loyalty to the United States and thus capitulated to the Confederate cause and the war effort, at least temporarily and on the surface."  

In the county seat of Luray, considered to be the hotbed of secessionist activity in Page County, Cornelia Jane Matthews Jordan, wrote a poem regarding her concern for the fate of the Union. Though a native of Lynchburg, Virginia, she had married into a wealthy Luray slaveholding family. "A National Hymn for the New Year" was written on 1 January 1861 and made an appeal to God that times were desperate and it was very much the "Country's hour of need."

Shall gaunt Disunion hovering nigh  
To our bright flag destruction bring,  
While, 'mid the brooding shadows dark,  
Our Eagle droops his wounded wing?

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3 Records of the Circuit Court of Page County, Va., Minute Book, 1845 - 1870, Page County Court House, Luray, Va. Luray District Number 3 appears to have had several residents who were especially enthusiastic over secession at the opening of the war. Following the public referendum, a number of committees were formed to raise money through bonds as well as to maintain the peace among the residents of the town and the county. The majority of the men appointed to the committees were residents of Luray District Number 3. Many of these men were also slaveholders. Jordan’s father-in-law was among the wealthy slaveholding residents of Luray. Her husband, Captain Frances H. Jordan, served, along with his brother, General Thomas Jordan, for the greater part of the war on the staff of Confederate General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard.
No! show Thy face, Almighty God,
While peril stalks on every hand;
Stretch forth thine own all-powerful arm,
And save our own, our Native Land.⁴

Though Jordan had expressed her concerns for the future of the Union, she proved to be the classic “conditional Unionist,” even to the point where she reversed her sentiment to gain renown for her work as a Confederate poet. In 1865, one of Jordan’s published poems, “Corinth,” was found to be so “incendiary” to the Union that the senior occupation general in Lynchburg ordered all copies gathered and burned in the court house square.⁵

A native of Luray, David Coffman Grayson after the war was able to clarify the shift in sentiment among the residents of Page County. Though he himself claimed to be a Unionist, he attributed President Lincoln’s administration for bringing about the very shift in local loyalties. Grayson remembered:

From the date of the secession of South Carolina, on to the firing on Fort Sumpter [sic], and the meeting of the Virginia Convention, the majority of the sober, thoughtful citizens of Page were decidedly in favor of the Union and opposed to the suggestion of a disruption by secession, either peaceful or by force, among whom was your scribe . . . When however, the gauntlet was thrown down by President Lincoln in refusing to receive the Peace Commissioners, appointed by Virginia as arbitrators between the States that had then already seceded, and the U.S. Government, and instead issued his proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers to march across the State of Virginia (then still a State of the Union) to force her sister States to recede from the position they had taken in asserting their constitutional rights, to secede then the spirit of 1776 was rekindled in the bosoms of her patriotic sons then assembled in convention, and they almost unanimously voted to unite

⁴ Cornelia Jane Matthews Jordan, *Flowers of Hope and Memory: A Collection of Poems* (Richmond, Virginia: A. Morris, 1861), 327. In years after the Civil War, Jordan gained greater renown in Virginia as a “Lost Cause” poet and was named the poet laureate of Lynchburg, Virginia.

their fortunes and destiny with the young Confederacy.  

In his recollections of the months before Virginia seceded, Jacob H. Coffman remembered that the shift in sentiment was not as absolute as Grayson implied, but that the situation was still, in fact, “a matter of Secessionists against Unionists.” Coffman further stated:

Immediately after the election of Jefferson Davis as President of the Confederacy on Nov. 5th, 1860 politics began to warm up. Page [County], I suppose was dotted over with men whose sympathy was with the North and those using better judgment kept their convictions to themselves, while others spoke their sentiments rather freely, terminating in their hurt.”

In the months leading up to Virginia’s secession, the potential for violence flared up among the local citizenry. In the case of one Unionist rally in Page County, local well-to-do citizens attempted to uphold the importance of the preservation of the Union. A non-slaveholding farmer, John Shuler, was one of the speakers and, nearly lost his life at the rally for having spoken out against the dangers of secession. In recounting the story in later years, one of Shuler’s sons, Isaac Shuler, remembered that the crowd “yelled” for John Shuler to speak. “He responded and in his discourse followed along the line of

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6 David C. Grayson, “How Company K Marched Out 50 Years Ago,” Page News & Courier, 2 June 1911, 1. The manner in which Grayson describes this is interesting as the passage seems to imply that the transition in sentiment was absolute among the county residents, reinforcing the Lost Cause perception that Confederate nationalism was absolute.

7 Jacob H. Coffman, “When Page was a Poor Place for Union Men,” Page News & Courier, 3 April 1927, 2.

8 Unionist rallies were common in the Shenandoah Valley prior to Lincoln’s call for troops. In fact, information about such rallies in Staunton, Virginia, in the upper valley, frequently appeared in the newspapers there. In his letters to the Luray newspaper in the early twentieth century, Isaac Shuler indicated that there were a number of rallies, but this particular one was the only one so well documented. This rally took place at Newport which is located in central Page County. Among those to speak against secession at the rally were John Shuler, Doctor James Lee Gillespie and John Lionberger. Gillespie is mentioned in greater detail later in this chapter.
[John] Lionberger, trying to impress upon the minds of his bearers the horror and 
bloodshed that would follow secession.9 During his speech, at least one man in the 
audience took exception to Shuler’s rhetoric and slipped away from the crowd, went 
behind the store and grabbed a chair which he planned to smash over Shuler’s head. The 
storeowner, Reuben M. Walton, “jumped to the counter and prevented the blow.”10 
Despite the ruckus, the crowd yelled for Shuler to again “take up the speech and his 
remarks said something that was displeasing to some present.” In response, the hecklers 
yelled back that “if we cannot get our rights in Virginia we will go to South Carolina, if 
we have to wade in blood up to our knees.” Shuler, knowing these men and “having 
great respect for them said ‘you need not go to South Carolina where you can get all the 
fight in Virginia and probably near your home.’”11

9 Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, National 
Archives, Washington, D.C. John Lionberger (1807-1874) is listed in the 1860 Page 
County census as a “gentleman” living in Luray with over $24,500 in real estate. Out of 
the three men listed by Isaac Shuler that day at Walton’s Newport store, Lionberger was 
the only slaveholder. John Shuler had owned two slaves in 1850, but by 1860 they had 
either been emancipated or sold. Though standing against the idea of secession, from 
1850 to 1860, Lionberger had actually doubled the number of slaves he owned from six 
to fourteen. John Lionberger’s only son, John Henry Lionberger (1843-1879), started the 
war as a lieutenant with the “Massanutten Rangers” of Company D, 7th Virginia Cavalry; 
but by war’s end was a lieutenant in Company C, 39th Battalion Virginia Cavalry, a unit 
noted as Gen. Robert E. Lee’s bodyguard and couriers. John Shuler (1815-1908) was 
listed as a farmer with $6,375 in real estate in the 1860 Page County census. His oldest 
son was later a captain and company commander in the famous Stonewall Brigade.

10 Reuben Moore Walton (1818-1894) was a successful merchant in the village of 
Newport and was listed in the 1860 Page County census with $5,000 in real estate. He 
was also the brother-in-law of one of a locally well-known Unionist, Noah Foltz.

11 Isaac Shuler, “Secession Days in Virginia Before the War Broke Out,” Page News 
& Courier, 22 August 1939, 2. Isaac Shuler later added that of those men who spoke of 
the need to go to South Carolina, none were quick to take up the sword when war finally 
did come. It was his experience that the “rooster that crows the loudest is not the best 
fighter. Instead of going to South Carolina when we got in the war they remained at 
home and did everything they could to keep out.” Despite John Shuler’s firm stand 
against secession and war, two of his sons would serve in the Confederate army; the
As time would prove, violence and the threat of violence would only increase. For local Unionists, the first real challenge came six months after the presidential election when the public referendum on secession was placed before county residents on 23 May 1861. On the surface, the results of Page's referendum was 1,099 in favor and four opposed, showing overwhelming support for secession.  

A review of the Southern Loyalist Claims for Page County, however, reveals that several men had been reluctant to vote, mostly out of fear of retaliation. Morgan M. Price and Martin Ellis felt that it was not safe to go to the polls with their sentiments. Ellis elaborated that there was too "much excitement" to side against secession. Price remembered, albeit incorrectly, that only one man voted against secession, and that that man was forced to "leave immediately to save himself from the mob." William H. Sours remained away from the polls and stated that "My sympathies were with the Union Cause. I did not talk much in favor of the Union. I had to be careful how I expressed my sentiment. I feared that I would be arrested if I spoke much." Both James C. Robertson and Joseph Painter, Sr. remembered that they were too afraid to go to the polls. Painter

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oldest son as a company commander in the Stonewall Brigade and a younger son enlisting only three months before General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House. The older son was killed at the Wilderness in the spring of 1864, while the younger son was unable to make it to Lee's army before it surrendered.

12 County Vote on the Secession Ordinance, May 23, 1861. (Richmond: Library of Virginia, unpublished), 3.

13 One-third (889) of the loyalist claims filed in Virginia were filed from the seven counties of the Shenandoah Valley; a particularly large portion of those being from Rockingham, Shenandoah and Page Counties, all in the central valley.

14 Price was in error for saying this as there were actually four men who voted against secession in the county.
was “informed that a party was coming out to hang several of us unless we would come out and vote for secession.”\textsuperscript{15}

At least four men were bold enough to vote their sentiment.\textsuperscript{16} Reuben Kite is one of the persons identified who voted against secession. In the wake of his vote and after having lived in fear for better than a year before the first Union soldiers entered the area in the spring of 1862, ironically, Kite was initially arrested by Union scouts in advance of the army’s arrival. It was fortunate for Kite that another local Unionist, James Lee Gillespie, who had also voted against secession, was then serving as a guide for General James Shields’ army and vouched for his loyalty. Following the battle of Port Republic in June 1862, Kite continued to exhibit his sentiment when he opened his home for the body of a dead Union officer. In the days that followed, Kite hosted several Union officers and for giving the “enemy” comfort, he was soon living in the county on borrowed time.

Realizing the precarious state of affairs for Kite, General Shields offered to convey the family North.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Southern Loyalist Claims Application Files (Disapproved Claims), National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Southern Loyalist Claims Application Files (Approved Claims), College Park, Md. Southern Loyalist Claim Application Files of Martin Ellis, Joseph Painter, Sr., James C. Robertson, Morgan M. Price and William H. Sours.

According to the 1860 Page County census, Ellis was a forty-eight year old farmer with $825 in real estate; Painter was a forty-two year old farmer with $350 in real estate; Robertson was a forty-two year old teacher with $1,200 in real estate; and Price was a thirty-one year old shoemaker with $100 in real estate. Sours cannot be found in the census records. Of the four men identified in the 1860 census, two resided in Luray and the other two in districts to the east.

\textsuperscript{16} While 1,103 voted in the public referendum, Page County’s record for voting reflected that 1,153 voted in the Presidential election of 1860. Since 1,090 and 1,091 voters participated respectively in the 1859 gubernatorial and 1856 presidential elections, it would appear that at least fifty voters may have remained away from the polls on 23 May 1861.

\textsuperscript{17} Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of Reuben Kite. According to the 1860 Page County census, at the time, Kite was a thirty-four year old farmer with $6,000 in
For those few Page County residents who applied for loyalist claims after having voted for secession, most stated that they had cast their votes under duress. Samuel Varner claimed that he had voted for secession because he was told if he “wanted peace he must vote for secesh.” Martin Hite noted that he had been “persuaded to vote for the adoption of the ordinance.” Joseph Miller simply noted that he was obliged to vote for secession through “fear.” However, anyone who voted for secession, no matter the circumstances, would not receive approval for their loyalist claim. Nevertheless, understanding that the threat of bodily harm kept some men away from the polls to express their sentiment, it is not difficult to believe that some who had voted in favor of secession may well have done so out of fear for their lives or that of their families. Thus, even after Lincoln’s call for troops and the almost unanimous show of public support through the public referendum vote, Unionists were still very much a presence in Page County.

As historian John Inscoe points out, after the “secession process was completed and the war under way . . . the fluidity of the political debate as it had evolved in different

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real estate. Interestingly, when Kite filed for a loyalist claim, it was local secession convention delegate Peter B. Borst who served as counsel for Kite in being one of only six to have their claim approved. Stephen V. Ash makes the claim that most Southern Unionists were likely either Northern emigrants to the South, former Whigs, or small—generally poor —farmers. Considering the self-proclaimed Unionists mentioned in this chapter however, combined with information about other Unionists yet to be shown in this paper, Ash’s claim doesn’t apply to Unionists found in Page County. Stephen V. Ash, When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South: 1861-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 109-110.

Incidentally, there is no evidence to show that those who applied for Loyalist claims in years after the war were in any way shunned by their families, neighbors and friends.

Southern Loyalist Claim Application Files of Samuel Varner, Martin Hite, and Joseph Miller. According to the 1860 Page County census, Varner was a forty-six year old farmer with $4,000 in real estate; Hite was a forty-one year old farmer with $270 in real estate, and Miller was a forty year old miller.
ways in different states over the winter and spring of 1860-61 quickly gave way to the hard-and-fast allegiances demanded by two nations at war.” He further goes on to state that “suddenly to be a Unionist made one part of a self-conscious minority viewed with suspicion and hostility, a minority whose very presence threatened the new regime and its cause . . . Those who clung to what had been merely one side of a vigorous political debate were suddenly perceived as subversive and even traitorous, as ‘enemies to the country.” The example of the experiences of Page County Unionists fits very well into Inscoe’s description, especially considering the reign of fear that followed the public referendum vote.

As a major factor in keeping Unionists silent, violence or the threat of violence was still utilized by the most “rabid secessionists.” In his compilation of essays on the Unionists experience on the home front, Daniel E. Sutherland points out that “the Rebels employed a variety of means to keep Unionists in check, including intimidation by Confederate soldiers, militia, conscription and impressments agents.” However, in Page County ever-watchful secessionist neighbors were the most active element in this intimidation early in the war, and they were not limited to being merely watchful but had a direct hand in a long since forgotten local reign of fear brought about solely at the hands of secessionists.

Accounts of the heavy-handed intimidation are brief, but revealing. In an effort to keep themselves safe from the threat of violence, many Unionists knew to withhold their

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21 Sutherland, Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front, 8.
sentiments to themselves or only engaged in discussion with other Unionists. John and Henry Fox said that Martin Ellis was a man “that didn’t talk much but that [opposition to his sentiments] bothered his mind a good deal.” John Fox continued that Ellis “wanted to keep his boys out the war, and I wanted to keep mine out. He didn’t think it was right to break the Union [and] neither did I, so we talked a good deal about it.”

James C. Robertson, another county resident, took care not to reveal his true sentiment for at least the first year of the war. Initially drafted into Company F of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia on 22 July 1861, Robertson served five months before falling ill and returning home. With the absence of so many men from his locality, instead of returning to the army, he was permitted to remain at home and teach school, and within a short time was also appointed as one of the deputies responsible for patrolling the streets of Luray. As he recalled in his Southern Loyalist Claim application, throughout this time, he kept his sentiment to himself fully aware that “there was a strong disposition here to drive out men who entertained union sentiment.” When he and several other local citizens were arrested by Union troops in the summer of 1862 and taken to the courthouse, he was one of the few who were released after volunteering to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. Because of this open expression of sentiment, he was soon after threatened regularly “with injury” and told that there “might

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22 Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of Martin Ellis. The 1860 Page County census has Stombach listed as a sixty-five year old farmer with $3,500 in real estate, Henry Fox as a forty year old farmer with $1,575 in real estate, and John Fox as a forty-six year old farmer with $2,000 in real estate.
be hemp growing for me.” Despite this, Robertson remained in Page County and was one of only six county residents to receive approval on their loyalist claims.²³

For those Unionists who were unable to keep their sentiments to themselves, the consequence was most certainly intimidation from heavy-handed secessionists. John M. Keyser was one such man “who made no effort to conceal his sympathy for the North.” One evening, “three men called on him, took him to the top of the Blue Ridge at Milam’s Gap, stood him on a barrel with a rope around his neck and eased him down,” but supposedly “did not intend to kill him,” but rather to “scare him.” As the scribe of the story remembered, the “torture was enough to render him unable to read for three months. How he made his way home, I never heard, but I surely believe he never identified his captors.”²⁴

John M. “Jack” Dogans was the only free black in Page County to leave a record of his wartime experience as a Unionist through his Southern Loyalist claim. As one who vocalized his interests in the Union and the hope that its success would result in the freedom for all slaves, Dogan’s life was regularly threatened. In one of the documented incidents, Dogans heard from “old Mr. John Smith” that a party of men said that they meant to “kill that damn nigger [Dogans] down at the furnace.” Following the First Battle of Manassas in July 1861, when local merchant David E. Almond assembled

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²³ Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of James C. Robertson; Service Records of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia. Following the war, Robertson took the “ironclad oath” and was a sheriff during the Reconstruction. He also claimed that his only son was killed in the war while serving under General Ulysses S. Grant.

²⁴ Coffman, 3 April 1927, 3. Keyser is listed in the 1860 Page County census as a fifty-three year old cabinet maker with no real estate. He remained in Page County in the years to come and became Justice of the Peace of the Marksville district and, as Coffman noted, “had his captors come before him they might have met with justice that might have seemed injustice to them. And so we have another case of the bottom rail on top.”
several “free negroes” to serve as teamsters with the Confederate army, Dogans was pressed into the service. When Dogans voiced his opinion over the matter, Sheriff Benjamin F. Grayson told him simply that “we’ll shoot you if you don’t go.” After driving a wagon for about sixty days, Dogans returned to Page County and continued to support the Union troops who occupied the county over the years.  

Even outspoken Unionists whose sons were serving as officers in the Confederate army were not immune from the threats of local secessionists, as exhibited in the case of Page County merchant George Summers. Despite Summers’ constant battle to prove his loyalties to Union commands, he was frequently subjected to depredations at the

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25 Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of John M. Dogans. “Jack Dugans” continued to support Union troops as they passed through the Valley, and at one point, took in an ailing black servant who was serving with General James Shields. Dugans is listed in the 1860 Page County census as a forty-one year old mulatto with $45 in real estate. The census shows Almond as a thirty-three year old merchant with $4,000 in real estate and Grayson as a forty-five year old sheriff with $1,450 in real estate. Almond and Grayson were both slaveholders in Luray. In one letter to the local newspaper, Grayson, along with Martin Strickler, Peter B. Borst and John Doffleymoyer, was named as among those who “stood for secession and wanted the old State to secede and get out of the union.” Isaac Shuler. “A letter from Isaac Shuler,” Page News & Courier, 11 February, 1936, 3. As further display of his Union sentiment, Dogans mentioned in his application that he took in a “sick colored man” from Union General James Shields command when it left Luray in June 1862. The man remained with Dogans until General Robert H. Milroy “came and went” with his Union command. Dogans’ claim was the only claim filed by a former free black in Page County, and was approved by the claims commission.

26 Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of George Summers, Sr. Early in the war, Summers had attempted to discourage his son, George Washington Summers, from remaining in the county and proposed that he “go North to go to school there” and had even purchased him a horse to take him out of the area that would become the endangered arena of war. Nevertheless, despite the father being “bitterly opposed to it,” Summers enlisted as an officer in the service of the Confederacy, riding off on the horse that his father had purchased for him. In time, his son sent back the horse for having secured another upon which to ride in the engagements to come. In his Southern Loyalist Claim, in defense of his loyalties to the Union, the elder Summers reaffirmed that he had, in fact, furnished his son with “anything as I did when [he was] at home” but did not believe that to qualify him as a “Southern sympathizer.”
hands of Union soldiers. His outwardly Unionist efforts also resulted in bringing even more unwanted attention from the radical secessionists. Yet, despite the numerous incidents that tested his loyalty, somehow, Summers never abandoned his Unionist sentiment.\(^27\)

When Union troops moved in and occupied Page County in April 1862, Summers was able to secure protection orders for his mercantile store from Union Brigadier General John P. Hatch. However, and as was typical, after Hatch moved ahead with his command, Union troops who followed had little regard for such orders and took what they pleased from Summers’ store. Less than a month later, Summers’ store was again visited by Union troops when General James Shield’s army passed en route to battle against “Stonewall” Jackson’s Confederate army at Port Republic in neighboring Rockingham County. Despite his efforts to prove his loyal sentiment, the store was again subject to pillaging Union soldiers.\(^28\) Wrote Summers:

> A portion of his army camped near my store three or four days. Living on the other side of the river from my store and not anticipating any damages from Shields’ Army encamped close by, I went to my house at night as usual. Shields’ army passed during my absence and carried off my whole stock of goods and merchandise, which amounted to around one and two thousand dollars when I got to my store in the morning. The house was broken open and everything gone. My papers were strewn along the road towards Port Republic for several miles. I had a general apartment as is usually kept in a country store, Boots, shoes, hats.”

Apparently, in this same incident, several hundred dollars’ worth of store notes were stolen by Union soldiers as well. In an effort to prevent the illegal circulation of these notes as legal tender, Summers posted a note on the door of his store. When a part of the

\(^27\) Summers is listed in the 1860 Page County census as a forty-eight year old merchant/farmer with $8,500 in real estate.

\(^28\) Southern Loyalist Application File of George Summers, Sr. Grove Hill is located in central Page County, just to the South of the aforementioned Newport.
Fifth New York Cavalry came through, a Union cavalry officer took down the note and scribbled it that he did so “before the owner’s eyes.”

As a result of his constant efforts to prove his loyalty to passing Union commanders, Summers drew even more attention from local secessionists, as well as Confederate soldiers who frequently camped nearby. Local resident John Welfley recalled that, because of Summers’ outspokenness regarding his loyalties, he had “Heard a great many parties threaten him with arrest saying that – as he ought to be killed that such men as he caused a great deal of trouble to the army.” Grove Hill neighbor Samuel Step made a similar statement in another affidavit and had “heard men say Summers ought to be hung that . . . to stay here I was alarmed for him.” Summers himself recollected to Step that, when General Richard S. Ewell’s Confederate army camped in the area in late April and early May 1862, Major C. Roberdeau Wheat of the Louisiana Tigers and a Captain White had “told me that if I uttered one word more” regarding Union sympathies, “a thousand men would kill me.” Yet while he remained “unmolested at times,” he felt that his “life was at stake.”

Further troubles arose for George Summers in 1863, when, in an effort to protect himself financially, he drew the wrath of the Confederate soldiers camped near his home. Summers had felt that, from the beginning of the war, Confederate currency would be of little value, and thereby partnered with local iron ore magnate Henry Forrer in the purchase of tobacco in Maryland. Summers and Forrer passed through lines, making several trips to Berlin, Maryland during the war, and upon returning after one such trip

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30 Ibid. The 1860 Page County census lists John Welfley as a thirty-eight year old farmer with $16,000 in real estate and Samuel Step as a thirty-five year old with $400 in real estate.
the men were threatened with arrest by Confederate authorities for having crossed the
lines.31 “A party of soldiers were sent to me,” noted Summers, “but were prevented by
the fullness of the river from marching [on] my home. The Confederate Cutthroats took
my goods, burnt my rails and _____ [illegible] upon me as they pleased.”32

While Keyser, Dogans and Summers were among those who were able to remain in
Page County, a few outspoken Unionists were “run-out” of the county. The briefest
account mentions the story of Lawrence Gearing, the “Dutch Doctor” who had only
recently arrived from Hagerstown, Maryland. By the time of the war, Gearing had “built
up a good practice,” but for having spoken “his convictions freely,” he “received
marching orders,” and quickly left the county with his wife and three children.33

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31 Ibid. The former town of Berlin is now called Brunswick, Maryland. The 1860
Page County census shows Henry Forrer as a fifty-one year old ironmaster with $93,000
in real estate. On one trip to Berlin, Maryland, the partners were arrested by Union
soldiers and taken to Baltimore and brought before Union General Robert C. Schenk.
The men explained their situation and, with the assistance of a local attorney (Daniel
Miller of the firm of Daniel Miller and Company) and an extremely heavy bond, they
were released. Schenk also issued the two men permits to cross lines as necessary in
order to secure supplies for their families and others with Union sympathies. Likewise,
and apparently in the same trip, the tobacco was turned over to the men and sold “for
greenbacks and bankable Maryland money.”

32 Despite Summers’ efforts at maintaining proof of his loyalty and depredations
experienced at the hands of both Confederate and Union soldiers alike, his loyalist claim
was denied mostly because of his having purchased a $1,000 Confederate bond and
having allowed the Confederate army to impress wagons and supplies. In no way should
such things be considered as detracting from Summers’ Unionist sentiment. Instead, he
should be seen more as a man who used his business savvy to make certain that he and
his family were able to survive through those rather difficult times.

22 June 1933, 3. The 1860 Page County census lists Gearing as thirty-eight years of age
with no real estate. Gearing, along with his wife and two of their three children were all
listed as having been born in Saxony. It appears that the family did not emigrate from
Saxony until sometime after 1850. Because of his Germanic origins, he was called the
“Dutch Doctor,” which seems a little odd considering that German was still a widely
spoken language in Page by many who were of like descent. Gearing returned to Page
County at the end of the war in order to collect outstanding bills that were yet owed him.
Despite intimidation tactics at the hands of secessionists, Doctor James Lee Gillespie and Reverend Thornton Hamilton Taylor were notoriously intolerant of secessionist “thuggery” and in Taylor’s case, left a legend of resistance to Confederate authority that is still known today. Neither Gillespie nor Taylor relinquished their properties in Page County as easily as Doctor Gearing. The difference between the two outspoken Unionists was that Gillespie offered resistance by serving in the Union army while Taylor resisted by standing up to the secessionists and remaining in the county.\footnote{The 1860 Page County census lists Gillespie as a forty-two year old physician with $750 in real estate and Taylor as a forty-eight year old farmer/minister with $600 in real estate.}

A native of Albemarle County and a well-educated man, Doctor Gillespie settled in central Page County around 1851.\footnote{Gillespie had served in years before the Civil War as a lieutenant of engineers in the regular U.S. Army, and conducted surveys in Louisiana, but resigned his commission and continued his education as a physician, attending both the University of Virginia and later the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, from which he graduated with honors.} By the opening of the Civil War, Gillespie was recognized among locals as a physician with a very successful practice and was a highly respected member of the community. Despite this popularity, however, Gillespie was also among those who spoke out against secession. At least one newspaper account from the early twentieth century shows that he, along with John Shuler of Grove Hill and John Lionberger of Luray, made anti-secession speeches in Page County. Following the firing on Fort Sumter and the subsequent move by Virginia to secede, Gillespie was one of only four men in Page County who braved the “mob” to vote against secession in the public referendum on 23 May 1861.\footnote{Union Military Pension of James Lee Gillespie, National Archives, Washington D.C.}
While others refrained from being outspoken against secession following the referendum vote, Gillespie persisted in his belief that "secession was wrong and impractical and impolitic" and for regularly voicing this opinion, he was subsequently arrested. By 26 June 1861, Gillespie was in the county jail under the charge of "treason against the government of the Confederate States." His application for release from jail was denied, as the county court could not sufficiently establish jurisdiction in the case. Following the initial denial, Gillespie applied once again to the court, asking for an examination of the charges against him in a legal forum, but again the court denied the appeal based once again on "want of jurisdiction."37 While Minute books show no further information in this case, Gillespie was subsequently transported to the Orange County Court House, where he was able to escape. In what might be perceived as a perfect opportunity to vacate the South altogether, Gillespie was still unyielding in his sentiment and was determined to return defiant to his home, with the backing of Union authority.38

After having crossed the lines, Gillespie was able to secure an audience with Union General Henry W. Slocum, who, in turn, gave Gillespie a letter of introduction to President Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln "recommended General Nathaniel Banks take him [Gillespie] and protect his home in the Valley of Virginia." Gillespie served as a guide for Union armies in the Shenandoah Valley, and likely made his reappearance in Page County with the first Federal occupation in April 1862. By the summer of the same year, Page County Minute Book, 1845 - 1870.

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38 Union Military Pension of James L. Gillespie. There is an obituary in the pension file that provided additional information about Gillespie's incarceration as well as details of his rather exciting life. The obituary is believed to have been published in the Wheeling (West Virginia) Intelligencer.
apparently satisfied that he was able to return to his home, and yet one of the few who wished to continue to defend his sentiment, Gillespie obtained a commission as a Union surgeon in the First West Virginia Infantry. Gillespie's son, William H. Gillespie, also had strong sentiments in support of the Union. A school teacher in Page County prior to the war, William Gillespie was able to obtain a commission in a West Virginia regiment. After the war, as one article in a local newspaper reveals, Gillespie was asked to return to Page County as a doctor, but he refused, quite likely still resentful over the manner in which he had been treated by some of his Page County neighbors in 1861.

Just as outspoken in his Union sentiments, Thornton Hamilton Taylor remained in Page County for at least a year before being forced to flee. Taylor's son, Daniel, was "like his father and did not hesitate to speak without first thinking," and was the first in the family to catch the wrath of fire-eating secessionists. In short order, posters were soon tacked where Daniel was "sure to see them" and "bid him change his boarding house and to make it snappy." After a poor record of involuntary service with the

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39 Ibid. Union Military Records of James L. Gillespie and William H. Gillespie, National Archives, Washington, D.C. In addition to Doctor James Lee Gillespie and his son William, several other Page County natives have been discovered to have served in the Union army. Those who served in Union units include Private John T. Baker, Nineteenth Indiana Light Artillery; Private Francis Perry Cave, Sixty-sixth Ohio Infantry; Seaman Francis Day, U.S. Navy; Private John W. Sailor, Jessee Scout; Private Daniel H. Taylor, Forty-fifth Kentucky Infantry. One former Page County slave has also been identified as having served in the Union Army. Whether he was a run-away slave or had been freed, Private Noah Thornton made his way to Louisiana where he enlisted in the Eighty-second United States Colored Troops. Thornton returned to Page County after the war and may have worked for his former owner.

40 Union Military Pension of James L. Gillespie.
Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia, Daniel headed for the west where he enlisted in the Union Forty-fifth Kentucky Infantry.\textsuperscript{41}

Following Daniel’s “expulsion” from the county Thornton Taylor became the target of “slaveholders determined to get rid of him.” In addition to being outspoken, early in the war, Taylor had a sanctuary near his home to harbor Confederate deserters. “My grandfather had several boys and a couple of friends . . . staying with them in what is called Camp Hollow. They would come to the house, get their meals and lay around the orchard, and when my grandmother saw the ‘conscripts’ coming, she would take a case knife and would knock on an empty barrel and they would run back to their camp in the hollow. They burnt wood at night and charcoal in the day so that their presence could not be discovered in smoke.”\textsuperscript{42} While most of the men taken in by Taylor were locals, one Confederate deserter, William Beecher “Billy” Owens, was from the Ninth Louisiana Infantry.\textsuperscript{43} Owens later married one of Taylor’s daughters, Fannie, who later

\textsuperscript{41} “Who Was Said to be the Oldest Person in Page County,” \textit{Page News \& Courier}, 14 January 1938, 6; Service Records of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia; Union Military Record of Daniel H. Taylor, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Daniel Taylor served for more than two months beyond his term of enlistment and was mustered out in December 1864. Family stories place him in the Shenandoah Valley during the Burning of October 1864, but military records prove this to be incorrect.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Page News \& Courier}, 14 January 1938, 6.

\textsuperscript{43} Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Louisiana, Record Group 109, Ninth Louisiana Infantry. William Beecher Owens (1841-1908) was a private in Company H, Ninth Louisiana Infantry. Born in Pike County, Mississippi, he was a resident of Vernon, Louisiana at the opening of the war when he enlisted in his unit on 7 July 1861 at Camp Moore, Louisiana. He was present until absent sick at the Staunton Hospital in December 1862 and present again by the April 1863 muster. However, as of June 5, 1863 he was listed as a deserter. Owens was later listed on the register of prisoners received and disposed of by the Provost Marshal General of the Army of the Potomac on 20 April 1864 and was sent to Washington, D.C. on 24 April.
remembered that “those were days of serious times and a man hardly hated to speak his sentiments.”

Eventually, Thornton Taylor’s sentiment combined with his efforts at harboring Confederate deserters caught up with him. According to Reverend David W. Strickler, “slave holders” eventually “brought a rope and surrounded his [Taylor’s] house for one week, giving his family access only to the spring, thus cutting off his means of getting food and water as the slave holders thought he was hiding out. It was their purpose to hang him if they were able to find him. But he slipped away and was not heard from till after the war.” During the time that the house was surrounded, one of Thornton Taylor’s daughters recalled that the family “only had one mess of buckwheat cakes and that we ground in the coffee mill. Had it not been for Elders John Huffman and Nathan Spitler, two men of sacred memory in their day, they being also Union men, who brought us flour and meal, we would surely have starved.”

Family stories reveal that Thornton Taylor spent the rest of the war in Illinois, but returned to the county two months after the surrender at Appomattox. Despite Daniel having joined the Union army, the majority of Thornton Taylor’s children remained in Page County. Two sons, William and Benjamin, whether volunteers or not, served in different regular Confederate field units and accumulated a record of frequent absences, each being brought before courts martial as deserters. Ironically, family tradition states

45 Reverend David Walter Strickler, “War Character Came Near Hanging,” Page News & Courier, 12 July 1933, 5. Strickler’s father, David H. Strickler, was listed in the 1860 Page County census as a thirty year old farmer with $1,200 in real estate. The 1860 Page County census shows the Elder John Huffman as fifty-one years of age, a farmer/joiner and owning $5,000 in real estate. Nathan Spitler was forty-three, a farmer and owned $3,000 in real estate.
that these substandard rebel brothers threatened that if their Union brother were to return to the Valley, he should do so only under fear of death. At war’s end, when Thornton H. Taylor returned from his forced exile from the county, he stated that he would “like to see them chase me away from my home now.”46

The worst recorded instance of violence used against Unionists in Page County involved John F. Haynes.47 Remembered as one who was “not in harmony with the rebellion,” Haynes even took the opportunity to attend the inauguration of President Lincoln.48 As he continued to voice his Unionist sentiment, Haynes, as one Union officer recollected, was eventually “notified by the rebels not to return, but after the battle of Winchester, and our possession of the Valley, he did return. On our way to Fredericksburg he entertained some of our officers, and advised with them about his safety. Two days after we left, he was arrested.”49

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46 Coffman, 23 June 1929, 2; Jacob H. Coffman, “More of the Summers and Koontz Affair,” Page News & Courier, 16 June 1933, 6. Confederate Service Records for both William H. and Benjamin N. Taylor can be found in Reidenbaugh, 33rd Virginia Infantry, 144; Robert J. Driver and Kevin C. Ruffner, Jr., 1st Battalion Virginia Infantry, 39th Battalion Virginia Cavalry, 24th Battalion Virginia Partisan Rangers (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1996), 155; and the Service Records of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia. Thornton Taylor twice ran to represent the county but failed each time. He later became postmaster at Marksville, and in Coffman’s words, “no doubt handing out mail to some who urged him to leave the county a few years before. So here is a case where the bottom rail got on top of the fence.”

47 The 1860 Page County census record shows that John F. Haynes was fifty-nine years old, a miller and owning $59 in real estate. Haynes, his wife and three children lived in Overall, near the county line between Page and Warren counties. Along with the family in the residence were listed three free blacks (listed as mulatto). No record of Haynes or his family can be found in census records after 1860.

48 Reverend Frederick Denison, Sabres and Spurs: The First Rhode Island Cavalry in the Civil War, 1861-1865 (Providence: The First Rhode Island Cavalry Association, 1876), 94-95.

49 Lieutenant Colonel Franklin Sawyer, “Through the Shenandoah Valley,” Newark Advocate [Ohio], 17 July 1862, 2.
Haynes and another man, simply remembered as “Beylor” were taken to the jail in Luray.\(^50\) Within days of their arrival, they were put on trial by a group of local citizens, found guilty of some unspecified crime and condemned to death. According to a Union officer who recorded the incident:

They were taken out of jail at midnight, under pretense of being sent to Richmond, marched about two miles into the woods, and there told that they were to be shot. They were in charge of five of the citizens of Luray, one of whom was a Baptist preacher, - Haynes asked permission to pray, and did so. His prayer was so affecting that the hearts of two of the murderers failed, and one of them seeing this, stepped up and shot Haynes while on his knees, and another one immediately shot Beylor. The bodies were left unburied until our army went up there. The families of these men are said to be in a most wretched condition. - Our Chaplain, Dr. Freeman, visited Mrs. Haynes yesterday, and tells me that she has not left her bed since the murder of her husband was learned by her. This is only one instance out of hundreds, of cruelty of these rebels.\(^51\)

Although the incarceration of local Unionist Dr. James Lee Gillespie is recorded in the Page County Minute books, there is no record of any trial pertaining to the arrest and order for execution of Haynes and Beylor. Chaplain Frank Denison of the First Rhode Island Cavalry remembered that before the execution, “When General Shields moved to occupy Luray in June 1862, he promised Mrs. Haynes and her daughter that Mr. Haynes should be released; but on reaching the place he found the rebels had killed the prisoner; an account of which transaction the General penned and forwarded to the afflicted family by our Quartermaster, C.A. Leonard. But the crowning barbarity was that the rebels refused to give up the lifeless body.”\(^52\)

\(^50\) The Beylor mentioned in the story has not yet been identified but may have been from Warren County. Though several Beylor families resided in Page County in 1860, none of them appear to have lost a male member of their households at the time of the execution which likely took place in the latter part of May 1862.

\(^51\) Sawyer, 17 July 1862, 2.

\(^52\) Denison, *Sabres and Spurs: The First Rhode Island Cavalry in the Civil War, 1861-1865*, 94-95.
There are some indications that the Haynes-Beylor execution almost brought about the burning of the town of Luray. When General Shields arrived in Luray, having heard of the incident, he threatened to fire the entire town, but upon being warmly accepted at a Luray home, he refrained from the drastic measure.53

The oppression experienced by Unionists at the hands of secessionists would not go unanswered, and by the latter part of the war, the struggle between the two groups had come full circle. After having been the target of Confederate hostility for so long, the Unionists became the hunters and enjoyed a newfound power whenever Union soldiers were in the area. In a few incidents, Unionists eagerly informed on avid supporters of the Confederacy, whether those people were actual supporters or not. Of one such Union occupation late in the war, a local citizen wrote that as cattlemen began to take their stock out of harms way and into the Blue Ridge, “some of the home enemy (far worse than foreign enemy) took it on themselves to go to the enemy camp and report that there were a lot of refugee cattle in a field up against the mountain. As some other citizens had also turned in some stock for safety, and the enemy dispatched a squad of men to go out and drive them into camp, calling it capturing them from the Rebels.”54

Empowered in the aftermath of Appomattox, at least one Unionist played a part in one of the most remembered and tragic incidents in the “uncivil war.” Following the surrender, several local cavalrmen returned to their homes in Page County, though they had yet to receive their paroles. One of the men was Captain George W. Summers, a

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53 Profile of the Miss Annie Printz Home, found in the Works Progress Administration Historical Inventory for Page County, Virginia, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.
twenty-two year old native of Page County and son of the earlier mentioned die-hard Unionist, George Summers.

Within weeks of Captain Summers’ return from the war, he and three of his men set out to secure their paroles from the local provost marshal’s office in neighboring Shenandoah County. In their journey, they encountered a small group of Union cavalрмен stragglпng far from their column. Though it is unclear what caused the ensuing altercation, pistols were drawn and the former Confederates ended up returning to Page County, without their paroles, but in the possession of bluecoats’ horses and other various items. Furious at the actions of his son, George Summers, Sr. demanded that his son and his former comrades return the items to the local Union camp without delay. On their behalf, a few respected locals went in advance of the former Confederates and explained the matter to the Union commander, Colonel Francis W. Butterfield, who agreed that if the items were all returned there would be no retribution.55

Having returned the horses and other items, the former Confederates returned to their homes feeling confident that the matter had been closed. However, less than two weeks later, another Unionist who regularly attended the same church as the former Confederates, engaged in a heated exchange with one of the men. When the argument escalated, the Unionist, William Tharp, was nearly struck with a brick, and retorted that “every dog has his day.”56

Tharp made his way to the Federal camp and apparently reported some mischievous actions on the part of the four former Confederates. The more forgiving Butterfield had

taken a furlough to Ohio, and Butterfield’s second in command, Lieutenant Colonel Cyrus Hussey, was now in charge. Much more stern than Butterfield in the discharge of duties in an occupied South, Hussey would later prove to be the perfect instrument of revenge for Unionist Tharp.  

Whether coincidental or not, there may have been ties between the incident that took place in 1865 and the Haynes-Beylor murder of 1862. As a company grade officer, Butterfield had served in the Eighth Ohio Infantry, and in 1862 was in the same command in which Lieutenant Colonel Franklin Sawyer had served; Sawyer being one of two Union officers who left a record of the Haynes-Beylor execution. It may well be that Butterfield remembered the incident in dealing with men from Page County and, having imparted that knowledge to his second in command, Hussey may have felt more justified in taking more drastic measures when Tharp arrived in the Union camp to make his report. Without hesitation, Hussey ordered that the four Confederate cavalrymen be arrested and executed without delay.  

The Union cavalry patrol that was sent out to perform this task was able to collect at least two of the men, marched them back to the Union camp in Shenandoah County and subsequently executed them. What Tharp had told the Union commander is lost to history, however, the tables had turned, and, even despite the fact that the elder Summers had been absolutely devoted to the Union throughout the war, he had become a victim of yet another Unionist.  

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57 Summers, 27 July 1865, 1.
58 Morning Order Books of the 192nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
Understanding Unionists and their experiences in Page County is essential in pointing out some of the disillusionment perpetuated by the Lost Cause mythology. Unionists were not only a presence and made up more of the population than neo-Confederates would prefer to admit, but they also proved to be a problem for the success of the Confederacy in the Shenandoah Valley. Reluctance and resistance to the Confederacy was not only seen in those with Unionist sentiment, but also in the substantial number of soldiers who served in the various Confederate companies that were formed in Page County. If Unionists compromised the Confederate war effort on the home front, then certainly, just as important, were reluctant rebels in the ranks of the Confederate army as well as those who worked desperately to find exemptions from military service.
CHAPTER III
RELUCTANT REBELS

By 2 June 1861, approximately 320 men had enlisted in Page County's four volunteer companies.¹ The departures of two of the companies were well documented and recalled a day that personifies the glory days so commonly seen in Lost Cause mythology. The assembly of men at the county court house was followed by huge meals prepared by the families. As the companies prepared to depart, local ministers delivered invocations and local politicians made fiery speeches. Captain David C. Grayson remembered that “the people and kinsmen and loved ones had gathered to bid adieu and offer benediction to the young heroes who were offering themselves in behalf of the southern cause. Suddenly there came a solemn silence, a breathless hush and a sharp command – Attention, Company, File Left, Forward March.' Then Joe Bell and Andrew Campbell with fife and drum led the gallant band of Page's chivalrous sons down Court Street to Main, on over the old distant hill to Springfield. In the wake of the troops, the streets remained crowded with the fathers and mothers and sweethearts of the young soldiers with heavy hearts and tears streaming down their cheeks.”²

¹ Armstrong, 7th Virginia Cavalry, 173; Murphy, 10th Virginia Infantry, 180; Reidenbaugh, 33rd Virginia Infantry, 139; Moore, The Danville, Eighth Star New Market and Dixie Artillery, 99. On 1 June 1861, three companies were mustered-in for Confederate service, Captain Macon Jordan’s Company D, Seventh Virginia Cavalry with fifty-three volunteers; Captain William T. Young’s Company K, Tenth Virginia Infantry with eighty-seven volunteers; and Captain William D. Rippetoe’s Company H, Thirty-third Virginia Infantry with ninety-seven volunteers. Captain John K. Booton’s Dixie Artillery was mustered-in for service on 21 June 1861 with eighty-three volunteers.

Despite such accounts of nationalistic spirit for the Confederacy, there is substantial evidence that such sentiment was anything but universal. Based upon data from Southern Loyalist Claims, newspaper accounts and the military records of Page County Confederate soldiers, this chapter will discuss the frequently overlooked "reluctant rebels" and how their reluctance affected the Confederate cause. Similarly, this examination will call into question the credibility of Lost Cause mythology by challenging the true level of commitment of local Confederate soldiers.

Before examining local "reluctant rebels," it is important to clarify how that reluctance has been identified. Examples of reluctance include former militiamen who ended up in the Union army, sought exemptions from service by working in government jobs, harbored Confederate deserters, and enlisted only because of concern for public perception. Further evidence of reluctance can be found in reaction to conscription hunters and how citizens in the community struggled to evade them. The chapter closes with a brief examination of the local reserve company and how it was used more as a means of keeping men at home than as an effective military force.

When considering the fact that nearly 1,500 men served in the Confederate army from Page County, one might be left with the impression that support for the Confederate cause in the county was strong. In the late 1990s, a local history enthusiast, in a pamphlet discussing the institution of slavery in Page County, took the numbers of men who had enlisted at face value and stated that "an indication of widespread support for the confederates was the one thousand or so Page County men who served the gray ranks."\(^3\)

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As evidence will reveal, such a claim, based on a cursory study of the total number of men to serve, is presumptuous at best and does nothing more than reinforce the façade presented by Lost Cause mythology in regard to uncompromised Confederate nationalism.

As part of the proof that the numbers can be deceiving, one cannot overlook the overwhelming support for secession indicated through the public referendum vote. Given the nearly unanimous referendum in support of secession, it seems odd that only 320 men volunteered for the regular Confederate army within days of the vote. In all, those who had “rushed to the ranks” to volunteer by June 1861 numbered less than a third of those from Page who would see active service in the entire war.4

Even the number of men who enrolled in the local militia within a month of the organization of volunteer companies is deceiving and even more reason to downplay the disillusioned perception that local enthusiasm and support for the Confederate cause was high. Militia organizations predated Virginia’s secession and men who were in the ranks of the units prior to secession were automatically called into active service of the state by proclamation of the governor of Virginia on 13 July 1861.5 By activating the militia, the Confederacy was given time to organize regular army units and put them in the field. Therefore, though being mustered into the service of the Confederacy, the soldiers in these militia regiments should not be considered volunteers for the Confederate cause, let alone enthusiastic about it.

4 This excludes those who served in the militia and saw limited field service before being disbanded in the spring of 1862.

In all, 550 men filled the ranks of five companies of the local Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia, making up sixty-three percent of those from Page County enrolled in the Confederate service by July 1861. Once again however, these militiamen cannot be considered volunteers. A number of recollections reveal that many of those who were enrolled after 13 July were drafted into the service nine months before the Confederate Congress passed the first Conscription Act in April 1862. William S. Yates was one of those who recalled, years after the war, having been “drafted in September 1861.”

Despite being a conscript, Yates was still listed on duty as of 31 December 1861; the exceptional nature of his record being that only a third of the men in the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia could boast of such a record of uninterrupted service, and many of them were either commissioned or noncommissioned officers.\(^6\)

Another Page County militiaman, Henry “Hiram” Meadows, was, according to his military pension as a Union soldier, drafted into the Ninety-seventh Militia shortly before the First Battle of Manassas.\(^8\) His older brother, William T. Meadows, had been drafted into the same regiment just weeks before. Their reluctance to serve in Confederate military in any capacity is evident in their records, for, within three months, both brothers were listed as absent without leave and were still absent when the last complete muster

\(^6\) “A Confederate Story,” *Page News & Courier*, 21 June 1883, 1; Reidenbaugh, *33rd Virginia Infantry*, 147. Yates later enlisted in Company H, Thirty-third Virginia Infantry in February 1863 and served until the final months at Petersburg where he was wounded, resulting in the amputation of his leg. After taking the oath of allegiance in June 1865, he was released from Lincoln General Hospital and returned to Page County.

\(^7\) Even amongst those with perfect militia records, among those who later enlisted in regular Confederate field units, desertions can be found indicating several who lost heart for the cause as the war progressed.

\(^8\) Service Records of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia. Service records show that he was actually enrolled in the unit after the battle, on 8 August 1861. William T. Meadows was enrolled on 22 July 1861.
roll was filled out for the regiment on 31 December 1861.\(^9\) It is unclear if other family members went with him, but Henry left Page County sometime in late 1861 or early 1862 and headed for Pennsylvania to avoid further service.\(^{10}\)

Evidence of involuntary service with the militia can also be found in a number of Southern Loyalist Claims. In fact, a few men who were involuntarily enrolled in the militia came under scrutiny when they submitted their applications. Morgan Price had been enrolled with the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia on 5 July 1861, but by November 9, he was listed as absent without leave.\(^{11}\) When Federal troops occupied Luray in July 1862, he was taken to Front Royal where he “insisted on taking the oath of allegiance.” After Union General Franz Sigel’s command left Luray, some of his soldiers were left behind sick or were stragglers. Price took many of these into his home, fed them and “piloted them through the mountains” through Confederate lines and to safety. Nevertheless, partly because of his service in the Ninety-seventh, Price’s application was disallowed.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{9}\) Ibid.

\(^{10}\) Union Military Pension of Henry Meadows, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Interestingly enough, Henry Meadows was drafted by the Union army into the 143rd Pennsylvania Infantry on 19 September 1863. Just weeks before Henry entered the Union army, his older brother, William, was found once again by the conscript hunters and drafted into the Confederate army in Company I of the Tenth Virginia Infantry. William served for less than three weeks before he once again headed for the mountains to hide. The example of the Meadows brothers was not uncommon among men in the Ninety-seventh regiment. Twenty-eight percent of the Page militiamen were absent without leave at least once; six percent never reported for duty and one percent was listed as having deserted. Henry Meadows remained faithfully in the ranks of the Union army until he was wounded at the Battle of North Anna River, but, when he applied for a pension, it was initially rejected based on the belief that having been a member of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia, he had “\textit{voluntarily} borne arms against the United States.”

\(^{11}\) Service Records of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia.

\(^{12}\) Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of Morgan Price.
Claimant Martin Ellis’s son John was drafted into the militia on 5 July 1861, and bore the rank of second corporal. Nevertheless, Martin Ellis was able to get his son home for a while before Confederate conscript details came and took him away again. When Martin Ellis was able to get him away from the militia a second time, he “kept him hid until the war broke.” Ellis commented that his other son was in a “detail ship to keep out of the army.” Ellis not only worked to keep his sons at home, but was ready to provide safe haven for whoever else deserted from the army. James H. Miller gave testimony in support of Ellis’ claim and was one of those who volunteered for the Confederate army when the Page Grays of Company H, Thirty-third Virginia Infantry were being organized on 1 June 1861. Having changed his mind about serving the Confederacy, Miller deserted on 14 March 1862 while near Winchester. Recognizing Ellis as a Union man, Miller “went to him for protection and assistance and he kept me at his home concealed at different times; during a term of twelve months I stayed with him all about three weeks total.” After tiring of evading the conscript hunters, Miller left the county in 1863 and went west and eventually, as veterans of the Page Grays recalled, “went across lines.”

One of the most striking accounts of a militiaman turned “reluctant volunteer” was that of James Robert Modesitt. A lieutenant with the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia, Modesitt left a record of his reluctance in the form of a number of letters to his wife. Modesitt, though a militia officer, served only briefly in that capacity before being assigned to duty as a lead teamster. He remained in that role until the spring of 1863 and enlisted in Company D of the Seventh Virginia Cavalry on 24 May 1863. In the letters to his wife, Modesitt mentions nothing of glory or anything that would allude to any

13 Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of Martin Ellis; Reidenbaugh, 33rd Virginia Infantry, 133.
feelings of patriotism for the Confederate cause. Rather, he takes a more conservative, if not cautious, outlook on his participation in the war, leaving the impression that he remained on duty as a teamster more as matter-of-fact circumstance than as a duty. While he mentions an interest in enlisting in the Seventh Virginia, he expresses an even stronger desire in remaining out of the war altogether. On two occasions he made statements that he would gladly pay his way out of service if he had the opportunity. Following the 1862 Maryland Campaign, Modesitt began to show concern about the Confederacy drafting all “able-bodied men” from the teamsters and putting them into regiments. He wrote to his wife that he would “give all that the Confederacy is due me of which is nearly $800, if that would clear me from the war.” Four months later, he commented that he would be glad to pay $1,000 “to get out for good, but the way things are working there is danger of losing my money and then I have to come back myself.” In both instances, Modesitt warned his wife not to share with anyone what he had said.14

Modesitt’s interest in enlisting in the Seventh Virginia Cavalry was likely more out of self-preservation, considering the low casualty rate of the regiment in comparison with infantry units formed from the same region. Likewise, Modesitt probably hoped that, as the regiment had spent much of 1862 operating in the county, would remain in the area, giving him an opportunity to be closer to his wife and family. He knew that he was age-eligible under the conscription laws and, if he did not volunteer for the branch and unit of his preference, he would likely be conscripted into another branch or unit in which he knew nobody and had no interest in serving. Despite his hopes, after enlisting in the regiment, it spent more time on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge. Within five months of

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having enlisted, Modesitt was killed in action at Brandy Station, Virginia on 11 October 1863, one of only a few who were killed in the company. If Modesitt’s military record were taken at face value, without the benefit of seeing the letters to his wife, neo-Confederates would label Modesitt as a “patriotic Confederate” who made the ultimate sacrifice defending his “Southern rights.” In truth, however, Modesitt was a reluctant rebel, seeking nothing more but the best way to survive the war and see to the welfare of his family.

As further indication of the absence of loyalty and lack of interest in the Confederate cause among the county’s militiamen, following disbandment of the militia a large number men did anything they could remain out of active service with the regular Confederate army. Likewise, despite the order issued by Confederate General “Stonewall” Jackson, calling upon all disbanded militiamen to enlist in regular army units, less than seventeen percent of the nearly 550 Page County militiamen actually answered Jackson’s call.

In April 1862, just three months after the Ninety-seventh Virginia was disbanded, the first Confederate Conscription Act was passed, and with it came an entirely new threat to those reluctant to go to war. In addition to intimidation and violence at the hands of local

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16 Weaver and Weaver, *Reserves*, 515-525.
17 Many of the men who did not volunteer for the regular army were not age-eligible for service according to the first Confederate Conscription Act in 1862. However, the percentage of men who did enlist in other units is based on the fact that, with the passage of the third Confederate conscription act in 1864, nearly ninety-nine percent of those who were in the five militia companies were age-eligible for field service. The last Conscription act called for men between the ages of seventeen and fifty. A comprehensive study of the Confederate Conscription Acts can be found in Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1996).
secessionists, those who had not bought into the Confederate cause now had to be concerned with Confederate conscript patrols. Not only did conscription hunters look for deserters from the Confederate army, but they also actively sought out those eligible for the Confederate service. The conscript hunters soon became a recognized enemy to many in Page County.

John J. Moyer recalled an incident during those “unhappy days of the sixties,” when local cattlemen, having learned of the approach of the Union army, sent out civilian scouts to see if the news was true. “A number of persons went toward the top of the Massanutten mountains and catching a glimpse of the invading army the Luray and Page people, seeing that they were doubtless outnumbered many times, beat a retreat, those who lived in Luray not even stopping at their homes but pressing hard in the direction of ‘The Pinnacle,’ at that time a friendly knob at the top of the Blue Ridge.” Accompanying these cattlemen, on his own accord, a Confederate conscript officer mistakenly thought that the perfect opportunity had come to try “his hand at the conscription business.” Moyer continued that “the local folk didn’t take very kindly to the idea and were getting ready to make quick dispatch of the officer, even having a rope around his neck and being ready to string him up.” Fortunately, in the conscription officer’s defense, “Jonathan Rowe, of this county, intervened in behalf of the officer and persuaded the men who were bent upon his destruction to desist.”

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18 John J. Moyer, “Unique Facts in Luray’s Past Recalled,” *Page News & Courier*, 16 May 1924, 3. This particular incident shows that some were more interested in self-preservation and the preservation of their property than taking sides. Jonathan Rowe is listed in the 1860 Page County census as a fifty years old farmer/tanner with $5,500 in real estate.
Conscription affected people in the county in different ways. In some cases, families in Page County had intimate ties with family or friends in the North, thereby causing another reason for reluctance in supporting the Confederate cause and evade the conscript hunters. The family of Paschal Wellington and Elizabeth Offenbacker Cave was originally from Page County but relocated to Champaign County, Ohio in the mid-1830s. The stay there was brief, but while there, two sons were born to the couple, Francis Perry Cave and Washington John Irvan Cave. In 1840, a year after Washington Cave’s birth, the family returned to Page County.¹⁹

Before the opening of the Civil War, the three oldest daughters of Paschal and Elizabeth Cave had married men who, during the war, proved to be very reluctant toward committing to the Confederacy. Of Paschal Cave’s three age-eligible son-in-laws, one deserted from the Confederate army, another was absent without leave and evaded service in the regular army, and a third was exempted because of his occupation as a millwright.²⁰ Paschal’s age-eligible sons, however, were not as fortunate and ended up on separate sides of the war. It is unclear if Francis Cave was residing in Ohio at the outbreak of the war, but on 11 August 1862, he enlisted with Company G, Sixty-sixth Ohio Infantry. It is quite possible that when he enlisted, he was under the impression that he was heading for the western theater, away from family and friends. However, not long after having enlisted, Francis Cave deserted from the regiment while still in Ohio. Perhaps he realized that the bulk of the regiment was already in Virginia. In fact, it had

¹⁹ Though the father, mother and eight children were enumerated in both the 1850 and 1860 census for Page County, neither Francis or Washington can be located in either Virginia or Ohio.

passed through Luray in both May and June of 1862. Francis was apprehended by Federal authorities in Ohio, but he never saw a day of service with Sixty-sixth Ohio Infantry in the field. Instead, he remained in the North until the close of the war.\footnote{Union Military Records of Francis Perry Cave, Sixty-sixth Ohio Infantry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.}

Less than six months after Francis Cave signed his name to the rolls of the Sixty-sixth Ohio, his brother Washington enlisted; or more likely conscripted; on 4 February 1863 with Company H, Thirty-third Virginia Infantry. Washington was discharged before the end of the month, having been exempted from service because of his occupation as a shoemaker. Though this reprieve from military service was legitimate, Washington took no chances that he might yet be called into service and, according to veterans from his unit, he “went to the Yankees,” possibly to return to Ohio. Washington had been married only a few months earlier, which may have contributed to his reluctance to fight.\footnote{Reidenbaugh, \textit{33rd Virginia Infantry}, 115; Papers of Frederick T. Amiss, Private Collection of Robert H. Moore, II, Swoope, Virginia. Washington Cave died in April 1917. Though it is uncertain as to when, some years later, family members ordered a headstone from the Veterans Administration noting Washington Cave’s Confederate service, although he was more than likely a “reluctant Confederate” and the service was short-lived. Whether the Cave brothers ever realized it or not, less than a year after the two had enlisted in their respective blue and gray regiments, the Sixth-sixth Ohio and the Thirty-third Virginia faced each other in a hotly contested action, in July 1863 at Culp’s Hill, just outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.}

While some feared conscription, others, rather than hiding in the mountains or taking the most drastic measure of uprooting their families and heading north as refugees, saw it as an opportunity. By taking a government job in local industries, they could be exempted from military service, and jobs were plentiful in the iron ore industry, saltpeter works, and the extensive leather tanning industry in Page.
One local to take advantage of this loophole in conscription was thirty year-old

David H. Strickler. Strickler’s son wrote in later years:

I remember at that time there were only two or three Republicans in the county. Thornton H. Taylor was one of these and the feeling was so bitter against them that they were called Black Republicans . . . . Thornton H. Taylor didn’t believe in fighting for the rich and neither do I. My father was slow to express himself, his family consisted of a wife and five children that he loved better than the slaves. He thought slavery was wrong and would not own any, often hiring them from their masters. The conscription gave him so much trouble that he was detailed to work for the south in making harness for the army at Honeyville, finally the south was not able to buy leather so father made a loom for weaving bridles, saddle girths and wagon lines.23

The three iron ore furnaces in Page County were of great interest to those who sought exemptions from military service. The furnace operation was extensive and required many men to cut trees, make charcoal, mine iron ore, run the furnace, and sustain a hefty agricultural operation to provide for both the workers and animals. Ironmaster Henry Forrer had done all he could to maintain the operation with white labor and at least seventy-seven slaves before the war. Since a large number of whites had enlisted or had been drafted into the army in 1861, and hired slaves had been returned to their owners east of the Blue Ridge, a severe labor shortage ensued.24 Not surprisingly, enforcement of the conscription act suddenly created a vast pool of eager workers. Men

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23 Strickler, 12 July 1933, 5.
24 Charles C. Ballard, From Iron Plantation to Company Town: The Shenandoah Iron Works, 1836-1907 (Luray, Virginia: Page County Heritage Association, 1998), 7-10. Henry Forrer owned some of the slaves but the majority were hired from slaveholders east of the Blue Ridge. Forrer has been seen by some as a supporter of the Confederate cause by virtue of the fact that his well-being in the operation of the iron ore industry in the county demanded a hefty number of slaves to maintain operations. However, there was evidence in two loyalist claims that reveal that he was actually Unionist in sentiment. In 1863, Forrer came to the aid of Reuben Kite, who had been “arrested by the conscript guard and taken away to Richmond.” Intervening on Kite’s behalf, Forrer made a bargain with the officer in charge, and, by allowing one of his slaves to work for the officer without charge, Forrer was able to gain Kite’s release.
"who had rarely ever performed a day of manual labor sought details to keep out of the army. Some were even willing to work for nothing and board themselves. So the labor question was solved." Indeed, out of the nearly 550 men who served in the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia, nearly nineteen percent were detailed to jobs rather than being conscripted. Some were detailed to the ironworks, but more than a third were assigned to work in the nitre department mining saltpeter in Luray. The next greatest demand for detailed men was as teamsters. Other details included making harness, purchasing horses and various other roles that were not detailed in the detail orders. At least three men were detailed back to Page County just to gather up absentees and deserters.26

One of the many men drafted into the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia, Philip Ruffner, after three months of service, was detailed to make harness for David E. Almond. He remained in this job for another ten months before being taken up by conscription officers a second time. Ruffner was held in the county jail for twenty-four hours before finally being taken to Richmond.27 According to military service records, he was drafted once again, and enrolled on 1 January 1863 in the Thirty-ninth Battalion Virginia Cavalry. After four months he broke from the ranks and hid in the mountains until the close of the war. Ruffner had all along thought that it was "ridiculous that we

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25 "Historical Sketch of Milnes," Page Courier, 28 June 1885, 3. This particularly grouping of "reluctant rebels" in this part of the chapter pertains to both those militiamen who may have been drafted or activated into Confederate service unwillingly and those men who had not, yet sought exemptions from military service. Finding work in local government industries offered the opportunity to keep conscript hunters at bay, thereby evading military service.

26 Service Records of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia.

27 Ibid. Ruffner was enrolled in Company F, Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia on 5 July 1861. The 1860 Page County census lists Ruffner as a thirty year old farmer with $650 in real estate.
should go to war amongst ourselves.” Despite his reluctance to serve, when Ruffner filed a Southern Loyalist Claim in years after the war, it was denied.28

Considering the great number of men who opted to work in local government industries rather than carry a musket, there is yet another legacy that may be revealing in regard to true sentiment. Of the hundreds of men who served in these jobs, only four applied for the postwar pension offered in the 1920s by the Commonwealth of Virginia. One of the four applicants, John Short, noted that he worked as a blacksmith in the service of Milton A. McAllister and only left because “certain grade hands had been conscripted and gone into the army.”29 Just before Short’s “entry into the service,” the “surrender was made.” Another applicant, Peter Dovel, remained in the employ of McAllister from 1864 until “the job was done [and] all of us quit.”30

28 Driver and Ruffner, 1st Battalion Virginia Infantry, 39th Battalion Virginia Cavalry, 24th Battalion Virginia Partisan Rangers, 151. Despite being a reluctant Confederate, Ruffner served briefly as a non-commissioned officer with the Thirty-ninth Battalion Virginia Cavalry. Descendants wrongly noted on a recently placed Veterans Administration headstone that he served in the Seventh Virginia Cavalry.

29 The 1860 Page County census lists Milton A. McAllister as a twenty-four-year old saddler with $200 in real estate. Thirty year old William R. Sterling was residing with the McAllister family and was also listed as a saddler but with no real estate. Both were age-eligible for service in the Confederate army, but likely because of their work as civilians were exempted from service.

30 Virginia Confederate Servants Pension Applications under the Virginia Act of 1902. Applications of James J. Comer, Peter S. Dovel, Isaac Newton Short, Sr., and John Short, The Library of Virginia, Richmond. The Virginia Confederate Pension Application Act of 1902 allowed pensions for body servants, cooks, teamsters, or those who buried Confederate dead, worked on breastworks, shops, blacksmith shops, and in other capacities. Why more who had worked in these government labor positions in Page County did not apply for pensions is curious. One solution could be that many of the men who had been laborers were, on the average, older than those who served in the military, and therefore there weren’t many alive by the time the pensions for such rolls were accepted. However, as in the case of military pensioners, there exists a belief that the pension applications were carefully scrutinized, often by their peers or sons of the soldiers who were of the more “loyal class.” This is not always the case however. Robert W. Young was the pension board chair in Page County in the latter 1920s and, he was not
As the war progressed, the Confederacy faced greater challenges in filling the ranks of its army. In the spring of 1864, the third Confederate Conscription Act expanded the age limits and targeted men between seventeen and fifty years of age. As one of the companies to be filled as a result of efforts to enforce this conscription act, over half of the men of Second Company M, Sixty-second Virginia Infantry came from Page County. By no means did all of the men go willingly. Some of the youngest members were easily brought into the ranks from Captain Thomas Keyser’s Boy Company of Page which was made up of seventeen and eighteen year old boys.\(^{31}\)

Others who were tapped for service in the Sixty-second continued to resist. The story of one person who evaded service was found in the Southern Loyalist Claims. Benjamin Housden testified that Joseph Painter, Sr. had helped to harbor his son, James Kell Perry Housden, from the conscript patrols. Originally taken to Camp Lee near Richmond, James Housden was able to “run away” and, Benjamin Housden noted, “came home and Joseph Painter concealed him for us until I could do better for him.” Housden said Painter “kept himself a little darker than I did” but that he was also a Unionist in sentiment during the war.\(^{32}\) Painter also helped to conceal James F. Foltz, who was another involuntary recruit in the spring of 1864.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{32}\) Used in this context, being “a little darker” infers a stronger leaning toward the ideals of the Republican Party.

\(^{33}\) Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of Joseph Painter, Sr. Benjamin Housden was listed in the 1860 Page County census as a fifty year old farmer with $1,800 in real estate.
Another family affected by the conscriptions of 1864 was that of Absalom Franklin Nauman. Forty-four year old Nauman was a member of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia in the summer of 1861, but by November, he was one of the many listed as absent without leave. After the militia regiment was disbanded in January of 1862, Nauman, over the age of 35, was able to remain out of the service under the first Confederate Conscription Act. With the passage of the second Confederate Conscription Act in September 1862, however, he was once again age-eligible, but remained out of the service, probably exempted as an iron ore miner. When his seventeen year-old son, Joseph Siram Nauman, was conscripted in the spring of 1864, Absalom may have felt compelled to enlist to look after his son, or, perhaps he was conscripted as well. In either case, both father and son were listed as absent sick on 31 October 1864, after which there is no further evidence of military service.\(^{34}\) The story of the Naumans is revealing when taking into consideration the circumstances surrounding Confederate disability pensions. In his pension record, Joseph S. Nauman stated that he "joined as a volunteer." John P. Foltz claimed that he joined in Harrisonburg around December 1863 and did not leave the service until after June 1865, and yet, there is no record of Foltz having served with the Sixty-second or any other unit. In yet another application, Noah Seekford, who "joined" the Sixty-second on 15 February 1864, said he had entered the service in 1863 in Charleston, Virginia (West Virginia) and had been in "Davis' Battalion until fall of 1864" when the battalion was incorporated into the Sixty-second Virginia. Despite Seekford's claim, no such named battalion was ever recorded as having been incorporated into the regiment. Considering the different stories and the fact that each person signed in vouch

\(^{34}\) Absalom Nauman was listed in the 1860 Page County census as a thirty-nine year old laborer with $200 in real estate.
for the other in securing a pension, and with no further details of service in the Confederate military records, it may be that all three served together in the Sixty-second, but that they were anything but volunteers. Only one other Page Countian applied for a pension for service in the same regiment, and he, like the others was a part of the apparent four-man pact that vouched for one another. In that the pension board, at the time, was made up of veterans from companies organized early in the war, there were none who could possibly contest the claims of these men, especially when they supported each others claims.35

Something else that might be said of the trying times of February 1864, was that when the conscription patrols became very overzealous in the discharge of their duties, reluctant rebels not only evaded the patrols, they left the valley and joined the Union army. At least two men, Frederick Amos Alger and Andrew Jackson Foltz, turned seventeen years when the third conscription act was passed. Leaving Page County for the Union lines, both men ended up near Williamsburg, Virginia, where Alger enlisted in Company M of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry on 9 February, and, ten days later, Foltz enlisted in Company K.36 Foltz was also the son of a known local Unionist, Noah Foltz, who, remained behind. At forty-nine, Noah, like his son, fell just within the age

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35 Virginia Confederate Disability Pension Applications under the Virginia Acts of 1888, 1900, and 1902. Applications of John P. Foltz, Joseph S. Nauman, Siram W. Offenbacker and Noah Seekford, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; Delaughter, 62nd Virginia Infantry, 71, 94, 95, 105. If, in retrospect, men can be found filing Southern Loyalist Claims and yet lied about their sentiment, then it is just as possible that men filed false applications for Confederate pensions. In the case of these four men in the Sixty-second Virginia, bonding together in support of each others claim as men who volunteered more than likely improved their chances of having their application approved.

36 Union Military Records (Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry) and Union Military Pensions of Frederick Amos Alger and Andrew Jackson Foltz, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
parameters of the new Confederate draft, and was taken into the ranks of the Confederate army as a member of the Eighth Battalion Virginia Reserves.37

Cruising with the formation of the company of men for the Sixty-second Virginia, word of a concentration of Confederate conscripts in Luray had reached Union commands as early as February 1864. Subsequently, plans were made by Union General David M. Gregg to conduct a cavalry raid upon Luray to liberate the conscripts from the county jail. It was the hope of General Gregg “to collect the families about Luray that wish to come within our lines to escape the effects of conscription [and that such action] would require a command sent to remain in the vicinity of Luray for a day at least.”

Though this raid did not take place, Union reports of conscript concentration at Luray continued through the middle of April 1864.38

Another technique utilized to avoid conscription was to lie about one’s age, with the cooperation of locals. Enrollment in Company B of the Eighth Virginia Reserves reveals that more than a dozen men resorted to lying about their age. Formed in the summer of 1864, this company was comprised of men in their forties. The company also served as a cover for some of who were known in the community as devout Union men. It seems more than likely that these men, being neighbors and many having grown up in the same community for years, knew well the ages of their friends and allowed extra years on their ages to help keep their friends out of regular army service. At least three

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37 Page: The County of Plenty (Luray, Virginia: Page County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 54; Weaver, Reserves, 518.
men were listed as almost ten years older than their actual age. Therefore, this reserve unit could be considered a haven for men who could not otherwise find exemptions. Ironmaster Noah Foltz was among that number, having been heavily involved in conducting an “underground railroad” for Union soldiers who found themselves trapped “behind the lines” in Page County. As was seen earlier, one of Foltz’s own sons, Andrew Jackson Foltz, left Page County to avoid being drafted into the Confederate army and ended up enlisting in the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry.\textsuperscript{39}

In summary, substantial evidence of “reluctant rebels” indicates that Southern solidarity behind Confederate nationalism itself is a myth. Southern Loyalist Claims, postwar letters to the newspapers and individual military service records all reveal that reluctance was much more common among both civilians and soldiers than the Lost Cause mythology would permit. In \textit{Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism}, historian Paul D. Escott recognized the problem of unity in the South and suggested that localism prevailed over nationalism.\textsuperscript{40} The response of Page County’s locals to conscript hunters is one example of this. More importantly, there was the need to survive and see that one’s family survived as well.

Yet one more group of individuals compromises the Lost Cause myth. Hardcore secessionists had a difficult time dealing with Unionists and reluctant rebels, but soldiers

\textsuperscript{39} Weaver, \textit{Reserves}, 515-25; Judy Campbell, Compact Disc Compilation of Page County Cemetery Records, Rileyville, Virginia, 2001. The discrepancies in age were only realized after comparing the roster of Company B of the Eighth Battalion Virginia Reserve with the dates of birth on many available headstones of the same veterans throughout the county.

\textsuperscript{40} Paul D. Escott, \textit{After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 19-53.
in the regular army who volunteered and then lost heart in the Confederate cause, proved even worse. This group of men will be addressed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV
DISAFFECTED CONFEDERATES AND CONCLUSION

On April 13, 1914, Frederick T. Amiss, the commander of the Sons of Confederate Veterans camp in Luray, penned a letter to four local veterans of the "Page Volunteers" of Company K, Tenth Virginia Infantry. Amiss' objective was to compile the names of the county's "loyal" Confederate soldiers for inclusion on a monument that would be dedicated to Page County Confederate Veterans. The task proved daunting, and Amiss knew that he could not sit in judgment: "we can never build our Monument unless perfect harmony prevails, and I do not entertain for a moment the idea of dictating to any one as to who is and who is not a loyal Confederate Soldier." He continued that he would be greatly embarrassed if he were to "publish a roster ... and include in it the name of any deserter." The family of this deserter would almost certainly "take issue with me and cause me no end of trouble." Therefore, Amiss called upon the veterans to relieve him of this burden, "What I desire is for you gentlemen to assist me in this undertaking."¹

Amiss undertook his endeavor during the peak years of the Lost Cause celebration. In Page County, as elsewhere, there appeared to be more interest in faithful Confederates than in those who were less enthusiastic for the old Confederacy. As Amiss pointed out, even amongst local families of less than faithful Confederates, bringing attention to the

¹ Amiss Papers. It appears that even the Confederate veterans themselves had slightly redefined the meaning of "loyalty." In cross referencing the names with military records, some who had deserted and did not return to the army, had yet been forgiven by the "loyal" veterans and allowed membership in the local United Confederate Veterans Camp. Therefore, even amongst the disaffected Confederates, there may have been forgivable and unforgivable desertions. Curiously, the proposed plaques naming the "loyal" Confederates were never placed in the monument.
fact would quickly draw rebuttal. In time, this denial of truth would only lend more credibility to the Lost Cause myth. Compromised loyalties of Confederate soldiers threatened the Lost Cause belief in Southern solidarity. In time, this blurring of history would distort the truth so much as to make descendants of less than loyal Confederate soldiers, and even worse, descendants of local Union soldiers, come to believe that their ancestors had fought bravely as loyal Confederate soldiers.2

This chapter will address the truth about disillusioned or "disaffected" Confederate soldiers from Page County and how they also stand as an example of how the Lost Cause mythology has only proven misleading in understanding the more complex nature of the Civil War in the South. Though there is relatively little information as to why soldiers became disillusioned and deserted, there is clear and ample evidence that a sizeable number of soldiers did desert from the Confederate army.3 This chapter focuses on the

2 In the course of conducting research for this paper, a number of persons were encountered who believed their ancestors had fought as loyal Confederate soldiers, when in fact, proved to be reluctant or disillusioned Confederates, or, as they might perceive it, "even worse" as Unionists or Union soldiers. In considering these people, the Lost Cause myth had run its full course, and, with more time, the lies become even more cemented into local public memory as facts.

3 The only case of a soldier giving indication of his reason for deserting could be found in the Virginia Military Institute alumni file of William Harris, Jr. The son of a former member of Congress, Harris graduated from VMI in 1861. After a brief stint as drillmaster with Page County’s Dixie Artillery, Harris was assigned to duty with Colonel William N. Pendleton and, in the same month (November 1861) transferred as assistant adjutant general on the staff of General Cadmus Wilcox. Promoted to captain in January 1862, Harris resigned from Wilcox’s staff in July 1862 and was assigned as a lieutenant and acting ordinance officer in General Daniel Harvey Hill’s division. Harris was promoted to the temporary rank of captain in the spring of 1863, and was yet again reassigned and named Chief of Ordinance of General Robert E. Rodes’ division. Following the defeat at Gettysburg, entries in the file indicate that Harris deserted from the army "feeling that further effort was futile." However, some records reveal that he may have had other reasons for leaving the army in that he was denied a transfer to Major Harry W. Gilmor’s cavalry battalion. VMI Alumni Files, Preston Library, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.
“disease of desertion” as it ran its course through Page County’s Confederate soldiers and examines circumstances at home that contributed to desertions. Among these episodes on the home front were the brutal manner in which Confederate conscript hunters conducted themselves, the cruel treatment of civilians at the hand of Union occupation troops, the deaths of civilian men and women at the hands of Union and Confederate soldiers, as well as overzealous secessionists and Confederate deserters and bushwhackers. Through their actions, many deserters demonstrated that there were more pressing matters than service in the Confederate army. In the end, quite literally, the need for a man and his family to survive surpassed the more widely remembered glorious cause.

Supporting this line of thought, in More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army, Mark A. Weitz focuses on the impact that desertion had in the Confederate army and on Confederate nationalism. Among the many reasons he cites for desertion in the army were events that taking place on the home front. Weitz states that desertion was the “disease that ultimately killed the Confederacy . . . shortages of food and necessities, extortion, conscription, and the inability of a society strongly based on a semi-subsistence agriculture to continue in the absence of its male workforce all weakened the Confederate cause, and these same elements contributed to desertion in the ranks and disillusionment on the home front. Although desertion began in the military, it spread out into the home front and eventually became something far bigger and more lethal than the simple unwillingness of men to fight.”

Page County Confederates started

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4 Mark A. Weitz, More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 278. In the introduction to his book,
deserting as early as the summer of 1861. As part of the bread basket of the
Confederacy, the agricultural demands were great amongst recruits from the Shenandoah
Valley and certainly played a role in troops leaving the ranks so soon after having
enlisted. Even so, not all of those who had left the ranks to work in the fields returned to
the army. On 23 August 1861, the men and officers of the Ninety-seventh Virginia
Militia petitioned General Joseph E. Johnston, commanding the Confederate Army of
Virginia, to allow farmers to temporarily return to their homes.

We desire, first, to say that no portion of Virginia has been more loyal to the South
and her interest than the militia of this valley; that we are among the first to send
volunteers to the field of battle; that we have as great a number of volunteers in the
field now in proportion to the strength of our militia as any portion of the State . . .
We fully appreciate the condition of our country, and are willing to make any
sacrifice necessary to advance the interest of the South and to secure our
independence . . . the valley of Virginia is a wheat-growing country, in which slave
labor is scarce; consequently the larger portion of the labor must be performed by
white men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five years. The time for seeding
the wheat crop has arrived, and unless at least a considerable portion of the men now
here can be returned to their homes to attend to putting that crop in the ground we
will be unable to raise supplies sufficient for our own subsistence.

Endorsed by General Johnston and forwarded to Governor John Letcher and
President Jefferson Davis, the letter was misleading, the men of the regiment, as
discussed earlier, were not volunteers, and did not wish to be in the army in the first

Weitz also makes a valuable point in redefining Confederate nationalism. "The South,"
Weitz notes, "much more so than the North, was a region dominated by localism. Loyalty
in some case existed as high as the state level, but by and large it was local communities
that dominated people's minds and hearts. Combine this proclivity for the local with the
fact that the 'Confederacy' as a nation did not exist until two months prior to the war, and
that when it did come into being it was formed out of seven Deep South states, in three of
which secession was bitterly contested. Thus not only were the people less included to
attach to something national, but the nation hardly reflected the people being asked to
embrace it."

5 Of the regular army companies from Page County, eighteen percent of all of the
men who deserted during the war had done so before the spring of 1862.
6 Official Records, Volume V, Series 1, 821.
place. Indeed, by the end of August, fully eight percent of the men from the five Page County companies were already absent without leave.

Apart from being endorsed by high officials, the letter appeared to receive little attention, leaving the militia officers to repeat their plea in yet another letter on 31 August. By that time matters had worsened. The companies that were not from the Winchester area had become annoyed with those that were because the latter had “... failed to any great extent to respond to your call, and that instead of being ready to obey the call of the Governor promptly and coming forward to defend their own town, the very town that we are now defending, they are quietly pursuing their usual avocations.”

Finally, on 9 September, large numbers of men, including those from Page, were temporarily released from service. After just enough time to sow seed, the men were called from their farms with the reactivation of the militia on 4 November 1861. Despite the order, sixty-four more militiamen joined the seventy-seven men that had already been listed as absent without leave. By the end of November, twenty-seven percent of all of the militiamen in the five companies called up from Page County were absent without leave.7

While agricultural demands at home took several men from the ranks of the militia and the regular army in the opening year of the war, there were other reasons that must be behind the desertions of twenty-six percent of the total number of men enrolled in Page

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7 Ibid, Volume LI, Part 2, Series 1, 262. By December 1861, more than thirty-four percent of the men in the five Page County companies of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia were listed as absent without leave; twelve having left in July, thirty-four in August, eight in September, twenty-three in October, sixty-four in November and forty-four in December.
County's regular army companies. Nearly twenty-five percent of the total number of men who deserted during the entire war did so within the first year. Among Page County's "flash in the pan Southern patriots" in the first year of the war was Samuel Jacob Forrer. The son of the local iron-ore magnate and Unionist Henry Forrer, Samuel had been remembered by one Confederate veteran for his "joyful exuberance" in 1861, when he marched around with the colors and made the bold pronouncement that "never should they fall awhile a hand he had to hold them up." Less than a year later, Forrer was in the regimental guard house "with one of his feet chained fast to a Yankee's foot." One local later stated that Forrer had been caught in Hardy County [West Virginia] "that is a Yankee and him trying to make their way to the Federal army . . ." James Robert Modesitt remarked in a letter to his wife that Forrer had apparently "forgotten" the bold and patriotic pledge he had made less than a year before. Forrer's former school teacher, Jedediah Hotchkiss, also left a recollection of the incident. Pleading with Hotchkiss to testify on his behalf, Forrer explained that he had only attempted to go across lines to obtain medicine. Years after the war, however, Forrer's comrades remembered that he

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8 This is based on a tally made from examining the military records of men from the only regular army companies made up almost exclusively of Page County men; Company D, Seventh Cavalry, Company K, Tenth Virginia Infantry, and Company H, Thirty-third Virginia Infantry. Page County men from two other companies were also included in this tally. Captain John H. Grabill's Company E, Thirty-fifth Virginia Cavalry was made up of men from Page, Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties and was not formed until the summer of 1862. Fifty-one Page County men served in Grabill's company. The Purcell Artillery had fifty-three men transferred from the Dixie Artillery when it was disbanded in October 1862; the Dixie Artillery having been organized almost exclusively of men from Page County.

attempted to desert on two occasions. Captured at Gettysburg and paroled in August 1863, Forrer disappears from the Confederate military records.\footnote{Murphy, \textit{10th Virginia Infantry}, 150; Jedediah Hotchkiss, \textit{Make Me a Map of the Valley: The Civil War Journal of Stonewall Jackson's Topographer}, Archie P. McDonald, editor (Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1973), xxiii, 133, 178, 270. Samuel Jacob Forrer enlisted June 2, 1861 in Luray in Company K, Tenth Virginia Infantry and did not go absent without leave until 12 May 1862, in the midst of Stonewall Jackson’s famous Valley Campaign. Absent through 15 March 1863. Jedediah Hotchkiss visited with Forrer on Sunday, 19 April 1863. Curiously, Forrer was also listed as on conscript duty in Page County. He was wounded in the ankle on 3 July 1863 at Gettysburg and paroled at Chester, Pennsylvania in August 1863.}

As desertions escalated and conscription laws went into effect, conscription patrols scoured the Shenandoah Valley. Encounters between the patrols and deserters could turn violent, and likely contributed to the disaffection of Confederate soldiers. In the act of finding deserters and returning them to the Confederate army, conscript hunters were often overzealous in their duties. In one such episode, Thomas Jefferson Nauman, a soldier home on a legal furlough, was taken by the conscript hunters. Local turn-of-the-century newspaper historian, Jacob H. Coffman remembered that Nauman was a “soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia and was at home on a 10-day sick furlough. There was a gang of conscript hunters . . . under the command of Lieut. Perry Kite.” Hearing that Nauman was in the county, and apparently not realizing that he was home on a legal furlough, Kite ordered locals Al Richards and a man named Campbell, to go to the home of Thomas Nauman’s father to arrest the son. Coffman continued that as the Confederate army was in such desperate need of men that conscript patrols zealously sought out anyone “who could not produce a genuine written leave of absence. Nauman was in possession of the proper papers, but the two men . . . would not listen to anything he said, neither of them could read.” Nevertheless, “Nauman agreed to come with them.” When
the patrol reached a school house, Nauman requested that the schoolmaster, Thomas M. Offenbacker, read the furlough paper to the two conscript men, “but still they refused to accept it as a genuine document, and tried to take him and while they were contending”

the schoolmaster sent for Lieutenant Kite. Coffman continued:

Nauman had gone in the school house and sat down on a bench and the two men told Mr. Offenbacker to make him come out, but he said he could not make him come out. All of a sudden Nauman came out and with his gloved hand he knocked them both down and made a bee line for the old church. There was about three inches of snow on the ground and still snowing very hard, and before Nauman got twenty-yards away both of the men were on their feet and one of them took aim and fired striking Nauman in the back of his head and spilling his brains all over the ground, he falling flat on his face. Had he waited five minutes longer Lieut. Kite would have been on the scene and things might have turned our different. The man that committed this shameful deed, calmly blew the powder smoke out of his gun as if he had but shot a rabbit.11

In time, Lieutenant Kite gained such a reputation as to be “disliked by many for the power he exercised in this office.” In an effort to instill some fear in the young lieutenant, Jacob Coffman remembered that “One night a notice was put up at what was called the Butterwood Gate [near the Jacob C. Kite house and stage stop known as Mt. Hope] . . . The notice was to the effect that if the Lieutenant and his men did not leave the county they would be killed.”12

Conscript hunters were particularly active in their efforts to bring back a number of deserters from the “Page Grays” of Company H, Thirty-third Virginia Infantry. Of all the regular army companies formed in the county, the “Grays” had the highest rate of

12 Coffman, 5 July 1932, 4; Reidenbaugh, 33rd Virginia Infantry, 127.
desertion, accounting for thirty-six percent of the men in the company. On one such venture, Lieutenant Kite was hunting down three men “hiding in or around” their homes. When the conscript hunters came to the home of Private William Pence, Pence’s wife “would not let them in the house, but they forced an entrance and the wife became so enraged that she hit one of the officers over the head with a frying pan.” In response, the officer declared that “she would be sorry as long as she lived.”

Others rounded up by Kite and his men that same month included Privates Benjamin F. Price and Andrew J. Knight. Though military records state that they had “joined from desertion,” their return had been anything but voluntary. After being taken from their homes and returned to the army, the three men, along with four others, were brought before courts-martial during the “high-tide” of trials in Stonewall Jackson’s Second Corps in the winter of 1862-63 and ordered to be shot for desertion. In addition to seven “Grays” sentenced to be shot to death, eleven others from the company were sentenced to various other punishments including the laying on of between twenty-five and thirty-nine lashes across a bare back. Four of those who had been sentenced to be shot were fortunate enough to have escaped on technicalities, the courts-martial recorder having improperly maintained a complete record of the courts. Gabriel L. Price, Andrew Jackson Knight and William Pence were not as fortunate.

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13 A particularly strong effort in hunting down deserters from the “Page Grays” may also be attributed to the conscript officer, Lieutenant Kite, being an officer in that same company.
16 Reidenbaugh, 33rd Virginia Infantry, 128, 136.
17 Ibid. Of the three men, both Price and Knight had enlisted on 1 June 1861; Knight was present through October 1861, and then absent without leave through
At this point, brigade commander General Elisha F. Paxton intervened, writing
General Jackson that the execution of three men from the same company, all hailing from
the same county, might have undesirable results in discipline and morale. Instead, Paxton
suggested that the men be allowed to draw lots leaving only one to be executed. Though
not one for leniency, Jackson routed the paperwork to General Robert E. Lee, who in turn
made his recommendations. Though staff member Henry Kyd Douglas stated in later
years that on the day of execution the men were pardoned by President Jefferson Davis,
in fact, lots had been drawn and one man still faced a firing squad. On that fateful day of
28 February 1863, William Pence, a thirty-one year-old laborer from Leakesville, was the
unlucky man.\footnote{Records of Courts-Martial for the Second Corps, Army of Northern Virginia,
January to April, 1863, National Archives, Washington, D.C.}

Fortunate to have escaped execution for desertion, Price and Knight deserted again
almost immediately. Years after the war, a letter to the Luray newspaper detailed the
particulars of the second desertion. "I do not think he [Price] sought a reprieve but took a
chance in the dead hour of night and got behind the tent of the guard house and slipped
through a wagon train parked just back of it. He made for dear life for such it proved to
be to him. He made his way [with Andrew Knight and Benjamin F. Price] to Media not

October 1862. Price had been present up until August 1861, when he was sent home
sick. He was still absent sick at home in February 1862, but was listed as a deserter on 1
April 1862. He rejoined the command from desertion on 21 December 1862. Unlike
Knight and Price, Pence had been a member of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia and
did not enlist until 5 April 1862, just on the eve of the enforcement of the first
Confederate Conscription Act. In less than three weeks he had deserted, and, like Price,
rejoined from desertion on 21 December 1861.
far from Philadelphia where he worked on a farm until after the war when he came back home.”

Even after the execution, Page County soldiers continued to take their leave of the Confederate army on a regular basis. In addition to the nearly fifty men who deserted from the opening of the war until the summer of 1862, eighty-seven more soldiers left the ranks by the close of the winter of 1863-64.

Among those who deserted during the winter of 1863-64 were brothers Cumberland George Coffman and Reuben Yancey Coffman, along with five others. The Coffmans’ younger brother, Jacob, remembered in later years that the two “came home a few days before leaving for the north,” but before heading out, the conscript officers closed in on them. Hiding out in the barn four hundred yards from the family house, the brothers spied two men riding up to the house and “that was all the tip they needed to flee.” Coffman continued:

They had made ready for an emergency of this kind by taking off two boards on the back side of the barn and only a few leaps and they were in the woods. They had set the day, or night rather, when they would go with the other five companions, as well as I remember. It was only the next night after they left the barn that I went with my father after dark to take clothing and food to a pre-arranged place in the woods not far from the David Judy place near Stanley. The place was a thick patch of ivy where they were. It was understood that we should whistle like the partridge, which we did, but very low, and they answered thus. Getting the clothing and provisions we had for them, they struck out for a place in or near Printztown where they were to meet, which they did this completing all arrangements for the final move. They kept to the Blue Ridge as near as possible walking by night and resting by day. I think they said they were seven days getting to Hagerstown but once there were safe.

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19 Coffman, 3 April 1927, 2.
20 Thirty-two men alone left the army in the winter of 1863-64.
The plight of a family with deserting sons did not end with their escape from the Valley. Escape also involved taking wives and children north for a reunion with the men. Jacob Coffman recalled that “it had been previously arranged for my father to leave on April 10th, 1864, with the brothers’ two wives and children (each of them having two) for Martinsburg and he started on time, I going with them.” Passing through Confederate picket lines, encountering those who resented refugees and then passing through Union picket lines, the trip was arduous. Finally, the Coffmans, with the aid of an underground railroad system for Confederate deserters, were able to reach Martinsburg, [West] Virginia, where they met with a Mr. Tabler, “who sent us to a vacant farm house not far out of the town.” Coffman wrote that “Here we soon had the fires going in the old time fire-places. This was a fine place, good farm, large barn and all necessary out-buildings. I think the farm was owned either by Mr. Tabler or Longacker. They wanted my father to stay there and work the farm which he would have done if he had had the rest of the family there.”

When the elder Coffman attempted to find his sons, he was able to make contact with “Mr. Calvin Cave, one of the seven that went North with them.” He gave the wives and children fare to “go on to Hagerstown which they did and met their husbands there and from there they went to Chester County, Pa. where they had been working on the farm.” After the families were reunited, the father and the youngest son returned to Page County, to wait out the end of the war.

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid. Several other Page County Confederates have also been identified as having “gone North” or “across the lines.” Records of the Tenth Virginia Infantry are particularly detailing when it comes to these men. Over a dozen men can are identified
Not all deserters headed north. Some hid in the mountains surrounding Page County, and, in some cases, took the opportunity to snipe passing Union patrols. Two such men, Frank and Walker Jenkins, had enlisted in Captain William H. Rice’s Eighth Star New Market Artillery in 1861. After reenlisting on 15 February 1862 and receiving sixty-day furloughs and fifty-dollar bounties, the men overstayed their furloughs and were absent without leave by 21 May 1862. Two of many who used the mountains to “keep out of the service,” the Jenkins brothers fired on a detachment of Union cavalry as it advanced towards Milam’s Gap in the Blue Ridge during the third occupation of the county in the summer of 1862. “The soldiers were riding at a slow pace and when within a few hundred yards of them the three men raised up and fired on them with muskets . . . doing but little damage, more than slightly wounding one or two of their men. In the return fire, both Frank and Walker Jenkins were killed.”

With the Jenkins brothers was Mark Berry, who had been among the first to volunteer in the ranks of the Thirty-third Virginia on 1 June 1861. Berry was also a chronic deserter, having first deserted a month after he enlisted. Captured and fined, he deserted again on 10 March 1862. When the Jenkins brothers were killed, Berry “threw up his hands and surrendered, thus saving his life.” Union troops took Berry to Luray, where he was found guilty of bushwhacking and sentenced to be executed the following as taking the oath of allegiance and sent North after being captured. Most were sent to either Philadelphia, Pennsylvania or Martinsburg, West Virginia.

24 Moore, The Danville, Eighth Star New Market and Dixie Artillery, 76. Rice’s Company was formed in neighboring Shenandoah County, but had a number of men from Page County in the ranks.

25 At the time the Jenkins brothers deserted, Rice’s Company was operating with General Stonewall Jackson’s Army of the Valley in the Shenandoah Valley.

day. Late that night, however, Berry escaped. Later recaptured by Confederate conscript hunters, Berry was returned to his regiment in November 1862 and sentenced by court-martial to thirty days hard labor. He deserted again in the spring of 1863, this time for good.  

An entirely different class of disaffected Confederates was those who, after being captured and reaching a prisoner of war camp, joined the Union army rather than endure the hardships of being a prisoner-of-war. As can be seen in the substantial number of men who were held as prisoners-of-war through the summer of 1865, those that took the step to become "galvanized Yankees" proved to be the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, for having taken the oath and joining the Union military, these men offer evidence that the spirit of Confederate nationalism was secondary to a greater desire to survive.

One of the "galvanized Yankees" were Private Columbus Skelton of the Tenth Virginia Infantry. Skelton, along with his brother Charles, had enlisted in the "Page Volunteers" on 2 June 1861. Both had intermittent records of being absent without leave, but neither actually deserted. When Charles Skelton fell at Gettysburg on 3 July 1863, Columbus remained behind with his dead brother, was captured, and sent to Fort McHenry and later Point Lookout, Maryland. After less than three months at Point Lookout, Columbus accepted the offer to join the Union army. On 25 January 1864, he took the oath of allegiance and, as a corporal, became one of a number of "Galvanized Yankees" who had enlisted in the First United States Volunteers.  

\footnote{Ibid; Reidenbaugh, *33rd Virginia Infantry*, 112.}

\footnote{Union Military Record of Columbus Skelton. Skelton died at Fort Rice in the Dakota Territory in January 1866. Several other Page County Confederates have also...}
One of the reasons soldiers decided to desert may have been a natural aversion to combat. Not all men were ready for such service and many had borne witness to the slaughter before deserting. Even so, Weitz states very clearly that “studies to date suggest that deserters were not cowards, or at least most of them were not.” Likewise, the thought that the men were fighting because the “Yankees were down here” may apply to some, but certainly not to all men. The service of men in the regular army units should also be carefully scrutinized before one can presume that an accurate measurement of loyalties can be made. As the war progressed, a number of factors altered the thinking of men who had joined voluntarily. The reasons for becoming a disaffected Confederate ranged from losing faith in the “Cause” to concern about families at home.

Beginning in 1862, several incidents took place in Page County that drew soldiers away from the field. Civilian lives were in danger and lost at home at the hands of both Confederate and Union soldiers alike, as well as at the hands of overzealous secessionists. With more of a sense of localism and a greater concern for the well-being of the family at home, Confederate nationalism did not take priority in the minds of Confederate soldiers. As pointed out by historian Mark Weitz, “A nation that held its

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been identified as “galvanized Yankees.” John Tobin, Thornton W. Beylor and James W. Jewell all joined the First United States Volunteers. Jewell only did so with the intent to desert from the Union army when the opportunity arose. He deserted and made his way back to Page County, and was a bushwhacker for a while before returning to his Confederate company. Others who left the Confederate army and joined the Union army before being sent to prisoner of war camp included Joseph S. Rider of the “Massanutten Rangers” who reportedly “joined Custer.” New York born James Conner, also of the “Massanutten Rangers,” claimed upon being captured that he had been conscripted into the Confederate army. After deserting to the Union army, he joined the Third Maryland (U.S.) Cavalry. Other former Page County Confederates have also been identified as “going across the lines” and joining the Union army, but such service can be difficult to prove, as in the case of Joshua C. Southard, who joined the Union army under an alias.

29 Weitz, More Damning than Slaughter, xvii.
citizens and its army together on the ancient notion of *patriae* had to be able to convince its soldiers and civilians that the best way to protect home in the long run was to fight in a venue that for most was far from home.”

Even so, as in the case of the aforementioned Jenkins brothers, soldiers did not need to be far from home for domestic concerns to lead them to desert. At the time the Jenkins brothers deserted, they were a part of General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s army operating in the Shenandoah Valley, during which time Page County was twice occupied by Union armies.

Concern for their families escalated in the summer of 1862. While the town of Luray had just narrowly escaped being burned to the ground, during the occupation of July 1862, Union General Adolph Wilhelm August Friedrick Baron von Steinwehr took harsh measures to protect his men from the threat of bushwhackers.

Earlier that month, Union General John Pope had issued General Order Number Five which allowed for the seizure of grain, meat, and crops by Federal soldiers. But the more scorned order among the Luray citizenry was from General Order Number Eleven which called for taking “up all active sympathizers, and either hold them as prisoners or put them beyond our lines. Handle that class without gloves, and take their property for public use.” The distinction between sympathizers and disloyal citizens was not clearly defined and left the majority of the population fair game. If the citizen had been disloyal, but was willing to take the

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31 Page County was occupied by Union forces twice during the 1862 Shenandoah Valley (March – June); first from 19 April until 12 May by forces under General Nathaniel Banks, and again from 2 June to 15 June by forces under the command of General James Shields. After Jackson left the Valley in mid-May, the county was subject to reconnaissance expeditions on both 22 June and 29 June. Of course, these spans of occupation are minor in comparison to the multiple occupations of other towns in the lower Shenandoah Valley during the campaign.

32 This Union occupation lasted from 21 July until 9 August.
oath of allegiance, the citizen could “remain at their homes and pursue in good faith their accustomed avocations.”

Page County was quickly impacted as all male citizens of Luray were rounded up by General Franz Sigel’s men and placed in the court house for a time. None of the Luray inhabitants were sent South, but in Rappahannock County, General Robert Milroy, headquartered in Sperryville, enforced the order with more zeal and sent at least eleven citizens out of the homes and out of “Federal lines.” In fact, in the wake of General Order Number Eleven, General Steinwehr issued Special Order Number Six commanding Major William Stedman of the Sixth Ohio Cavalry to arrest five of the most prominent citizens of Luray, and send them to his headquarters as hostages. “They will be held as long as we remain in this vicinity. They will share my table and be treated as friends; but for every one of our soldiers who may be shot by ‘bushwhackers,’ one of these hostages will suffer death, unless the perpetrators of the deed are delivered to me. It is well known that these so-called ‘bushwhackers’ are inhabitants of the district, and encouraged in the cowardly acts by the prominent citizens here.” Taken from their homes, the five were held in the upstairs portion of the Nicholas Yager home and mercantile, which also served as the Masonic Meeting Hall.

In speaking about General Steinwehr and the zeal in which he operated as a occupation officer, Confederate Veteran Theodore H. Lauck remembered that “Steinwehr

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33 _DeBow’s review, Agricultural, commercial, industrial progress and resources_, Volume 2, Issue 2 (New Orleans, J.D.B. DeBow, 1866), 197. The order was issued from Greer’s Farm, Virginia on 13 July 1862.


... had imposed himself and his staff upon my father’s household, and foraged at his table, and then threatened to rob them of husband and father! Our women were in a terrible state of fear and anxiety, and their teeth on edge, as it were, that summer of 62, and even the sweetest tempered of them rebelled against the nervous strain and their speech was made bitter by the unusual trials.”

In the same letter to the newspaper, Lauck also inserted the comments made by his thirteen year-old sister, Lucie. In a letter to Lauck written at the time of the occupation, Lucie wrote:

Pa is not at home on account of the Yankees; they took up every male citizen in town about two weeks ago, for the purpose of making them take the oath. They kept them in prison for four or five days and finally paroled them to go to their homes until they were called for, and if they went a step out of town they were to be hung. In two or three days they were called for and Pa, with others who were called strong Secessionists, were kept in close prison away from the other prisoners for two days and then they were sent across the river into our lines and if they are ever caught in Yankee lines they will be shot as spies.

Local Henry F. Broyles also commented on the occupation and of the taking of hostages. It seems possible in this instance, that the Union troops were holding men to assure safe passage out of the Shenandoah Valley. Broyles remembered, "When we arrived at Beahm’s toll gate they formed us in line in the orchard and informed us that they were going to shoot us. They did not carry out their threat to shoot us, but marched us to the top of the mountain and turned us over to the provost guard.” After being held in a granary and subsisting on rations of “one cup of water and two hardtack per day,” the men were not released for six days. Broyles remembered that his father had been sick the

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
entire time while confined in the granary and regularly told the Union soldiers “Shoot me, but spare my boy.”

Stress among Confederate soldiers in the field was not always over the activities of Union soldiers on the home front. During another time in which Northern troops were in the county, guides were sought out amongst the civilian population and placed in harms way, subject to bushwhacking by Confederate deserters. Jacob Coffman remembered that a “company of some 40 cavalrmen came by our house” and, having been told that Coffman’s father was “well acquainted with the Blue Ridge mountains,” told him, “You come with us and we will take care of you and bring you back safe and sound.” Putting Coffman on a horse and keeping him in the rear and guarded by two men, the contingent headed for the mountains. “There they asked Father to tell them where to find cattle they were looking for. He told them he could not and would not tell them anything to give them a lead and it was then sundown. It being around three o’clock when they took Father away. So they gave up their job and wound their way back to the River, getting back to our house about 11 o’clock at night.” Jacob Coffman recalled that his father did not “relish the trip knowing what had happened to the late William Martin.” Requested by Union troops to lead them into the mountains, when Martin came back he did so “with a bullet through his lungs from which he suffered for many months and it is safe to say he

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38 Henry F. Broyles, “A Thrilling Experience,” *Page News & Courier*, 13 October 1911, 3. It is interesting to note that in the Southern Loyalist Claim Application File of James C. Robertson, one of Perry Broyles’ brothers, Andrew Jackson Broyles, despite being named in this incident as one of the hostages, gave written testimony in support of Robertson’s application and made the claim that he was himself a devout Union man during the war. Incidentally, Robertson’s was one of only six applications approved.
never did fully recover from the wound. This was inflicted by Southern bushwhackers, thinking Martin had volunteered to guide them.”

Isabella Knight Painter was the victim of a similar incident in 1864. One local remembered that it was a case of a North Carolina soldier being drunk on local apple jack that caused her death. Apple jack was in ready supply throughout the war in Page County and was frequently sought out by passing soldiers, no matter the side. In this incident the drunk soldier asked Mrs. Painter “for something to eat and she told him she could not accommodate him and he said he would kill her and she made an effort to run up the stairs. The stairs faced the road, and she only made a few steps when he shot her dead, she falling as though kneeling on the steps.”

In February 1863, another incident involving apple jack resulted in death. Jacob Coffman recalled a pair of Union soldiers who were barely able to “navigate.” Coffman remembered that the men came encountered his father and demanded that he cook some eggs. When Coffman explained that he could not and that he was a mile from home, one of the soldiers threatened, while pointing his pistol at his head, “Cook them or I will blow your head off.” Coffman’s father pleaded, “For the Lord’s sake, don’t’ shoot me,’ at the same time pushing the gun from his head with his hand and the man turning to Daniel Cubbage, a peaceable citizen and Southern soldier who was at the time at home on a sick

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40 Jacob H. Seekford, “Jacob’s Well,” Page News & Courier, 29 March 1927, 7. Isabella Painter’s husband, Joseph, had been a member of the Ninety-seventh Virginia Militia, but never reported for duty and any record of service beyond that is uncertain.
furlough. He took aim at his head and pulled the trigger, splitting his head wide open from front to back."\textsuperscript{41}

As the war progressed and the dreadful episode known as the “Burning” laid waste to hundreds of farms, mills and homes in the Shenandoah Valley, Confederates did not automatically seek out revenge, nor did it bring back to the ranks those who had deserted in the years before. In fact, to many in the Valley, the “Burning” and the subsequent defeat of General Jubal Early’s Confederate army at the Battle of Cedar Creek signaled the end to the war in the Shenandoah Valley. In reflecting on the situation in the Valley and upon relieving General Early from command, historian Gary Gallagher noted that General Robert E. Lee even recognized the severity of the blow to the Confederacy. Gallagher wrote that the “defeats in the Shenandoah Valley had alienated that vital region’s citizens and raised doubts among Early’s soldiers.”\textsuperscript{42}

In the case of Page County, the wake of the “Burning” was so severe that on 28 November 1864, the county made an appeal to General James L. Kemper, the commandant of conscripts, to exempt a number of soldiers from duty. The letter read:

By a recent call made for merchants and millers by the military authorities, we have

\textsuperscript{41} Coffman, 25 February, 1927, 6.
\textsuperscript{42} Gary W. Gallagher in *Nolan and Gallagher*, 38; John L. Heatwole, *The Burning: Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville, Va.: Howell Press, Inc., 1998), 219. Under the command of General Philip H. Sheridan, Union forces had inflicted substantial loss among Valley residents. From 26 September until 8 October 1864, Sheridan’s men had destroyed 630 barns; forty-seven flour mills; four sawmills; one woolen mill; 3,982 tons of hay, straw and fodder; more than 400,000 bushels of wheat; three furnaces; 515 acres of corn; 750 bushels of oats; more than 3,000 head of livestock; 560 barrels of flour; two tanneries; one railroad depot; one locomotive engine; and three boxcars. The total war concept and its demoralization to the Southern civilian population are argued in detail in Mark Grimsley’s *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Grimsley, however, does not discuss the impact of the demoralization of Southern civilians on the Confederate soldier in the field.
been deprived of the services of most of the mechanics and millers of this county. We are now unable to have the limited quantity of grain that has been left us converted into meal and wholly unable to have such mill work done as is absolutely necessary to have done. In view therefore of these facts, with the hope that you will be able to grant us such relief as we regard absolutely necessary this court most respectfully requests that the following named persons be detailed as millers, etc.  

In all twelve blacksmiths, two millwrights, three millers, three wagon makers, six shoemakers, and two tinners were requested by name. To make matters worse, the winter of 1864-65 was one of the “hardest” on record. The Rockingham Register and Advertiser of 24 February 1865, reported that the “present winter will stand out, in all coming time, as one of the hardest, one of the severest ever known in this latitude. It commenced very early, and has continued, with but a few days of intermission until the present period, within a week of the first spring month – March.”

In reflecting on the condition of Virginia in the last year of the war, Confederate Edward Porter Alexander recalled that “the situation of the country at large was one of almost as great deprivation & suffering as that of the army itself; and many localities even of much greater.” Alexander pointed out that, considering the state of affairs at the end of the war, “naturally, the wives and mothers left at home wrote longingly for the return of their husbands and sons in the ranks of Virginia. And naturally, many of them could not resist their appeals, & deserted in order to return and care for their families.”

However, as desperate as appeals were from Page County for relief from conscription, in other areas of the county one would think the war had already come to an end and lives had resumed. Lieutenant George Daniel Buswell, of the “Page Grays” had

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43 Page County Minute Book, 1845-1870.
been home for a number of months after having been wounded in the leg at Spotsylvania Court House. As grim as the county court made it appear to the Confederate government, Buswell painted quite a different picture in his diary. Having taken on the role as a teacher for local schoolchildren during his recovery, as early as Thursday, 22 December 1864, the lieutenant wrote of sleighing to school and that “the boys turned the teacher out at noon.” A few days later on Sunday, 25 December, Buswell spoke of Christmas and of drinking eggnog and then on to a family member’s house where there was “a nice crowd present.” In the days that followed dancing seemed to be the business of each day through New Year’s Eve. On 26 December, Buswell, in a crowd of folks, and along with Lieutenant Oliver Hazard Perry Kite, the earlier mentioned and notorious conscript officer, since wounded severely in the spring campaign, headed for Mr. John Welfley’s where “they had a dance.” Welfley was one of those who sworn in affidavits in support of George Summers’ loyalist claim that he had been a Unionist. The following day there was a dance at Jack Kite’s. With a brief respite on 28 December, the pleasant pastime resumed once again with yet another dance at Noah Kite’s, followed by yet another on New Year’s Eve, at Mr. Leonard S. Printz’s house.45 By the opening months of 1865, the two things that concerned people the most in Page was survival and moving on with life. In neither the diaries of Buswell or Kite was there any mention of nationalistic feeling for the Confederacy’s demise looming fast on the horizon.

While some contemporary works examine the reasons why Confederates fought, an equally complicated question is to examine why Confederates did not fight. Detailed

examinations of Southern Unionists, "reluctant rebels" and "disaffected Confederates" severely compromise the myth of Southern nationalism perpetuated by the Lost Cause ideology. Contemporary Confederate heritage groups would like everyone to believe that, as in the time of the Civil War, Southerners should once again stand united against attacks on Southern heritage. Inevitably, in order to preserve the truth in history, especially in a society that devours more popular history than scholarly history, there is a need to dispute such misguided historical perceptions and the modern arguments to which they contribute. This effort to thwart what is really revisionist history, therefore, leads us back to the need to reexamine Southern society in the Civil War era.

Furthermore, the advantage on focusing on state and local studies of these three groups of Southern citizens will prove critical to a true understanding of the diversity in Southern sentiment. As Daniel E. Sutherland stated, "the emphasis on state and local studies of Unionists and antigovernment Confederate activity coincides with a decided trend toward the study of communities as a means of understanding the war." By "getting to know" the people in small communities, local studies, notes Sutherland, "can infuse our understanding of the war with the gritty experience of real people, people with names, and families who wondered what each day would bring, how long the war would last, and how much more chaos, destruction, and suspense they would be asked to endure. This is one area of research where it is important not to miss the trees for the forest."46

Perhaps Edward Everett, in his lesser known address at Gettysburg on 19 November 1863, was correct in saying that the South was full of Unionists and if a public referendum would have been "fairly" submitted "to the mass of people in any single

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Southern State, a majority of ballots would have been given in its favor.” Despite the misperceptions set forth by the Lost Cause and contemporary Confederate heritage organizations redefining the South as solidly behind the Confederacy, findings to the contrary would demand that we begin to look at more of the population as under a reign of fear and under the oppression of a Confederate government than in support of it.
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