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Set Adrift by the Confederacy: The Civil War Occupation of Virginia's Eastern Shore

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SET ADRIFT BY THE CONFEDERACY: THE CIVIL WAR OCCUPATION
OF VIRGINIA'S EASTERN SHORE

by

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ABSTRACT

SET ADRIFT BY THE CONFEDERACY: THE CIVIL WAR OCCUPATION OF VIRGINIA’S EASTERN SHORE

Paige Kelly Solomon
Old Dominion University, 2014
Director: Dr. Timothy J. Orr

Despite the profusion of literature examining the importance of Virginia’s Civil War, the Old Dominion’s two Eastern Shore counties have been too often ignored by historians. To correct this deficiency, this thesis examines the events that occurred there during the Civil War Era, illuminating specifically President Lincoln’s attempt to rekindle loyalty to the Union through an evolving military occupation strategy. Although Federal soldiers and sailors invaded the land and waters of the Eastern Shore with relative ease, citizens found ways to resist occupation and aid the Confederacy. In the end, the four-year Federal occupation brought an end to slavery, but it failed to destroy the conservative social order that ruled Northampton and Accomack Counties. Truly, the Civil War brought changes to the Eastern Shore, but the region’s remote nature insulated it from some of the conflict’s most revolutionary effects.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Etna Nottingham Kelly Walker and Warren Thomas Kelly, Jr., who have given me a lifetime of support and encouragement and have been tremendous examples of hard work and patience. I also want to thank my sons, Miller and Russell, for their love, understanding, and help carrying books through this laborious process. This would have never been possible without the unwavering support of my husband, Geoff, who pitched in and did more than his fair share so that I could complete this work. I would also like to thank my aunt, Janey Nottingham Parsons, whose ongoing interest in this work led me to a key source.

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INTRODUCTION

In the annals of Civil War historiography, information on the Eastern Shore of Virginia – and the sentiments of the people and the events that took place there – is conspicuously absent. Due to its remote location and limited communication with the rest of the state, the area and its people have been overlooked and forgotten. Howard Pyle, a journalist for Harper's New Monthly from Wilmington, Delaware, visited the Eastern Shore in 1876. He was struck by the bounty of the land and what he saw as the backward culture there. He wrote:

Thus the southern peninsula, the garden spot of the county, to whose shore Nature seems to have invited man by every bounty she could lavish upon it, appears to be cut loose from the rest of the world, sleepily floating in the indolent sea of the past, incapable of crossing the gulf which separates it from outside modern life, and undesirous of joining in the race toward the wonderful future. The poor are woefully ignorant, as the upper classes are, in many instances, indolently unprogressive, though far less so than formerly. In short, the Virginia portion of the peninsula seems sunk in a Rip Van Winkle sleep that has lasted a hundred instead of twenty years, and that as yet shows but small signs of awakening.¹

Little attention has been paid to the Eastern Shore by Civil War historians. Stephen Ash, one of the few who has shown an interest in the region, incorporated events on the Shore into his study of Union occupation. Ash cited the region as the test case for

the transition from conciliatory policy to hard war policy. Other than Ash, those who have written about the Eastern Shore have been natives. James Mears produced several informative works, recording valuable details related to the secession crisis and the Union invasion and occupation. Alton Brooks Parker Barnes wrote *Eastern Shore Soldiers: The Civil War 1858-1865*, vol. 2 of *Pungoteague to Petersburg* about Confederate military preparations and the Federal invasion, but did not examine events on the Shore. Beyond 1861, his narrative focused on the stories of Eastern Shore soldiers who fought in mainland Virginia. Similarly, Barry W. Miles’s *Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia: Confederate and Union* cataloged biographical information on the military men from the region. Only one other published work has appeared. Written in 1961, Susie Ames’s article “Federal Policy toward the Eastern Shore of Virginia,” recounted General Dix’s proclamation and the “bloodless” invasion by Union forces, but did not carry the story of Union occupation beyond 1861.


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Army's Wartime Occupation of Southeastern Virginia," studied Union occupation in Southeastern Virginia, although the Eastern Shore generally took a back seat to the study of larger communities in Virginia's Tidewater. Accomack and Northampton Counties were tangential at best. William T. Alderson's thesis "The Freedmen's Bureau in Virginia" provided valuable information about the beginnings of reconstruction on the Eastern Shore which shaped the development of contract labor systems elsewhere across the South.

Recent Civil War scholarship has focused on microhistory, examining particular regions within the South in order to better understand local dynamics and the role each area played in the progression of the war. Historians commonly assume that not much of interest happened on the Eastern Shore of Virginia during the Civil War. It fell under Union control early in the war, and the people gave up without a fight. The truth is far removed from that superficial portrayal. Did the occupation of the Eastern Shore early in the war really mean that it weathered the conflict with no ill effects? In my research, I attempted to discover how secessionist sentiment developed on the Eastern Shore as compared with Virginia as a whole, as well as other parts of the South. Did secessionism have widespread support, or did elites force the lower classes to follow them in rebellion? How did Union occupation affect the Eastern Shore counties, and how did the people react — were they content to live under Federal control? How did the process of emancipation occur since Lincoln granted the region an exemption from the Emancipation Proclamation? What help, if any, the Eastern Shore gave to the

7 Stephen B. Sledge, "The Bitter Fruit of Secession: The Union Army's Wartime Occupation of Southeastern Virginia" (PhD. diss., George Mason University, 2012).
Confederacy through blockade running? The answers to these questions paint the picture of a region that figured centrally into the Civil War's transformative processes. Northampton and Accomack Counties may have been set adrift by the Confederacy, but this did not shield the counties from the war's drastic changes.

Chapter 1 examines the process of secession. What drove the secessionist movement on Virginia's Eastern Shore? I conclude that secessionist leanings were predicated on economic factors and the growth of southern nationalism. A popular movement took hold of eastern Virginia, emphasizing the importance of slavery in upholding southern values. I believe that Eastern Shore secessionists adhered to a spirit of constitutional liberty, one that led them to defend slavery. As James McPherson concluded, in defending the institution of slavery, southerners defended their own liberty and freedom from perceived tyranny. This ideology was not exclusive to the planter class, yeomen farmers bought into it as well. Aaron Sheehan-Dean posited that democratization of Virginia politics in 1850 brought middle and lower class men to the defense of slavery. This sense of Southern nationalism was prevalent on the Eastern Shore but economic factors cut across the movement yielding a more complex picture. The market-oriented economy in Accomack County left doubts in the minds of the population. In particular, two islands, Chincoteague and Tangier, whose economies relied on the steady export of oysters to northern cities, remained staunchly loyalist to the Union. But overall, growing sectionalism raised a concern among white residents that

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10 Aaron Sheehan-Dean, "It is Old Virginia and We Must Have It: Overcoming Regionalism in Civil War Virginia" in *Crucible of the Civil War: Virginia from Secession to Commemoration*, Edited by Edward L. Ayers, Gary W. Gallagher, Andrew J. Torge, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).
abolitionists might come to power and hurt the interests of the majority who relied on slavery.\footnote{William A. Link, \textit{Roots of Secession}, \textit{Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia}. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 63, 96.}

A deterrent for anyone trying to gain an understanding of the complicated events that rocked the Eastern Shore comes from the fact that Northampton and Accomack counties came under the control of different Union military administrations at different times. Thus, Chapter 2 analyzes the different Union administrations and the policies they developed. Once the region succumbed to the Union in 1861, it fell under the control of the Middle Department, and, soon after, the Union Army tried to annex it to the state of Maryland for the army's convenience. Citizens of Virginia's Eastern Shore resisted this process and tried to make the best of their situation under the Restored Government of Virginia. Under the auspices of sympathetic Union commanders, the region fared relatively well, witnessing no wide-spread guerrilla conflict as erupted in the trans-Mississippi or Confederate Appalachia. As Union troop levels declined, Confederate sympathizers emerged from anonymity and grew increasingly vocal. Once the army granted General Benjamin Butler's request to transfer the two counties to his District of Virginia and North Carolina, restrictions increased and conditions worsened for the white population. By the end of the war, the Eastern Shore became a region marred by violence. Oddly enough, this region of the Confederacy – one of the first occupied by Union forces – became one of the least reconstructed areas by war's end.

Yet, some Eastern Shore citizens welcomed the Union invasion. Chapter 2, then, also explains the contours of loyalty and dissent, revealing how and why white residents came to support Union occupation or resist its implementation. Quite rationally, some
believed they could not win against such a large force. Others held onto hope of a
generous occupation policy, believing in the words of Major General John Adams Dix's
Proclamation, which promised to protect all property including slaves. Most white
citizens were loyal to the Confederacy though, and when faced with occupation, they
tried to retain their way of life, hoping that somehow, if they outlasted their occupiers, the
Confederacy would eventually liberate them. But not all Confederate residents believed
this. Some used the time of Union occupation to wreak their vengeance on the bluecoats.
Still others used the turmoil of military occupation for personal gain, rising to positions
of power from which they had been barred previously. In short, the war turned neighbor
against neighbor.

As Stephen Ash explained, the communalism wrought by the southern, agrarian
existence tied yeoman farmers together with the planter elite and upheld the social order.
Small farmers believed they shared interests with planters; therefore, they joined them in
defense of slavery and in support of secession. The experience of the occupied south
changed with evolving Union occupation policy. Conservative, lenient policies
transformed into restrictive regulations that overturned the status quo. White citizens
viewed these changes as a vindictive betrayal. Much like other areas of the occupied
South, white citizens on the Eastern Shore fought their own private civil war, one where a
new yeoman elite used the distracting forces of the conflict to unseat the planter
oligarchy. J. G. Potts, a Unionist from the Eastern Shore, appealed to the “mechanics,

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12 Stephen Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South 1861-1865* (Chapel
tenants, and laborers" to stand up against "the small potatoe aristocracy" and drive them out of power.¹⁴

The North's need for soldiers, not the revolutionary changes of the war's goals, ended slavery on the Eastern Shore. Chapter 3 examines the process of emancipation on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The process of liberation did not occur as it did elsewhere. In other regions, Union invasion ushered in emancipation of the enslaved. Slaves flocked with the lines of Union troops seeking protection and usually they received it.¹⁵ As Eric Foner noted, the Union army operated as an instrument of freedom.¹⁶ This did not happen in Accomack and Northampton Counties. On the Eastern Shore, General Dix forbade army troops from interfering with slave property. In fact, they were bound to uphold the institution.¹⁷ They could offer no protection nor could they allow escaped slaves within their lines. In the same way, the Emancipation Proclamation had little effect. Although it signaled the portents to come, the document specifically exempted the Eastern Shore. Curiously, on the Shore, the recruitment of black men as soldiers in the Union Army ushered in change more swiftly than any other measure. By enlisting, a slave could gain immediate and permanent freedom. Black soldiers received a lucrative federal bounty capable of settling them once the war ended, and while away at war, their families received security from Freedmen's Bureau agents. In short, once Union officers from Maryland used the counties of Northampton and Accomack as their own pools of recruits, slavery disintegrated. Eric Foner established that the recruitment of blacks in the

¹⁷ Major General Dix to President Lincoln, November 15, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 431.
army undermined slavery in the Border States. Unlike the rest of the Old Dominion, the emancipation of blacks on Virginia’s Eastern Shore resembled the path taken by the Border States where “military service pushed the Union’s commitment to abolition beyond the terms of the Proclamation to embrace, first, black soldiers, and, shortly before the war’s end, their families as well.”

Chapter 4 examines the role of the U.S. naval blockade and Shoremen’s resistance to it. According to Francis Bradlee, blockade running sustained the Confederacy for the last two years of the war. The agricultural nature of the Confederacy meant that vital supplies had to be imported. Blockade runners brought in food, ordnance, provisions, medicine, and hospital supplies and shipped cotton out for export to England. The Eastern Shore could not participate in this exchange. It produced no cotton and it landed no weapons. However, the Eastern Shore became the nexus of a different kind of smuggling. Local captains regularly slipped past the Federal blockade in small boats. They transported small quantities of clothing, food, and contraband from the North to the western shore, often returning with Confederate newspapers and illegal mail. They also shipped people past the thin line of Federal patrol boats. Some left the Shore to join the Confederate army, others fled to escape the Union occupation, and still others to relay information to Richmond. Without a doubt, these small shipments provided some assistance. They were not as significant as the trans-Atlantic aid, nor were they as well known, but the Eastern Shore’s response to the blockade proved to be as complex and active as anyplace else during the Civil War.

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All of this suggests that the Eastern Shore was more than just a sleepy backwater within the greater storm of violence that embodied the Civil War. The changes wrought by the war made the Eastern Shore counties a laboratory where Unionists could visualize revolutionary changes and their potential long-term significance. President Lincoln took a particular interest in the occupation policy indicating the region’s importance. In August 1863, he intervened in a situation involving 400 former Confederate soldiers turned Union citizens in which the commanding officer, Major General Robert Schenck, intended to change policy and require these men to take the oath of loyalty or be imprisoned or sent into exile into the Confederate lines. Concerned that the promises made to these men during the invasion be kept, Lincoln wrote to his Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton:

In the autumn of 1861, certain persons in armed rebellion, against the United States, within the counties of Accomac and Northampton, laid down their arms upon certain terms then proposed to them by General Dix, in and by a certain proclamation. It is now said that these persons or some of them, are about to be forced into the military lines of the existing rebellion, unless they ill take an oath prescribed to them since, and not included in, Gen. Dix' proclamation referred to. Now, my judgement is that no one of these men should be forced from his home, who has not broken faith with the government, according to the terms fixed by Gen. Dix and these men. It is bad faith in the government to force new terms upon such as have kept faith with these men -- at least so it seems to me.²⁰

President Lincoln expected the region to revert to loyalism immediately. He discovered that bad policy could hurt that loyalty and hurt the project of reconstruction. By occupying a fiercely secessionist region, emancipating its chattel, and curtailing its citizens’ maritime activities, the U.S. government learned many hard lessons about how to reconstruct a rebellious territory in a time of war. (These lessons aided the Union invasion of the South elsewhere, but the war left the Eastern Shore counties as a failed experiment.) Miscues, missteps, and injustice – on land and sea alike – abounded. Neither the occupiers nor the occupied were completely innocent. As necessities of prosecuting the war evolved, national government policies changed, leaving the white citizens of the Eastern Shore feeling as if that they had been deceived. What they wanted more than anything else during the period of occupation was to hold onto their old social order, which the war had taken away from them. Once slavery dissolved around them, they looked in desperation for ways to revive their economy and regain their status.

When the war finally ended in 1865, the thought of resurrecting their loyalty to the U.S. government seemed impossible. It is no surprise, then, that when Howard Pyle visited the Eastern Shore in 1876 he saw Rip Van Winkle. As the laboratory for postwar reconstruction, the Eastern Shore had paid the price for the Union’s experimentation, its residents falling asleep, even as a new age dawned elsewhere in the South. This thesis tells that story.
QUESTIONS OF LOYALTY

Both counties of Virginia’s Eastern Shore were reluctant to support secession. White citizens felt strongly about protecting the institution of slavery, but they also wanted to defend the Union. Virginia, they believed, was the crucible of that Union. Only after Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s call for troops did Northampton County galvanize in support of the Confederacy, shifting its loyalty to support for fellow southerners. Accomack County citizens remained loyal to the Union even longer. Only after they were outvoted in the final round at Virginia’s Secession Convention did they embark upon the experiment to break away from the United States government. Even then, coercion and intimidation played a part in Accomack County’s popular vote to ratify secession. Though both counties had been strong supporters of the Union, Southern nationalism emerged to sever those ties. These Shoremen saw no choice but to join the Confederacy, which they viewed as the rightful defender of the true spirit of liberty.¹ The few unionists in Northampton County were warned by their friends not to voice their opinions.²

Unlike the South Carolina planter elite who were the architects of secession, Virginia’s Eastern Shore elite demonstrated reticence on matters of disunion. The South Carolina gentry led the nullification movement, the threat to secede in 1852, and the movement to reopen the African slave trade.³ The Eastern Shore’s population hoped that

such intersectional unpleasantness could be avoided, yet some conservative leaders, such as Northampton County’s Miers Fisher, saw the interests of Virginia as inextricably tied to the interests of the Cotton South. Fisher sympathized with the interests of South Carolina and even walked out of the second Democratic National Convention after that state’s delegation left in protest.⁴

The election of the Republican Abraham Lincoln to the presidency proved to be the final straw. South Carolina withdrew from the Union in December 1860, and in response, the Shoremen called for a preemptive move. They believed that if Virginia did not secede, they would fall victim to abolition at the hands of the Union.⁵ Unlike the Deep South, where fire-eaters led the population to secede between December 1860 and February 1861, in Virginia, moderates dominated the political discourse. Still, in an ideological sense, moderates in the Old Dominion were not far removed from extremists in that they too insisted on the constitutionality of secession and believed in the necessity of it once Lincoln called for troops to bring the Deep South back into the Union by force.⁶ It was not until fighting ensued between the Deep South and the United States government that the white citizens of Northampton County resigned themselves to leave the Union which they had held so dear. Southern loyalties were too strong to allow Shoremen to take up arms against their regional brethren. As in South Carolina, the upper class of the Eastern Shore, who controlled the most significant shares of land and

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⁵ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, “It is Old Virginia and We Must Have It: Overcoming Regionalism in Civil War Virginia” in Crucible of the Civil War: Virginia from Secession to Commemoration, ed. by Edward L. Ayers, Gary W. Gallagher, Andrew J. Torge (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 62.
slave property, led the movement to perpetuate the existing social order, complete with
the institution of slavery which lay at its core.\textsuperscript{7} The Shore's elite were hardly alone in
their thinking. The majority of whites believed that the institution of slavery was
righteous and paternalistic; they viewed slaves as their birthright. The political climate
included resistance by slaves and increasing anxiety among slaveholders. Through the
1850s, the politics of slavery became the basis of southern nationalism, and for all of its
isolation, the Eastern Shore was not immune.\textsuperscript{8} Middle- and lower-class men were
increasingly drawn into the defense of slavery.\textsuperscript{9}

Within Virginia, the threat of a possible attack on slavery by Westerners
heightened fears and hastened the political actions of Easterners. The Virginia
Constitutional Convention of 1850 - 1851 brought significant changes to the calculation
of representation in the state government, thus highlighting Virginia's devotion to
slavery. Supporters of white representation only insisted that the state government
should protect the interests of all white men across the state. Property, they asserted,
should not give certain regions a greater voice in government. They claimed that the
continuation of mixed representation would sustain inequality among white men and
provide undue advantages to slave owners. In turn, slave owners feared the ascension of
a non-slaveholding majority which might one day succeed in abolishing slavery. Eastern
slave owners shuddered to think of the ramifications of abolition in their part of the state,
where slaves outnumbered whites.\textsuperscript{10} This political debate heightened the sensitivities of

\textsuperscript{7} Sinha, The Counterrevolution of Slavery, 1-17.
\textsuperscript{8} Sinha, The Counterrevolution of Slavery, 1-17.
\textsuperscript{9} Sheehan-Dean, "It is Old Virginia and We Must Have It," 62.
\textsuperscript{10} Link, Roots of Secession, 11-9.
the slaveholders of eastern Virginia to protect the institution of slavery and the power that it gave them.

In the state of Virginia, slavery remained a dominant force despite the expanding market economy and transportation boom in the 1850s. Slave owners still held distinct advantages in the shifting economy, whether they hired out their slaves or sold them to other parts of Virginia or into the Deep South. In 1860, the Tidewater and Piedmont regions of the state contained the majority of Virginia’s slave population. Increasingly democratic political developments establishing universal white male suffrage and popular elections for many local offices only served to increase the fears of citizens through the Tidewater. The protection of slavery became the very foundation of their politics.

While support for secession on Virginia’s Eastern Shore came from the planter aristocracy, it is too simplistic to attribute the movement to a “slavepower conspiracy.” Once the Deep South broke away and Lincoln called for troops, Northampton County’s citizenry showed broad support for secession. The white population shared common interests in maintaining the social order and restricting the black population. In Northampton County during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, free blacks were looked upon with great suspicion and the white population took steps to restrict their personal liberties. In 1806, Virginia passed a law stating that free blacks must leave the state within one year or be subject to re-enslavement. It said:

*And be it further enacted,* That if any slave hereafter emancipated shall remain within this commonwealth more than twelve months after his or her right to

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11 Link, *Roots of Secession*, 29-42.
12 Link, *Roots of Secession*, 63, 96.
freedom shall have accrued, he or she shall forfeit all such right, and may be
apprehended and sold by the overseers of the poor of any county or corporation in
which he or she shall be found, for the benefit of the poor of such county or
corporation.  

County enforcement of those restrictions varied widely, and Northampton County courts
chose to enforce them strictly.

By contrast, Accomack County citizens showed less support for the 1806 law.
Accomack, which shared a border with Maryland and possessed a more diversified
economy, resisted secession until the day the Commonwealth of Virginia decided to
leave the Union. Only then did the electorate begrudgingly grant its assent. Threats and
intimidation faced those who dissented. In these small, tight-knit rural communities,
disagreeing with the majority was a risky business. Independent-mindedness came with a
price for loyalists in Accomack, such as intimidation or imprisonment. When it came
time to vote publicly, most voted to ratify Virginia’s decision to secede. Loyalty to
Virginia and fear of being targeted for retribution led citizens in most communities – with
the notable exception of Chincoteague in Accomack County – to cast their votes in favor
of disunion. Not all Eastern Shore communities’ election results survived, but Eastville,
Northampton’s county seat, cast 505 votes in favor of secession. None were cast against
secession, but there were 673 qualified voters, meaning 168 voters stayed home. 

\[13\] Samuel Shepherd, ed., The Statutes at Large of Virginia, from October Session 1792, to December
Session 1806 (Richmond: Samuel Shepherd, 1836), 3: 251–3.
http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/An_ACT_to_amend_the_several_laws_concerning_slaves_1806.html.

\[14\] Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 30-2.
Demographic differences between the two counties help explain the greater support for the Confederate cause among the population of Northampton County and the greater degree of loyalty to the Union in Accomack County. Proportionately more slave owners lived in Northampton County than in Accomack. Slaveholders made up 13.34% of the white population of Northampton County, compared to 7.25% in Accomack County. Slaves in Northampton outnumbered white citizens by a ratio of 1.29 to 1; however, in Accomack, whites outnumbered slaves by a ratio of 2 to 1. Economic differences also help explain the disparity of secessionist sentiment. Northampton County operated on plantation agriculture; whereas Accomack offered more diversity, with small scale agriculture, and fishing. Widespread support for secession existed in Northampton County though the plantation elite were likely its strongest proponents. Miers Fisher stood out as the most vehement demagogue. Although he was not born into wealth, Fisher came from a long line of Northampton residents, charting his lineage to Virginia's colonial period. Not satisfied with life as a milliner, he studied law and entered the Virginia Bar at the age of twenty-two. He served two nonconsecutive terms as a Jacksonian Democrat in Virginia’s House of Delegates. During his second term, shortly after Nat Turner’s Rebellion, Fisher motioned for the creation of a committee to address ways of increasing the state’s security against domestic rebellion. Fisher headed that committee. In 1830, Fisher owned one acre of land and three slaves. By 1861, he owned nearly 1,400 acres and twenty-one slaves. On March 18, 1861, in Virginia’s

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17 Sara B. Bearrs, “Miers W. Fisher,” Union or Secession Virginians Decide, Virginia Memory Library of Virginia, John T. Kneebone and others, eds., Dictionary of Virginia Biography (Richmond: The Library of
Secession Convention, Fisher implored action saying, “Shall we relieve... [our] degraded and degrading position... in this Federal Union?... [Every] gentleman in this Convention... [must] recognize the fact that our rights have been invaded, our interests paralyzed, our honor infringed, by the Northern states of this confederacy.”¹⁸

Fisher’s pro-slavery opinions were hardly unique, but the antebellum population of the Eastern Shore was unlike the rest of Virginia in that it contained an equal number of blacks and whites. The large number of free blacks on the Shore had been the result of policies enacted during the colony’s early settlement. In the seventeenth century, slaves had been able to earn money, raise crops and livestock, and, if possible, purchase their own freedom.¹⁹ Once free, these individuals could exercise rights such as land ownership, voting, and marriage. Free blacks paid taxes; some even owned their own slaves.²⁰ By the late seventeenth century, about one in five Eastern Shore slaves had gained their freedom.²¹

A changing economy reshaped relations between blacks and whites. By the early eighteenth century, the Shore’s prosperity faded. White citizens tightened their control over the black population. As Ira Berlin put it, Virginia changed from a society with slaves to a slave society.²² In 1723, the Commonwealth of Virginia denied voting rights

¹⁸ William H. Freehling and Craig W. Simpson, eds., Showdown in Virginia: The 1861 Convention and the Fate of the Union (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 139.
²² Berlin, Many Thousands Gone, 8-9.
to blacks and restricted slaveholders' ability to manumit slaves. By the nineteenth century, the changing economy of the Tidewater of Virginia brought new ways of utilizing slaves. Slave owners sold slaves outright, usually to locations in the Deep South; however, the hiring out of slaves became a method that allowed slave owners—who did not have sufficient farm work to occupy their slaves—to generate income while still maintaining ownership of their human property. Slaves contracted out in this way lived comparatively independent lives, and some exercised substantial amounts of *de facto* freedom, but *de jure* slavery remained firmly entrenched. Some worked on the water and enjoyed autonomy, cultivating independent business relationships and developing a commanding knowledge of the geography of the region. Some slaves used their knowledge of the coast to elude authorities or help others to escape. Unfortunately, dangers outnumbered the opportunities. Even free blacks risked being kidnapped and sold into slavery, or having their spouses or children sold away. Unscrupulous slaveholders deceived many free blacks who attempted to buy the freedom of their loved ones and cheated them out of years of hard earned savings leaving them no legal recourse.

Between 1790 and 1860, the free black population in Northampton County increased from 464 to 952. It might have been more, but a Virginia statute passed in 1806 stated that freed slaves would have to leave the state within a year or be subject to re-enslavement. Neighboring states passed laws prohibiting free blacks from

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immigrating after Nat Turner’s rebellion in Southampton County. Miers Fisher proposed a plan to double taxes in order to raise $15,000 to transport all the free blacks in the county to Liberia.\textsuperscript{27} Northampton County petitioned the Virginia General Assembly to allow the deportation of free blacks from the county stating, “Degraded by the stain which attains to their color, excluded from many civil privileges which the humblest white man enjoys, and denied all participation in the government, it would be wholly absurd to expect from them any attachment to our laws or institutions or any sympathy with our people.”\textsuperscript{28} Northampton County strictly upheld the law forcing out free blacks, while Accomack County generally ignored it. Citizens of Northampton County believed that their land was no place for black freedom.

Thus, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the white population continued its reliance on slavery, having a larger slave population than its neighbor, the more populated Accomack County. In 1840, Northampton County counted 3,341 whites, 754 free blacks, and 3,620 slaves.\textsuperscript{29} Twenty years later, black slaves still outnumbered whites. Four hundred slaveholders owned a total of 3,872 slaves in a population of only 2,998 white inhabitants. Slaveholders made up 13.34% of the white population.

Meanwhile, 962 free blacks completed the 1860 census. Of all slaveholders in Northampton, 46 out of 400 slaveholders owned twenty or more slaves.\textsuperscript{30}

Accomack, Northampton’s neighbor, formed the border with Maryland, providing its inhabitants with more outside contact and interaction. Accomack County exhibited

\textsuperscript{28} Petition from Northampton County to the General Assembly, December 6, 1831, cited by Frances Latimer, \textit{The Register of Free Negroes}, (Heritage Books : Bowie, MD), xi.
greater tolerance of free blacks and its white citizens interacted more often with northern cities through commerce and communication. Accomack contained more large farms than Northampton County, but a lower percentage of slaves. In the seventy years leading up to the Civil War, the number of free blacks increased twenty times over (from 171 to 3,418). An area of Accomack County near the Pungoteague River possibly held the first community of black property owners in Virginia. Traditionally, free blacks made up a substantial portion of the population. In the seventeenth century, some black residents received land grants of 50 to 500 acres under the head rights system. Some gained property in chattel, while others inherited land from their former masters. By 1670, the number of land owning blacks had grown to such a point that whites sought to limit their rights. The first such law restricted blacks from owning white servants. The second prohibited blacks from owning firearms or other weapons.

Legal restrictions did not halt community formation, and other free black communities developed within the county. From the late eighteenth century, through the first decade of the nineteenth century, some large slaveholders in Accomack freed their slaves due to devout religious beliefs or ethical concerns. William Parramore, a wealthy landowner and early convert to Methodism, set his slaves free with a deed of manumission in the 1770s. Abel West of Currituck, owner of the largest number of slaves in Accomack County in 1800, freed all of his slaves in 1806. Upon his death in 1816, his will set aside two hundred acres for those emancipated slaves along with one

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thousand pounds of pork, thirty barrels of corn, and all the leather, flax, and wool in his home at the time of his death. Such mass emancipations set into motion the establishment of large, fully-functional free black communities in Accomack.

Religion, too, played an important role in shaping Eastern Shore society. Methodism, in its early form, reviled slavery and other forms of privilege. In the American South, as numbers of small farmers joined the church and more members became reliant on the use of forced labor, the church reexamined its censure of slavery. Through the 1830s and early 1840s, Methodists in the United States debated the issue of slavery. The Philadelphia Conference favored abolition, whereas, the Southern Conference favored retaining the institution of slavery. In 1844, the Methodist church divided over the issue, leaving hundreds of thousands of southern Methodists free to own slaves. Even 1,200 ministers owned slaves. Still, a few Methodists in the South emancipated their slaves as a matter of conscience. According to George C. Tyler, a resident of Accomack County, before the war broke out, loyalist ministers had been dragged off the pulpit in churches in both counties, “When party spirit rose so high it was positively dangerous to receive a minister from the conference of our choice (the Philadelphia Conference).”

Further, local courts and judges applied state laws selectively. Typically, Accomack County courts chose to ignore the state law requiring freed blacks to leave the county. This liberal treatment of free blacks was meant to deter slaves from escape.

attempts, an ever-present concern in a county located on a state line in the Upper South. In some cases, the county court granted individual appeals allowing free blacks to remain there legally. Many free blacks, especially men who had been apprenticed as children, possessed valuable skills such as smithing, carpentry, bricklaying, and shoemaking. This leniency resulted from practical concerns for necessary labor rather than from progressive attitudes about racial equality. Henry A. Wise, an antebellum Governor of Virginia and native of Accomack County, voiced a presumably common attitude among white elites when he said, “Those who had been freed as a rule turned out to be shiftless and were regarded as a nuisance in the communities in which they lived.”

Despite demographic differences, both counties shared similar social dilemmas. Both counties possessed limited public education, operating only a few schools for brief periods each year. Census figures from 1850 show both counties averaged forty-seven students for each teacher. Wealthy families sent their children to private schools or hired tutors for them. Sons of the most prominent families attended Margaret Academy, located in Accomack County. Henry Wise, Virginia governor and later Confederate brigadier general, went to school there.

The counties shared a common lifestyle, one born in relative isolation. By 1840, nearly 25,000 residents lived in these two counties, yet the people chose to live spread out across the countryside or in small villages. No towns of even five hundred people existed. A Union soldier in the invasion forces wrote, “I should think the people had been asleep the last fifty years and our coming among them had awakened them from their sleep.” Over the years, only the crops changed. By 1840, planters and yeoman

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39 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 5.
40 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 572-6.
farmers on the Eastern Shore stopped growing tobacco and diversified with investments in grain production and cottage industries such as small-scale textile production.\textsuperscript{42} On the Shore cotton, oats, and corn predominated. By 1850, farmers grew sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes in large quantities.\textsuperscript{43} Virginia experienced an economic boom through much of the 1850s due to improvements in transportation and the Eastern Shore counties benefitted, but only marginally.\textsuperscript{44} Regular steamboat service, established in 1849, linked the Eastern Shore with Norfolk, Hampton, Yorktown, and Baltimore.\textsuperscript{45} Despite the new connection, most inhabitants made their living as small farmers and watermen. The area has been known for centuries for its good soil and plentiful seafood. Writing in 1845, Henry Howe commented on the surprisingly fertile soil, the abundance of fish, crabs, and oysters, and the exceptionally good climate in the region. He concluded by saying that “the inhabitants have a high relish for good living.”\textsuperscript{46}

Only one area had made a dramatic change, Chincoteague, an island on the seaside in Accomack County near the Maryland line. The 1850s witnessed Chincoteague transform from a crossroads into a village of watermen who worked for themselves and had strong commercial ties to the north.\textsuperscript{47} The seaside communities of Accomack–Chincoteague and a few smaller villages – traded with New York City and Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{48} The \textit{New York Herald} characterized the population of Accomack as outwardly neutral and only “from motives of prudence have acquiesced with the action of the State in going

\textsuperscript{43} Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries}, 579.
\textsuperscript{44} Link, \textit{Roots of Secession}, 30-7.
\textsuperscript{45} Mears, \textit{The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries}, 583-4.
\textsuperscript{47} Captain John A. M. Wheaton interviewed years after the war, quoted by James Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period}, 30-2.
\textsuperscript{48} Mears, \textit{The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries}, 583.
out of the Union.” Not only had many of the people engaged in the fisheries industries, but many of the young men there had traditionally served in the United States Navy.\textsuperscript{49} Interestingly, a community of freedmen developed in Chincoteague with 109 free blacks living there in 1850, making up about 27% of the population.\textsuperscript{50}

Politically, the counties exhibited similarities, although Northampton was slightly more conservative than its northern neighbor. Both counties had been strongly supportive of the Whigs for decades. When the party collapsed in 1852, Old Whigs on the Shore briefly became Know-Nothings, staunchly pro-American and anxious of foreign immigration, which they believed would strengthen the antislavery movement in the North. Oddly enough, the Shore’s best-known politician, Henry Wise of Accomack County, ran as a Democrat. As a Congressman, he wrote a 12,000 word tome railing against the Know-Nothing party.\textsuperscript{51} While that manifesto won him support across the western part of the state, it worked against him in the east, where the Know-Nothing party retained its strength. In Northampton, during the gubernatorial race of 1855, the Know-Nothing candidate, Thomas S. Flournoy, took 288 votes to Wise’s 235. Not even Accomack County voted for its son.\textsuperscript{52} Flournoy netted 932 votes to Wise’s 816.\textsuperscript{53}

Wise’s disfavor on the Eastern Shore is difficult to explain. Although the two counties supported the Know-Nothings, it did not mean that the voters responded to anti-foreign campaign rhetoric. It is likely that the white citizens of the Eastern Shore

\textsuperscript{52} Bladek, “Virginia is Middle Ground: The Know Nothing and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1855,” 56-7.
\textsuperscript{53} Bladek, “Virginia is Middle Ground: The Know Nothing and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1855,” 56-7.
remembered Wise’s attempt to reform the basis for representation in the state legislature at the Virginia convention of 1850-1. Wise had been one of only four delegates to support a proposal for representation within the state legislature to be based solely on the white population and to strip the property requirements for white male suffrage. He argued for removal of the mixed basis of representation because he believed that only then would the western part of the state trust and unite with the east.\textsuperscript{54} Naturally, such proposals alienated Wise from old line conservatives, and when the Whig party collapsed, rather than join Wise and the Democrats, Eastern Shore voters flocked to the only logical alternative, the Know-Nothings.

Even though support for the Know-Nothing Party surpassed that of the Democratic Party on the Eastern Shore, Wise won the governor’s seat in 1855. The results say a great deal about the political attitudes of the region. Eastern Shore voters remained predominately nativist, anti-Catholic, and ardently anti-abolitionist. This contrasted sharply with the Know-Nothing party in the North which blended nativism and abolitionism. In Northampton and Accomack counties, conservatism dominated citizens’ thinking. In the governor’s race of 1859, both counties voted for William L. Goggin, a lingering Whig, though he lost to the Democratic candidate John Letcher, 48\% to 52\% across the state. (Goggin received most of his support from the eastern part of Virginia who viewed Letcher with suspicion.)\textsuperscript{55} Northampton supported the Whig conservative


candidate Goggin 59% to 41%; actual votes numbered 227 to 153. In Accomack, Goggin also prevailed but by a slimmer margin of 53% to 47%, or 768 votes to 675.56

As it was across much of the South in the presidential election of 1860, there was no support for Lincoln on the Eastern Shore and little, if any, support for Douglas. In Northampton County, the votes were generally split between John Bell, the Constitutional Unionist, and John C. Breckenridge, the Southern Democrat. A majority of voters in Northampton County voted for Bell over Breckenridge, but only by a narrow margin of twenty votes. While both Bell and Breckenridge vowed to protect slavery, Bell put more emphasis on retaining the Union.57 Thus, Eastern Shore conservatism spoke of a strong defense of slavery, but also a strong plea for the Union.

When the tide turned in favor of secession, it happened quickly. Northampton County moved first, jumping on the secession bandwagon months before Accomack County.58 In the voting to send delegates to the Secession Convention, Northampton sent Miers W. Fisher, a man known to favor immediate secession. The community became so hostile to the Union that twenty years later, even the few Union men in Northampton County, could not remember the name of the man who ran against Fisher.59 Even Robert Costin, a resident who voted for the Unionist, refused to speak his name.60 Fisher went straight to work, connecting Northampton's interests with the preservation of slavery.61 Noting the awkward position of the Eastern Shore, he stated, "There is not a tree, as you

57 Potter, Impending Crisis, 405-47.
60 Latimer, Robert S. Costin of Northampton County, Virginia.
know...between my residence and Europe or Africa.” However, he focused on what he interpreted as northern insults against the honor of Virginia. Fisher interpreted President Lincoln’s inaugural address as a declaration of war and demanded immediate secession.62

Overall voting in a January referendum across Virginia favored support of the Union by over 55,000 votes. In early February, the convention was still strongly in favor of the Union. Fisher, though, stood in defiance of this. Fisher offered two resolutions to the convention on March 2, 1861, to prevent the federal government from using coercion against any states that seceded and also to demand the turnover of any federal military installations in those states to the “Southern Confederacy.” Fisher pushed these resolutions to be considered before March 4, the date of President Lincoln’s inauguration:

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention any attempt on the part of the Federal Government to collect revenue on goods in transit to any port or ports in any of the States which have withdrawn from the Confederacy of the United States of America, or any attempt to take the forts, arsenals, dockyards or munitions of war in possession of any of the said States that have withdrawn from the Federal Union, would be the initiation of civil war; and that this Commonwealth will not be an indifferent spectator in such war, but will take part in the same to the fullest extent of her military ability in behalf of her Southern slaveholding sisters that have seceded from the Federal Union.

Resolved, further, in the opinion of this Convention, that it is the duty of the Federal Government, at the earliest practicable moment, to enter into negotiations

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with the authorities of the Southern Confederacy for the transfer of Fort Sumter and Fort Pickens to said Confederacy, and for an equitable division of the public property and public burdens of the United States of America, at the time of the withdrawal of the States of the Southern Confederacy from the Union, between them.63

Fisher’s unusual resolution sought to give the Confederacy crucial military installations, and no doubt he hoped that when and if Virginia seceded, Fort Monroe would fall to the Confederacy by the same diplomatic process. It was a hopeful plea. At the time, few convention delegates wanted secession. Naturally, the convention rejected his resolutions. By mid-April, an Ordinance of Secession passed by a vote of 88 to 55. It took two separate votes, one on April 4 and another on April 17. Fisher voted in favor of secession in both times.64

Conversely, Accomack sent William Henry Bagwell Custis, who opposed secession.65 An owner of a large plantation with forty-nine slaves, Custis was a Democrat who had supported Stephen Douglas in the election of 1860.66 On February 4, 1861, citizens of the county voted him to represent them at the Secession Convention. Incensed that William Custis had been elected, some individuals asked if Henry A. Wise, now an ardent secessionist, could accompany Miers Fisher to the Convention instead. On

February 9, Custis and three other Unionists, one of whom was reported to be Frederick Douglass, the famed African American abolitionist, were burned in effigy by local residents.67

Despite this attempt to intimidate him, Custis voted against secession on April 4, explaining that his decision was due to the problems of defending their property and slaves on the Eastern Shore. A vote for secession, he argued, would be akin to a declaration of war. Custis worried that Virginia’s secession would bring on war with the national government, which he believed to be the protector of freedom and liberty. Again on April 17, after the Battle of Fort Sumter, Custis voted against secession, believing it to be in the best interests of his constituents.68 He spoke to the convention “to enter (his) most solemn protest against the passage of this ordinance.” However, he also voiced his resolve to support the will of the convention if they moved forward with a secession ordinance, “But if a majority of these people vote for it, then it becomes the act of the people and I will submit; and whenever the standard of the Old Dominon floats, I will rush to it; and I venture to say I will be found as true to it as the most ultra in this Convention or out of it.”69 In the end, Custis felt pressure to go along with the majority, and he finally signed the Ordinance of Secession in June.70

67 Norfolk Argus printed in Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 15, 1861.
Both Eastern Shore counties ratified the convention’s vote. With no secret ballot in the state of Virginia, men announced their votes publicly, and a clerk recorded each vote. Not one citizen voted against secession in Northampton County. Out of 673 eligible voters, 505 voted in favor of it. Of the 168 who did not vote, there must have been individuals who disagreed but were not willing to state it publicly for fear of being singled out for retribution. William Richards, a special commissioner and agent hearing testimony in October 1879, described the situation in Northampton County this way, “It is evident from all the testimony that the excitement was great and the feeling ran high...it required a high degree of moral courage on the part of any man to stand up against the population current and openly manifest his opposition to secession and his preference for the Union. Such was the general state of things.” A man of wealth and high standing, such as Robert Costin, who quietly opposed secession might have been “marked and watched.” If Costin had voted against it, he would have been “grossly insulted,” or so he later claimed. In his appeal to the national government fourteen years after the end of the war, Costin attempted to explain how he had to vote in favor of secession despite his private loyalty to the Union. Local authorities arrested and imprisoned one “poor white” for his bold stance against the secession ordinance.

Accomack also came to support secession, although the number of secessionists is less certain. The county’s popular election ratified the Virginia Convention’s vote.

Accomack’s referendum vote represented greater diversity than Northampton. At Locust

71 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 603.
72 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 603.
73 William Richards in Frances Bibbins Latimer, Robert Costin of Northampton County, Virginia, 10-1.
74 William J. Nottingham quoted by William Richards in Frances Bibbins Latimer, Robert Costin of Northampton County, Virginia, 10.
75 Edgar J. Spady quoted by William Richards in Frances Bibbins Latimer, Robert Costin of Northampton County, Virginia, 10.
76 William Richards in Frances Bibbins Latimer, Robert Costin of Northampton County, Virginia, 10-1.
Mount and Pungoteague not one vote was cast in support of the Union; meanwhile, Chincoteague voted nearly unanimously in favor of remaining in the Union, with 134 votes for the Union and only two for disunion. Captain John A. M. Whealton of Chincoteague stated that economic interests drove his decision to side with the Union even though he felt sympathies for the Confederate cause. According to him, every oyster he raised was shipped to the Philadelphia market. Siding with the Confederacy meant starvation. Chincoteague stood apart as the only community in either county to show such vehement support for the Union.

Later on, Union supporters claimed that intimidation, deception, and threats had manipulated the less educated to vote in favor of secession. According to a pamphlet written by J. G. Potts of Accomack County one year later, “deceptive addresses...which took many of the illiterate and dependent men unawares... and fear and threats of tar and feathering” exerted significant pressure. Potts described the time after the Secession Convention but before Union occupation as a “Reign of Terror.” He would later relish the changes brought by Federal control. Referring to the occupation, Potts proclaimed, “the death knell of our demagogues has sounded.”

Northern soldiers who later occupied the two counties certainly believed that the planter elite had pushed the common people into support of the war. A broad base of support for secession existed in Northampton County; however, in Accomack County secessionists pressured loyalists to join in support of the Virginia Convention’s decision.

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77 Captain John A. M. Whealton interviewed years after the war, quoted by James Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 30-2.
78 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 603.
Ample anecdotal evidence supports this theory. A *New York Times* article, "Credit Due to General Dix," asserted that elites had manipulated the general population, stating that loyalists on the Eastern Shore had been told that if Union troops came in they would steal their property and slaves as well as burn their houses. Another report, this one from the *New York Herald*, announced that members of the militia disbanded quickly in Accomack County telling Union forces that they had never really wanted to fight, but had been "compelled to do it by hot headed secessionists." It continued to quote a Union officer, "The greater part of the persons I met were of the disbanded militia. Three cheers for the Union were given with such zeal and zest as to make me conclude that there was something more in them than expressions arising from fear." Additionally, Union soldiers later noted a distinction between the two counties. Captain Edward Hudson, aide-de-camp, included in a letter to General John Dix this indictment of Northampton secessionism, "I have twice called to the attention of the Government the fact that there is a rebel camp in Northampton County, on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, which is a nucleus of disaffection for Accomac and the counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland up to the Delaware line."

Union troops who were interviewed by congressmen investigating the loyalty of the people noted the scarcity of Union loyalists among the residents of Northampton County. Colonel Halbert E. Paine of the 4th Wisconsin said, "I do not know of more than one or two; I never heard of more than two men about Eastville that I thought were loyal men." Another reported that there were perhaps a half dozen who were loyal to some

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83 Hudson to Dix, August 23, 1861, *OR* ser. 1 vol. 5, 577.
extent, but that even those men were not enthusiastic about it. Colonel Gouverneur K. Warren, commander of the 5th New York Infantry, commented, "In Accomack there were [loyal men]. In Northampton there were none that I found." A New York Times correspondent in Northampton County after the invasion reported that most of the inhabitants had believed that the Union forces came to free the slaves or incite them to revolt and to drive southerners from their land and homes.85

The debates about coercion versus volition continued as the war dragged on, making the percentage of secessionists difficult to know. According to J. G. Potts in his "Address to the people of the counties of Accomack and Northampton in general and particularly to the mechanics, tenants, and laborers," virulent secessionists used threats and intimidation to stifle any support for the Union. Edward K. Snead, an attorney in Accomack County, was hit with a cane by John J. Wise, the nephew of former Governor Henry A. Wise, when Wise "vindicated the Confederate principles with a loaded cane in a most brutal manner upon Judge Sneed's loyal Union head by striking him senseless." Potts also reported that three prominent men — Judge Pitts, William H. B. Custis, and Abel T. Johnson — had been burned in effigy for their Unionist leanings. Potts asserted that the established, powerful landowning families had filled the minds of all the common people with secessionist ideas. According to him, many blindly accepted and repeated without question the rhetoric, like an "an old-man brained nothing in Drummondtown, who has learned them true by ear, like the rooster learned his cocky-doodle-do."87

84 Col. Warren quoted in Alton Brooks Parker Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 54-5.
86 J.G.Potts' pamphlet quoted by Alton Brooks Parker Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 15.
87 J.G.Potts' pamphlet quoted by Alton Brooks Parker Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 16.
also claimed that he had been forced to serve in the 2nd Virginia Militia by Colonel Benjamin Gunter, who had been the Commonwealth Attorney in Accomack County before the Union occupation, going on to explain, “This little Accomack Cataline had found his Cicero.” Potts’s vindictiveness and sense of self-importance hint that perhaps he sought to use the opportunity to exact personal vendettas. Perhaps he used the safety offered by the Federal occupation to take aim at those against whom he held grudges. In January 1862, his Union loyalties were rewarded when Potts gained the post of operator of the Hog Island Lighthouse. Still, the burning in effigy of prominent local Union supporters shows intimidation was a real thing. The exact numbers of Unionists will never be known.

May 1861 found the secessionists ascendant, joyful even. Mary Howard, a Northampton native, recorded in her diary, “I am proud of the E.S. (Eastern Shore) Northampton has been loyal and gallant from the beginning, and largely in favor of secession, for a longtime; but Accomack has been reputed a strong Union county; and the result is far more satisfactory than was anticipated.” For the first two weeks, then, Eastern Shore secessionists were optimistic of success. Howard, the daughter of Nathaniel and Susan Winder and a member of the landowning gentry, expressed both excitement and concern when she called the secession of Virginia an “incalculable and indescribable horror of civil war,” but also mused that the excitement had affected the entire community, or at least her sphere, “it is something to have seen and shared in the

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88 J.G.Potts’ pamphlet quoted by Alton Brooks Parker Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 16.
89 “Affairs in Accomac County, Virginia,” Philadelphia Inquirer, January 22, 1862.
90 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry May 25, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, Onancock, VA, 21.
enthusiasm, with which, the news of Va.'s secession, was greeted everywhere.” She put her faith in the honor and bravery of Southern men and wrote as if trying to reassure others, “Southern women, have no fear, while Southern hearts and Southern arms promise to defend them.” Like many other Confederate women, she viewed the Yankee opposition as inferior and predatory, “in this wicked effort to subjugate the Southern people. An effort as futile as wicked. They think to conquer us!”

Such optimism did not last long. By May, goods became scarce. The price of cotton sewing thread had increased from three cents to ten cents. Sugar, which had been eight cents a pound, reached fifteen to eighteen cents a pound. On a shopping excursion to obtain scarcities, Mary Howard teased her friend Lizzie about buying a large quantity of rope and “told her, [she] knew she was providing it for Yankee necks and wished her good luck in catching her game.” She made do with limited supplies, still managing a birthday party for her five-year-old son Charley with “refreshments not very sumptuous, but such as suitable for wartimes.” Still, Howard lamented that she could not do more for the war effort, “Oh if words were only weapons! Or if I were not a weak woman, unfit to wield a more effective kind, I mourn daily that I can do nothing. It humiliates and distresses me. So far, I have not even had to suffer, for the sake of Southern Rights.”

A wealthy woman, Howard tried to unify her neighbors behind secession and became scornful of lower-class Shoremen who lacked the will to sacrifice. In June, as she tried to return home to Eastville she heard of an impending attack. Fearful that her children might be in harm’s way if Federal troops landed in a creek near her home, she

91 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry May 7, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 5.
92 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry May 13, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 13.
93 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry May 25, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 21.
94 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry June 1, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 25.
95 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry July 2, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 34.
ignored advice to stay away. With disdain she remembered the nervousness of her black driver and the apathy of some presumably lower class white men she encountered along the way. She noted with condescension, “Our driver (a darkey) was in perfect agony of terror.” Later, she “poured her wrath upon” a small group of men sitting idly who told her of a Yankee landing of 800 to 1,000 men at Hungars Creek. She asked them if they were all cowards and why they were still sitting around, if fighting had been going on all day. A few claimed to be sick, one said it was too hot, and another said he thought about going after lunch. Mary Howard forced the one who had “talked about going,” William Taylor, into her carriage. With him, he brought a large fowling piece but no ammunition, explaining that he “knew its ways.” “It’s not often,” he said, “that we gets a shot at black ducks, this time of year, and I’m going to make the most of it.” Upon her return home, she gathered shot powder and caps for “her recruit,” sent him off in the direction of the skirmish, and implored him to “Kill a Yankee for me, that will more than pay me.” As a vocal proponent of secession Howard viewed it as her right to take charge, expressing disappointment at her neighbors’ reluctance to defend her home from Yankee invaders. She did not hesitate to invoke a sense of duty in one man and deliver him close to the battleground. Still, it is noteworthy that the rest of the men remained behind, not sufficiently swayed by her sharp tongue.

Regardless of the political sentiments of the population, the act of secession brought war, and citizens of Virginia’s Eastern Shore prepared for it in a variety of ways. Northampton County began preparations as early as January 1861, well before hostilities broke out in South Carolina. Militia units drilled and volunteer forces organized

96 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry August 1, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 59-62.
97 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry August 1, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 62-3.
themselves into a separate regiment, which would become the 39th Virginia Infantry. As early as January 14, Northampton County authorized William G. Smith and N. R. Cary to spend as much as $5,000 of public money to purchase 100 to 150 of the most modern and efficient arms to supply the volunteer companies of the county. The mobilization of troops reached a heightened urgency in Northampton because its residents feared that it could be invaded by citizens from Accomack as soon as secession passed.

General Mitchell West, commander of the Eastern Shore's 21st Militia Brigade, repeatedly wrote to Richmond, asking for more troops to subdue Union sympathizers in northern Accomack County. In May, he asked Governor Letcher for instructions on how to deal with the Union sentiment and also asked permission to detain ships in reprisal for southern ships being held in northern ports; however, the state government ignored his plea for help. Richmond authorities bluntly told West that they could not send troops to the isolated Eastern Shore. Complicating this, the Federal blockade – which went into effect in May – made communications with the state government in Richmond spotty at best, made possible only by messengers running the blockade across the Chesapeake Bay. Thus, offered no reinforcements, Northampton County raised an army on its own. In mid-May, the Northampton County Court authorized the negotiation of a loan of $1,800 payable in three annual installments so that the county could purchase weapons.

Without support from the Confederate War Department, the county relied on its militia for protection.

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100 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 17-9.
101 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 10.
On May 20, General West called together the officers of two of its three Militia Regiments, the 27th Regiment (Northampton County) and the 2nd Regiment (Lower Accomack), but not the 99th Regiment (upper Accomack), fearing the latter was infested with unionists. Even so, the call-up was fraught with anxiety. Together the militia commanders wrote up a list of questions for the Richmond government. Would soldiers be paid by the Confederate government or by the state government? Would they be receiving supplies, and if so, when? What actions could they take against individuals found to be giving aid and comfort to the enemy? They also asked again if they could make reprisals against northern ships. John R. Floyd and R. B. Winder, Mary Howard’s brother, were sent as special messengers to run the blockade and get answers from either the Virginia governor or the Confederate Commander-in-Chief. A response came from the Advisory Council of the State of Virginia on May 28 instructing them to extinguish all lights (including lighthouses) and encouraging them to introduce weapons for their own use. They were ordered not to arrest anyone unless someone acted in open aggression against the state. They were also ordered not to make reprisals against northern boats. In addition, the Advisory Council commissioned officers of the 39th Virginia Volunteers, naming Charles Smith as colonel. Soon after, Smith went to Richmond to request 2,100 flints for his forces, since most of them possessed outdated flintlock muskets. The General-in-Command of Virginia Forces, Robert E. Lee, approved the request, and the 39th Regiment went on active duty, but only as a state force. In a July 11 letter to Confederate Secretary of War Walker, Colonel Smith reported that he had mustered 220 men into service, creating three companies of infantry and one of

102 Barnes, *Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865*, vol. 2 of *Pungoteague to Petersburg*, 20-3.
The 39th Regiment established its headquarters at Camp Huger, on a farm owned by Dr. George T. Yerby on Old Town Neck, about four miles from Eastville, the county seat of Northampton. In an attempt to fortify the most accessible creeks, "on Saturday the negroes were called out, trees felled and earthworks thrown up." 

In September, Miers Fisher reported to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, describing the military situation on the Eastern Shore. He made it clear that the Confederacy was not doing enough to defend it. The C. S. government needed to stoke the fires of patriotism, and it needed to provide the Eastern Shore's women and children with adequate protection. Fisher demanded more encampments. He explained, "Every neighborhood is constantly liable to be infested by marauding or foraging parties, and no one ought to be left entirely without protection...I would barely remark that if you obtain a foothold in Maryland, on the Potomac, it may become desirable to send forces upon the Eastern Shore of that state: and if so, they must necessarily be sent from these two counties, and then it will be eminently important that a good general officer shall be in command here." Just two weeks later, Miers Fisher penned a letter to J. P. Benjamin, Attorney General of the Confederacy, expressing concern that a law should be written to punish treason against the Confederacy. Essentially, anyone who swore an oath to the United States government or the U.S. Constitution was now guilty of it. He wrote, "The reason of me making this request is that many persons on this peninsula are declaring, in the event of this enemy overrunning this peninsula, they would not hesitate to take the oath which might be tendered them by invading forces." Fisher declared his assurance that they would not be overrun but worried that if "a portion of society takes the oath of

105 Mary C. Howard, Diary, August 1, 1861, Eastern Shore Historical Society, Onancock, VA, 67.
106 Fisher to Jefferson Davis, September 28, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 51, part 2, 323-4.
allegiance to the Government of the United States, that those who refuse to take it will most certainly be taken as prisoners."  

Unlike Northampton County which had begun preparing for war months earlier, Accomack County took no steps to prepare for war before shots were fired at Fort Sumter. The first preparations were organized by officers of the militia companies and led by officers of the Accomack County Court, one of the few institutions free from Unionist influence. Brigadier General Mitchell W. West, a military commander, was a justice of the Accomack County Court. The Accomack Rifles, a company attached to the 2nd Virginia Militia, were under the command of Captain John Gillet, who also served as clerk of the Accomack Court. On April 29, 1861, the Accomack County Court ordered the sheriff to deliver enough muskets and ammunition to arm the Accomack Rifles. The court assigned commissions to three men – William F. Burton, John A. White, and William Aydelotte – making arrangements for the county to issue 300 muskets to secessionist militiamen and alter them from flint to percussion. On the same day, the court also ordered cannon which had been under the control of civil authorities to be put under the authority of the court.  

Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Gunter, Accomack County’s Commonwealth Attorney, became second in command of the 2nd Militia. On April 30, he read a resolution calling for a committee of one to be named to inventory the arms held by the county and to make plans to divide them between the civil authorities and the militia units. He appointed Captain Gillet to inventory and distribute arms. Gillett counted 124 muskets, sending sixty-two to the 2nd Militia. The other sixty-two were to be split

\[107\] Fisher to J. P. Benjamin, October 12, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 51, part 2, 343-4.  
\[108\] Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 7-9.
between the 21st Militia and the 99th Militia. While Northampton County had spent five thousand dollars in January to equip its militia forces with adequate weaponry, Accomack County refused to act at all until late April, and at that time it distributed only a small number of outdated weapons. Northampton County went into debt in order to supply its militia troops with sufficient guns and ammunition. It was the end of the summer before Accomack decided to spend money on additional material for militia troops there. While Accomack hoped to avoid war the unpleasant reality of war, Northampton sought to prepare itself for what many believed to be an eventuality.

After securing serviceable weapons, Confederate sympathizers erected their barracks. Here, Confederates encountered unexpected resistance from the populace. In September, Colonel Smith wrote to the trustees of Margaret Academy and requisitioned the school buildings to be used to house troops in Accomack County in the fall and winter of 1861. He promised that the Confederate government would compensate the school. The trustees refused to comply. No further attempts were made to use the school facilities. The question of quartering troops quickly evaporated when the recruiting drives ended for the militia. Eventually the 39th Regiment filled 859 Eastern Shore soldiers, while the 2nd militia – the only militia unit to survive – mustered no more than 100 men.

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109 It was not until August 27 that the Accomack County Court gave orders for the purchase of guns and ammunition to be divided between the 2nd and 99th Militias. On August 27, Gunter, Gillett, and Robert Boulton were named as agents of the county to obtain more arms and ammunition. Court records indicate the 2nd Militia did receive the guns and ammunition stored in the jail, but no records indicate whether or not the 21st or 99th Militia ever received arms that had been authorized for purchase. Barnes, *Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1838-1865*, vol. 2 of *Pungoteague to Petersburg*, 1-30.


If citizens rejected opening their homes as barracks, many Eastern Shore women displayed their support in other ways. According to a letter from Northampton County printed in the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* on September 3, 1861, women on the shore began a systematic program to produce socks for the troops. Beginning in July, they gathered donations of goods, wool, and cash. The wool was given to poor women to spin. They used the proceeds to purchase cotton, which they twisted with the wool and then made into socks. One family in Eastville had already knit sixty pairs of socks to be sent to Norfolk or Richmond for distribution.\(^{112}\)

Although the Eastern Shore sent nearly one thousand soldiers into Confederate service, only a few among the white population held strong enough Unionist sentiment to motivate them to enlist in the Union army. John Henry Upshur, son of John Evans Nottingham and Elizabeth Upshur Nottingham, nephew of Commodore George Parker Upshur and also nephew of Abel Parker Upshur, the former Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of State, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and served in the North Atlantic Squadron during much of the war. The family tradition of service to the nation compelled him to fight for the Union, while his cousins fought for the Confederacy.\(^{113}\)

Only one unit of white soldiers from Virginia’s Eastern Shore formed in support of the Union. It consisted mainly of men from the community of Chincoteague along with some men who had moved to the Eastern Shore from other, usually northern locales. The First Regiment, Loyal Eastern Virginia Volunteers, Company A, formed in September 1863 and had 123 soldiers. Although this provided the Union little more than a token

\(^{112}\) "Correspondence," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, September 3, 1861.

force, they served a vital role as a unionist coast guard, patrolling the shoreline for smugglers.  

Major General John Dix provided much of the impetus behind the Union invasion of Virginia’s Eastern Shore. Fearful that Confederate sympathizers might influence their neighbors in Maryland or Delaware and turn them against the Union inhabitants, Major General Dix expressed concern about solidifying control over this remote region and placating its people. In July, Dix conveyed his concerns to Simon Cameron, the Secretary of War. Worried that secessionists on Maryland’s Eastern Shore were carrying out illicit trade between the terminus of the railroad at Salisbury and the Virginia border, he also warned of a rebel force amassing near Eastville between 1,000 and 3,000 men. Even though the area was outside his department, he suggested sending three or four regiments to break up the camp because, “The exhibition of such a force and the destruction of the secession camp would have a salutary effect throughout the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia.”

As Dix worried about secessionist activity on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, he feared a rebel stronghold just forty miles south of the state line might offer support and worsen the situation. Dix’s doomsaying convinced Maryland’s Unionist governor, Thomas Hicks, to call for an invasion of the Eastern Shore of Virginia to prevent “a system of daily and regular communication between the Confederate commanders in Virginia and their allies in Baltimore, the breaking up of rebel camps there (Accomack and Northampton) before they ripen formidable

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114 Miles, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, xiii.
116 Major General Dix to Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, July 31, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 2, 770.
organizations,” and to win “back those people to the cause of the Union.” In an October 14 letter, General Dix voiced his concerns about the election approaching in Maryland whereby the state would choose secession or loyalty to the Union. Both Dix and Hicks feared that secessionist influence from the Virginia counties of the Eastern Shore would be influential enough to tip the balance of popular opinion in Maryland. If that occurred, the Union would have had to abandon Washington, D.C. as its capital. To Dix and Hicks, control of Virginia’s Eastern Shore counties was crucial to the political situation in Maryland, which was also essential to the stability and defense of the Federal government.

In addition to the political exigencies of the time, there was also a fear that the Delmarva Peninsula could act as a conduit to provide material support to the Confederacy. General Dix instructed General Henry Lockwood to put an end to the smuggling of goods across the state line into Virginia, warning him of the need to be kind to the citizenry, so as to turn their allegiance back to the Union. In a letter to Francis P. Blair, Major General Dix wrote, “We are more in danger on the Eastern Shore than we are in any other part of the state.” Governor Hicks wrote to the Secretary of War, “We have as good fighting material in the Union element in those eight counties composing the Eastern Shore of Maryland as can be found anywhere, and they [are] unable even to arrest the secessionists that are now passing in great numbers through that section to the

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117 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 605; OR, ser. 1 vol. 2, 770.
Eastern Shore of Virginia, where the Confederates are getting together a pretty formidable force."^{120}

Dix's complaints had some basis in fact. Confederate troops routinely skirmished with Union naval forces. The first battle of record in the region was a Federal expedition to Northampton County on Friday, August 2, 1861. It intended to enforce the blockade by shutting down transit in and out of Cherrystone Creek. Three Federal vessels, the Cadwalader, the Adnatic, and the Fanny, attempted to land but were repelled by Companies A, B, C, and D of the 39th Virginia. The battle lasted three hours and resulted in the destruction of two locally owned schooners but no human casualties.^{121} The next engagement with Federal troops involved Company E of the 39th Virginia in upper Accomack County. Approximately 300 Federal troops landed at Holden's Creek near Jenkin's Bridge and then moved to Pitt's Landing, destroying the property of a Captain Haskins. They also broke into George Croswell's store where they stole $300 in cash, meat, and boots.^{122}

Another encounter occurred on October 5 near Wishart's Point in Chincoteague Bay in upper Accomack County. Company E of the 39th engaged the enemy forces and drove them off. The USS Louisiana sent troops to destroy a schooner suspected of being converted into a privateer. According to the Confederate Commander, Captain Fletcher, twenty Union men were killed and only one Confederate was wounded.^{123} The Washington Star printed a formal statement from a committee of Chincoteague Island citizens to Captain Murray, the commander of the steamer, declaring their allegiance and

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^{120} OR ser. 3 vol. 1, 480.
^{121} Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 33-4.
^{123} Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 36.
describing the “many menaces from [their] secession neighbors.” Afterwards, 150 citizens took an oath of allegiance to the Union in the presence of Murray. They claimed they had been threatened by nearby secessionists and welcomed protection from a Union patrol.

Worried by these reports, General John A. Dix decided to act. As commander of all U.S. troops stationed in Maryland, Dix selected Henry H. Lockwood, a native of Delaware, to lead the invasion of Virginia’s Eastern Shore. Dix believed Lockwood could placate the Virginians. According to Dix in his proclamation to the people of Accomack and Northampton, “The command of the expedition is intrusted to Brigadier General Henry H. Lockwood, of Delaware, a state identical in some of the distinctive features of its social organization as your own. Portions of his force come from counties bordering your own. From him and from them you may be assured of the sympathy of near neighbors as well as friends, if you do not repel it by hostile resistance or attack.” Dix wrote, “Their greatest offenses are sympathizing with the Richmond leaders and engaging in illicit trade.” With the use of an intimidating show of force of approximately 4,500 men, Dix wanted to break up Confederate camps, but he also wanted to use conciliatory measures whenever possible. By taking over the home of former Governor Wise, he hoped to win a symbolic victory, “If they can be reclaimed and induced to throw off their connection with the Confederates it will be a great point gained, especially as the residence of Governor Wise, their former Representative, is in Accomack; and I thought it worth while to make the effort of quieting their fears in the first place, for they have got

125 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 607.
126 Major General Dix, “Proclamation to the People of Accomack and Northampton,” OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 431-2.
it in their heads that we want to steal and emancipate their negroes; and by giving them
the strongest assurance of kind treatment and protection if they do not resist the authority
of the Government, I trust – I ought to say I hope rather than trust – that they might be
gained without bloodshed.”

In this November 15 letter to President Lincoln, General Dix explained, “As their
case is peculiar, I have endeavored to meet it with a remedial treatment adapted to the
special phase of the malady of secessionism with which they are afflicted. I have sent an
additional force since my return from Washington. The whole number will be 4,500 –
among them about 3,500 as well disciplined troops as any in the service.” He issued a
proclamation to the people of the Eastern Shore of Virginia assuring them protection and
kind treatment if they offered loyalties to the Union. Dix ordered Federal troops to
uphold the local laws and customs, which meant that they could not emancipate slaves
nor could they allow runaways to come within the Union lines. He explained, “Special
directions have been given not to interfere with the conditions of any persons held to
domestic service; and in order that there may be no ground for mistake and no pretext for
representation, commanders of regiments and corps have been instructed not to allow any
such persons to come within their lines.” Trade would be reestablished, and the
lighthouses would be relit. Dix warned that anyone who rejected these overtures of
friendship would be responsible for “the blood which may be shed and the desolation
which may be brought upon peaceful homes.” Dix ordered Lockwood to take as
prisoners only men who held arms in their hands. Dix decreed that civil officials be
allowed to keep their posts if they took oath of loyalty to the Union. Those who laid

127 Major General Dix to President Lincoln, November 15, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 431.
128 Major General Dix to President Lincoln, November 15, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 431.
down their arms and took the oath of loyalty could go free, as long as they were not Confederate soldiers.\textsuperscript{129} He warned, “On all who are thus reckless of the obligations of humanity and duty, and on all who are found in arms, the severest punishment warranted by the laws of war will be visited. To those who remain in the quiet pursuit of their domestic obligations the public authorities assure all they can give – peace, freedom from annoyance, protection from foreign and internal enemies, a guaranty of all constitutional and legal rights, and the blessings of a just and paternal Government.” Dix threatened rebels with harsh punishment and promised loyal citizens sweeping protections that the occupying force would not be able to provide for long. He wrote:

A conciliatory course should be pursued in regard to those who are not under arms and have not been in the pay of the Confederate government...The utmost vigilance is required to preserve discipline among your troops and to prevent any outrage upon any persons or property. If any man violates your orders in this respect, you will put him in irons and send him to this headquarters. No distinctions should between the citizens of those counties in regard to the past. All who submit peaceably to the authority of the Government are to be regarded as loyal.\textsuperscript{130}

Unfortunately for the Confederate resistance, the Eastern Shore did not contain anything of enough importance to compel the Confederacy to defend it. It had no

\textsuperscript{129} OR, ser. 1 vol. 5, 431.
\textsuperscript{130} Dix to Lockwood, OR, ser. 1 vol. 5, 424-5.
industrial centers and consisted of too much open land and even more extensive coastline to make defense practical. The Confederacy would have had to spend an inordinate amount of resources in an attempt to retain a territory of little benefit. The Union, however, would gain a strategic advantage that helped them control the Chesapeake Bay. Control of the bay was important to maintain the Federal blockade, protect Washington, D.C., and provide an easy route to attack Richmond via the Yorktown Peninsula.

These military truisms were not lost on the local population. Mary Howard asserted the belief that the Eastern Shore counties were indefensible. She wrote, "We soon realized that the defence of this peninsula was impossible, and any attempt at it, sheer folly. Consequently the fighting men of both counties joined various commands on the other side of the Chesapeake; it being evident that the fighting would be elsewhere, and for the retention of more important places." It is reasonable to assume that her perception was influenced by her brother, R. G. Winder, who was an officer in the 39th Virginia, whose regiment had struggled to repel Union incursions from the coast.

Perhaps other Eastern Shore secessionists understood why the Confederate government chose to abandon them. Still some held out false hope. Once word of Dix’s proclamation reached the county leaders, they expected an invasion, making one final plea for reinforcements. Confederate soldiers and militia asked for help from Major General J. Bankhead Magruder who was in command of the Confederacy’s Peninsula army. As Federal troops amassed just north of the state line in Salisbury, Pocomoke, and Snow Hill, Maryland, Colonel Smith ordered his 800 volunteers of the 39th Virginia and the additional militiamen to march north to upper Accomack County. Smith asked for

131 Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry October 22, 1897, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 69.
help, but got none. The answer from Confederate officials was that General Magruder had neither reinforcements nor the means to send them.\textsuperscript{132}

The people of these Eastern Shore counties did not put up much overt resistance as Federal troops invaded. They did, however, erect barricades along the road from Oak Hall (near the Maryland line) to Drummondtown, which caused the Union army to walk four miles out of its way.\textsuperscript{133} The forces sent in by General Dix were intentionally large in order to discourage the population from staging opposition. A newspaper article repeated this commonly held view, “If half the number of troops had been sent there would no doubt have been resistance, and very likely a sanguinary and protracted guerilla warfare; for which the country is well suited.” The journalist also voiced the belief that once people in the South realized they were going to be protected by conciliatory policies, “the deep seated feeling of attachment and devotion to the Union which lives in the hearts of the majority of the Southern people will break out into open expression.”\textsuperscript{134} It is likely that conciliatory policies played a role in reviving loyalty; however, logic dictated that the people could do nothing but submit and make the best of the situation. If the Union occupation was unlikely to be challenged militarily, it followed that citizens should try to at least feign loyalty to encourage the Federal army to leave them alone. The people of Accomack County submitted to Union authority in advance of the troops’ arrival. Drummondtown, the county seat, flew the U. S. flag before the arrival of General Lockwood and his advance forces.\textsuperscript{135} Citizens of Accomack County made overt attempts

\textsuperscript{132} Mears, \textit{The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries}, 604-6.

\textsuperscript{133} Barnes, \textit{Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865}, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 46.


to show their willingness to submit peaceably to Union control. Newspapers ran numerous false reports that the Confederate Army had been sending reinforcements across the Bay to aid the Eastern Shore units.\(^{136}\) No doubt, such reports had added to a sense of urgency for the Union to seize control of these Virginia counties before they caused serious trouble for the Union.

Union leaders went out of their way to make sure that Virginia residents knew of the lenient Federal policies and hoped they would be less inclined to stage resistance. General Henry H. Lockwood sent small groups of troops south in advance of his invasion forces in order to introduce General Dix’s Proclamation to the People of Accomack and Northampton Counties.\(^{137}\) According to the *New York Times*, the proclamation was read to a large group of Virginians in a farmhouse where many of the attendees expressed joy, welcoming protection from the national government. Some complained that they had been forced into Confederate ranks against their will and had to hide in the woods at night.\(^{138}\)

When Accomack residents saw the diminutive Confederate forces, the Unionists became emboldened. According to a story from the *Baltimore American*, a man from the Shore reported a surge in Unionism among citizens of Accomack as Federal troops began amassing just north of the state line, “Last week a Union speech was made in Drummondtown, where, a month previous, the speaker would probably have been lynched. In Northampton County, affairs were quite different, the Secessionists ruled


\(^{138}\) “The Expedition to Accomack,” *New York Times*, November 19, 1861.
everything.139 Even before the invasion, as troops were gathering in preparation, the citizens of Accomack, some of whom had only recently favored secession, seemed to change their minds again in the face of impending danger and reassurances that their rights and property would be protected by Union forces. The prospect of facing overwhelming numbers discouraged the Confederate volunteers and militiamen from following through with their plans of a defense. Pragmatism shaped the response of all the citizenry.

Lockwood encamped his troops in Drummondtown for five days before marching south. They did move forward under specific orders to take three days before their arrival in Eastville.140 Lockwood gave the people every opportunity to consider the liberal provisions of Dix’s proclamation and to rejoin the fold of loyal citizens. By November 26, Federal troops had taken 189 prisoners from the 39th Virginia. Federal authorities released most of these prisoners just a few months later, after they had taken the oath of allegiance or a parole of honor. However, one of those men, Private E. W. Phillips, died in a Union prison four years later on June 26, 1865.141

The Union invasion faced little resistance because many of the Eastern Shore’s Confederate forces voluntarily left their defensive positions. Company by company, they slipped across the Bay through the blockade to join units in Norfolk, Gloucester, or Richmond. According to special correspondence from Norfolk printed in the Daily Dispatch, Captain Lewis M. Hudgins left Accomack and took forty men of Captain Fletcher’s company in his boat through the blockade to Gloucester Point. Colonel Smith, it was presumed, retreated too since his means of resistance was limited to 500 poorly

139 “From the Eastern Shore of Virginia,” Easton Gazette, November 16, 1861.
140 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 46.
141 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 49.
equipped troops. The reporter reasoned that the occupation was designed to stop trade between the Shore and the mainland and to secure grain-producing land and access to Cherrystone oysters. The writer also wondered why the Union had not taken possession sooner, considering the isolated nature of the area.\textsuperscript{142}

Families, too, decided to leave before the Union invasion came. Families of Confederate soldiers ran the blockade to avoid having to live under occupation. On November 7, Mary Howard took her mother, children, and four slaves with her in a small sloop. First they stayed in Norfolk with a family friend and later, her cousin, General John H. Winder, helped Mary get a job in Richmond with the Confederate Department of the Treasury.\textsuperscript{143} Meanwhile, the family of Miers W. Fisher, Northampton County’s representative to the Secession Convention, also ran the blockade that November, leaving its estate and most of its belongings behind.\textsuperscript{144} When the family returned after the war, everything of value in the house had been taken.\textsuperscript{145}

Virginia’s vote to secede brought Union attention to the remote and vulnerable Eastern Shore of Virginia counties. The disparity of opinion between Northampton and Accomack prevented these counties from mounting an effective defense. Some citizens, especially in Accomack, were forced to prepare for a war that they opposed. Militia leaders from Northampton County did not trust those from upper Accomack, failing to include them in their plans for defense. Finally, the organization of the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia Volunteers took men away from the local militias, the only means of defense. While

\textsuperscript{142} Special Correspondence from Norfolk, November 21, 1861, printed in \textit{Daily Dispatch}, November 22, 1861.
\textsuperscript{143} Mary C. Howard, Diary, entry October 22, 1897, Eastern Shore Historical Society, 70-3.
\textsuperscript{144} James Mears, \textit{Supplement to Eastern Shore of Virginia in the 19th and 20th centuries, and The Pungoteague Creek area, Accomack Co., Va., 1659-1968}, 603.
\textsuperscript{145} Sally Cary Graves, \textit{Running the Blockade}, Eastern Shore Historical Society, Onancock, VA.
Northampton County began stocking weaponry and organizing its militia soon after Lincoln’s election, Accomack did not even begin to organize its forces until after the Virginia Convention voted for secession. That vote and its ratification by the electorate sealed the fate of Virginia’s Eastern Shore. Encouraged by the orders of General Dix, Union troops descended on this remote, unprotected region in overwhelming numbers. The great tragedy is that the uncertain path of secession in the two Eastern Shore counties led to its immediate occupation, and ultimately took away whatever usefulness it could have had offered the Confederacy.
UNION OCCUPATION AND THE POLITICAL PENDULUM

Initially the Union took a conciliatory tact, promising to protect the property, rights, and way of life of Virginia’s Eastern Shore citizens. Though Federal forces made some attempts to fulfill those promises, they did not completely uphold those ideals. As the war dragged on, the Union army’s policies grew increasingly rigid. With changes of leadership in the occupying forces, came increasing demands on the white population.

General Benjamin Butler required oaths of allegiance from all citizens, subverted the civil courts in order to provide justice for freed slaves, increased taxes, and imposed harsher penalties on rule-breakers. Many citizens tried to make the best of the situation by waiting out the occupation. Some sought secret opportunities to aid the Confederacy, hoping to avoid detection. Union policies regarding slaves changed over time. First they protected the chattel property of slaveholders. Later they granted freedom to enslaved men who enlisted in the Union army. This move ushered in de facto freedom on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, nearly eight months after President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation withheld the promise of freedom to the enslaved population there. White farmers faced labor shortages because their servants refused to stay, demanded better conditions and wages, or simply wanted to lead independent lives. Individuals who wanted to do business of any kind were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Union. The Federal government assumed that since the Eastern Shore of Virginia had fallen so quickly to its invasion, sentiments there had changed to broad support for the Union. President Lincoln believed that most Virginians were loyal and had only been led
to secession by a prominent few.\textsuperscript{1} Though they submitted peacefully, Confederate support remained strong throughout the region. The people’s initial lack of violent resistance resulted from the practical realization that they would not get any help from the Confederate army, and, thus, they were in no position to defend themselves. However, as the reality of Federal occupation set in, Eastern Shore citizens bristled at the curtailment of their civil liberties and representation in the state legislature and Congress which served as a rubber stamp of Union policies. Early in the occupation, even if Confederate supporters were elected, they would not have served in the restored state government at Wheeling. In short, the bloodless invasion gave way to a tense occupation.

Initially, General Dix pushed for the invasion of the Eastern Shore for strategic reasons and political concerns. Dix’s top priority was to prevent secessionist sympathies from influencing Maryland to secede and thus, leave the Federal capital in Confederate territory. Dix treated Accomack and Northampton Counties as an extension of Maryland; in fact, the counties remained in the Middle Department until Union forces controlled much of eastern Virginia. By the time of the midterm elections for Congress in 1863, pragmatism led citizens to cast their votes for the candidate they believed would protect them from conscription. Gillett Watson, the loser, accused the incumbent Joseph Segar, the winner, of pandering to Confederate sympathizers.\textsuperscript{2} Segar and General Dix both wrote to President Lincoln requesting that the Eastern Shore counties to be exempt from the Emancipation Proclamation.\textsuperscript{3} In late 1863, General Butler petitioned the War

\textsuperscript{1} Stephen B. Sledge, “The Bitter Fruit of Secession: The Union Army’s Wartime Occupation of Southeastern Virginia” (PhD. diss., George Mason University, 2012), 36.
\textsuperscript{2} Gillett Watson, “Proclamation to the People of Northampton and Accomac Counties” (Portsmouth, VA: The Virginian Office, 1863), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
Department and added them to his Department of Virginia and North Carolina. Political concerns during the 1864 presidential election led President Lincoln to appease Butler, allowing him to extend his heavy-handed and self-serving policies to the Eastern Shore. Butler sought monetary benefits for himself and the occupation government by exploitation of the citizenry and control of trade in the area. Butler’s regime imposed high taxes and much of that money went to support the newly freed black population. Over time, these policies made the white citizens restless and distraught. Butler’s temporary use of black troops as Union occupying forces insulted the white population, who could not stand to see their black neighbors in uniform. The recruiting and arming of free blacks and former slaves in the area sowed the seeds of discontent, increasing animosity between the white and black populations which lasted for decades.

Much of the shifting relationship between Union occupiers and the occupied had to do with military leadership. In 1861, occupied citizens faced General John Adams Dix, one of the oldest generals in the Union army. Although he was not known for decisive, swift action, his contemporaries considered him a reliable organizer. He was a Free Soil Democrat from New York, and much like Lincoln, he favored banning slavery in new territories but took no stance on making any changes to the institution in the states where it already existed. He had served in the US Senate from New York 1845-49, as postmaster of New York City in 1860, and Secretary of the Treasury in 1861. As commander of all U.S. forces in Maryland, it fell to him to decide the fate of the Eastern Shore.

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Colonel Charles Smith, the Confederate commander who gave way to Dix’s invasion, left the Eastern Shore at the request of the community leaders. A statement in the *Daily Dispatch* signed by Smith and many officers in the 39th Virginia explained that the captain had called a council of war on November 15 to decide whether to make a stand or “fall back to a stronger position about 10 miles in [our] rear.” At that time, Smith anticipated facing 8,000 bluecoats. Having only about 500 infantry and 140 cavalry with smooth bore six-pounders, and knowing that the militia could only raise another 100 soldiers armed with shotguns and flint lock muskets, Smith said that the council unanimously decided to retreat in order to allow as many men as possible to escape through the blockade to join the Confederate Government. He included a statement from the officers that explained their actions were necessary and practical, “with the means at our command resistance would be utterly hopeless, and could but result in a useless effusion of blood and destruction of property.” With no chance of gaining reinforcements and the duty they had to save as many of the soldiers and officers of the Confederate States, he believed this was the only option. In order to defend his actions, Smith also included a statement from twenty-one prominent citizens of Accomack County written on November 14 that urged him not to try to defend them against such an overwhelming force, but instead to allow them to accept “the offering of any terms on the part of the enemy which can be acceded to with honor, and thereby a sanguinary and useless conflict avoided.” The citizens went on to assert that they wanted to defend the honor of their officers and did not require of them that they fight a “hopeless contest.”

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Whether or not the Eastern Shore citizens condoned it, Confederate forces left without putting up any resistance. Some Confederate soldiers stationed on the Eastern Shore traversed the Chesapeake Bay to join other Confederate army units at Norfolk, Yorktown, or Richmond. Probably close to 500 enlisted men ran the blockade to reach the Virginia mainland. These men later came to be known as the “refugees.” According to Henry Wise, the number of men who escaped might form “two, perhaps three good companies but they consist of fragments of companies.” Wise asked permission to attach them to his 4th Brigade under Major General Huger. After this first exodus, additional men secretly slipped across the bay to join Confederate forces. County Clerk’s records indicate that an additional 197 from Accomack and 255 from Northampton did so. Those volunteers or militiamen who remained hid their guns or buried them, and presumably tried to accept Union occupation.

Thus, the invasion of Virginia’s Eastern Shore in November 1861 occurred with little outright violence. Still, both the occupiers and the occupied stereotyped each other. Northern news reporters painted the Eastern Shore as a sleepy backwater, where a gullible public had been manipulated by elites to believe that Union forces had come to free the slaves, incite them to revolt, and seize people’s private property. It fell to the soldiers to disabuse them of this notion. A New York Times correspondent wrote from Northampton County, declaring that the Federal soldiers had been ordered to protect property rights in the region. The journalist indicated that the “designing few” had convinced the general public of the nefarious intentions of the Union army. The slaves,

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8 Henry Wise, January 19, 1862, OR ser. 1 vol. 9, 139.
meanwhile, had been told that those who were too old to work would have their right arms and legs cut off and the rest would be sent to Cuba. In general, Union soldiers scoffed at the primitiveness of Eastern Shore civilization. A member of Company C, 2nd Delaware, wrote to a friend from his encampment near Drummondtown, which he referred to as "one of the most God-forsaking looking towns that you ever heard of and the people, are at least one hundred years behind our times." He went on to say, "We have met with no armed rebels and will not I suppose, on this peninsula." He lamented the lack of excitement stating, "No doubt our time will pass to rather dull music this winter. I wish we were away on more active service." Such conclusions may have held some truth; however, they proved to be an oversimplification. While the population seemed willing to comply with Union standards of law and order, many only resigned themselves to go through the motions to maintain the appearance of cooperation. The citizens of the Eastern Shore of Virginia realized their predicament. The chances of waging a viable resistance were nonexistent, for they could get no help from the Confederate government. Essentially, they were on their own until the war was over. A Norfolk report appearing in the Richmond Daily Dispatch lamented, "Our good people of the Eastern Shore will have to submit with becoming patience to this sudden defeat, until our forces shall achieve more victories to compensate for what they have lost."

Leniency and a desire rekindle their ties to the Union characterized this first phase of occupation. President Lincoln believed that the majority of southerners were, in their heart of hearts, tied to the United States. In his address to the nation, Lincoln boasted:

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12 Report from Norfolk, Richmond Daily Dispatch, November 25, 1861.
An insurgent force of about fifteen hundred, for months dominating the narrow peninsular region constituting the counties of Accomac and Northampton, and known as the Eastern Shore of Virginia, together with some contiguous parts of Maryland, have laid down their arms, and the people have renewed their allegiance to and accepted the protection of the old flag. This leaves no armed insurrection north of the Potomac or east of the Chesapeake.\footnote{President Lincoln’s Address, \emph{Richmond Daily Dispatch}, December 7, 1861.}

General Dix hoped to win over the population with promises to protect their property and way of life, doing his best to avoid altering the social structure. General Dix enacted policy from Baltimore, though he did make occasional visits. When at his Baltimore headquarters, he entrusted General Henry Lockwood to apply those policies in such a way as to placate the population. In fact, Dix ordered Lockwood not to delegate certain sensitive decisions in dealing with the populace to anyone else.\footnote{General John A. Dix, “Proclamation to the People of Accomac and Northampton Counties,” \emph{OR} ser. 1 vol. 5, 432.} Lockwood, a Delaware native, was hand-picked by Dix because of his familiarity with the Eastern Shore culture.

In similar manner, troops from Maryland’s Eastern Shore made up the bulk of occupation forces.\footnote{General John A. Dix, “Proclamation to the People of Accomac and Northampton Counties,” \emph{OR} ser. 1 vol. 5, 432.} Lockwood remained the commanding officer until late 1863, implementing policy for the commander of the Middle Department, whomever that happened to be.

What was Union occupation policy? The first question of Union occupation involved the Eastern Shore counties’ civil government. Could it continue to function? At first, General Dix answered “yes,” but only as a part of another state. Just days after Union occupation, General Dix expressed his desire to make Accomack and

\begin{thebibliography}{15}
\item President Lincoln’s Address, \emph{Richmond Daily Dispatch}, December 7, 1861.
\item General John A. Dix, “Proclamation to the People of Accomac and Northampton Counties,” \emph{OR} ser. 1 vol. 5, 432.
\item General John A. Dix, “Proclamation to the People of Accomac and Northampton Counties,” \emph{OR} ser. 1 vol. 5, 432.
\end{thebibliography}
Northampton counties part of Maryland. In a letter dated November 21, Lockwood reported that both counties were prepared to declare allegiance to the Union, so much so, that they favored annexation. According to Dix, Lockwood had discussed the possibility of annexing these counties to Maryland, and some of the inhabitants had said it might be agreeable when it was constitutionally possible. Lockwood stated, “I hope that by this joint action this interesting people may be relieved from their present position, and brought into association with the State of Maryland to which their geographical position naturally points.”

Geographic consideration may have offered Lockwood a logical conclusion in this turbulent period, but politics prevailed. Another governmental body claimed a right to these counties, the “Restored Government” of Virginia that formed in Wheeling, the rival Virginia government that rejected secession. The General Assembly allowed Accomack and Northampton Counties to have a referendum regarding annexation to Maryland. Governor Francis Pierpont of the Restored Government of Virginia ordered an election in the counties to decide the matter, and one was carried out, but there are no records of the vote. Nevertheless, the Restored Government of Virginia proved willing to allow the Eastern Shore counties of Virginia to be annexed by Maryland perhaps because they were too far removed from the new capital, both geographically and ideologically. Moreover, the Restored Government wanted to remove some of its more troublesome members. One of the most vocal leaders for secession at the Virginia Convention, Miers Fisher, represented Northampton County. If Fisher was any indication, the Eastern Shore counties would represent an ongoing headache, bringing

16 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 129-32.
17 OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 436-7.
18 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 129-32.
little benefit to the Restored Government. Wheeling delegates expected Unionists from the Eastern Shore to fight hard to protect their chattel property while the western counties, nearly devoid of slaves, expected to do away with it. Thus, internal rivalry between unionists and secessionists at Wheeling gave Dix his cue to ask for annexation.

To the national government, annexation seemed a common sense approach, an organic byproduct of geography. Half of the state of Maryland and much of the state of Delaware shared Virginia’s Eastern Shore tidewater geography and plantation culture. But if the Wheeling government and the Union army viewed it this way, the people of the Eastern Shore did not. Eastern Shore residents saw themselves as distinctly different from their northern neighbors. They could not agree to the plan and thus after voting against it, they now reported to a remote state government in West Virginia. Union forces were dismayed at this decision. They had set out to return Virginia’s Eastern Shore to the Union in the most democratic manner, but the voters had rejected their plan. Dix and Lockwood miscalculated, thinking that residents would chose loyalty to the Eastern Shore over loyalty to Virginia. The people there identified more strongly with the Commonwealth of Virginia than they did with the Union, in fact, that is why some of them voted in favor of secession. They were not about to agree to join the state of Maryland.

The second question for the Union occupiers dealt with the definition of citizenship. In his book, The Hard Hand of War, Mark Grimsley characterized Virginia’s Eastern Shore as an important “test case for conciliation.” General Dix had given clear

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20 Dix and Lockwood, OR ser. I vol. 5, 431-3.
21 In the Hard Hand of War, Mark Grimsley briefly described Union occupation policy on the Eastern Shore. At the onset, the Union instituted a conciliatory policy, employing “respect and magnanimity.”
orders to Lockwood to treat all residents as loyal citizens of the Union unless they were or had been employed by the Confederate government or had taken up arms against the Union.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, early on, the Union army offered a lenient policy, not even requiring all citizens to take the oath of allegiance in order to vote. Civil officers who had not previously taken an oath of allegiance to the Confederate Government would not be required to take the oath, but those who had could take the oath of allegiance to the Union and maintain their office.\textsuperscript{23} Lockwood had thousands of typewritten oaths available but filled out few of them.\textsuperscript{24} Essentially only those who had taken up arms against the Union and wanted to retain their offices were required to take it as a show of contrition. John W. Gillet, former commander of the Accomack Rifles of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Militia and Clerk of the Court, was required to take the oath of allegiance to hold his office but abstained. The Commonwealth attorney, Colonel Gunther, also refused, resigning his position alongside Gillett.\textsuperscript{25} In December 1861, Gunther was also one of the only secessionists arrested for treason. He went to Baltimore and imprisonment Fort McHenry.\textsuperscript{26} Upon the recommendation of General Dix and Governor Pierpont, Federal forces paroled Colonel Gunther from Fort McHenry in April of 1862. Gunther had to promise not to give aid or comfort to the enemy. If Accomack ever fell into Confederate hands, his parole would be

Later, a pragmatic approach emerged, where officers employed whatever tactics were needed to achieve strategic success. Finally, a hard war approach arose as a byproduct of war-weariness and frustration, using intimidation and fear as legitimate and appropriate tools, with Union officers classifying southern citizens into three distinct groups, to be dealt accordingly. A small group of Unionists agreed to take the oath of loyalty to the Union. A second group signed a parole of honor, promising not to take any action against Federal forces. Though allowed to go about their daily business, Federal troops did not trust them. The third group refused to take the oath or sign the parole of honor. At first, they were treated as hostile neutrals. After 1862, anyone refusing to take the oath could be forced from his home. If he refused to sign the parole, he could be sent beyond the lines into Confederate territory.

\textsuperscript{22} Dix, November 25, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 428. Grimsley, \textit{The Hard Hand of War}, 54-5.
\textsuperscript{23} Dix, November 25, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 429.
\textsuperscript{24} Barnes, \textit{Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865}, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 55.
\textsuperscript{25} Barnes, \textit{Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865}, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 56-7.
\textsuperscript{26} "Local Matters," \textit{Baltimore Sun}, December 16, 1861.
revoked. After his release, Gunther asked permission to enter the lines of the 6th Maryland Regiment to look for his slaves. Dix refused that request but advised him to seek permission from civil authorities in Baltimore, which he received. Gunther was unsuccessful and returned to the Eastern Shore a free man.

Conciliation followed Union occupation elsewhere in the South. President Lincoln offered Confederates, including those on the Eastern Shore, a pardon if they would lay down their weapons and take the oath of loyalty to the United States. In January 1862, Dix and Lockwood required citizens to post a bond when they took the oath or signed a parole. Those caught acting against the Union lost their money. Northampton County Court records from January 13, 1862, indicated that anyone seeking legal status as executor had to take the oath and put up a monetary bond. Some Eastern Shore citizens accepted this. Richard Ames, for instance, took the oath and gave a bond of $3,000 as security. Another man, Elam Brickhouse, took the oath and paid $1,000 bond to be able to administer the estate of James H. Ward. Of course, only the wealthy could afford to pay such bonds. None could afford to slip and lose the money. Thus, Union policy tamed elites of the Eastern Shore counties into compliance and supplication.

Despite the rather serious bond issue, Dix and Lockwood dealt lightly with Eastern Shore citizens. They assumed that few harbored Confederate sympathies, because whenever their troops went in pursuit of Confederates, they could rarely find

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30 Stephen B. Sledge, "The Bitter Fruit of Secession: The Union Army's Wartime Occupation of Southeastern Virginia" (PhD. diss., George Mason University, 2012), 49.
any. In a report to General Lockwood dated November 16, 1861, John Knight, Assistant Adjutant General, recounted that he had been told by some men and boys in the area around New Church that there had been a large Confederate force of as many as 3,500 militia, but they had broken up and gone home. Knight's forces had come across a large breastwork, but no soldiers. The locals claimed that they had no idea where the cannon were. Later, Knight's forces met with horsemen and footmen, but many without arms; some ran into the woods, and others threw away their guns. The only big success came when Lockwood had captured two Confederate captains and one lieutenant, some of the "leading spirits of the late rebel forces on this peninsula," he wrote. Lockwood wanted to send the prisoners to Ft. McHenry, but the men in question claimed protection under Dix's proclamation. Lockwood commented further that the inhabitants were showing no signs of resistance, "They appear to receive the power of the Government as their deliverance from misery and great suffering." Further, Lockwood had productive meetings with local Unionists. Before Union troops made their way out of Accomack, Northampton County residents sent a committee of unionists to meet General Lockwood's forces to "make arrangements for a peaceable occupation of the County." They understood there was no chance to avoid the occupation and the conciliatory tone of Dix's proclamation buoyed their hopes. They hoped by sending a contingent of some of the few Union loyalists, they might strike a tone of moderation and cooperation with the

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33 *OR* ser. 1 vol. 5, 433-4.
34 *OR* ser. 1 vol. 5, 435-6.
invasion forces. Robert Costin, an Old Line Whig chosen for that committee, invited Lockwood's forces to camp on his land in the hopes that they would protect his family.\textsuperscript{35}

Of course, most of the easily identifiable secessionists had already fled the Eastern Shore and were in Norfolk. According to reports, they were in desperate need of sustenance. On November 25, 1861, the \textit{Richmond Daily Dispatch} ran a November 22 report from Norfolk asserting that over one hundred citizens had escaped from the Eastern Shore and were in the city. Many were "sadly in want of clothing and necessities." Confederate reporters blamed Dix for the destitution. The Richmond writer claimed that General Dix showed "little regard to the women and children who were made wretched by this sudden affair to their county, which but a day or two ago was so bright and cheerful with domestic happiness." Showing a great deal of skepticism for the provisions of the amnesty proclamation, the author lamented that the greatest injuries would be to slave owners because federal troops would surely take every slave they could get their hands on. He also criticized their actions in which they took "two of the finest houses in the county" to house his officers.\textsuperscript{36} On January 13, 1862, the \textit{Daily Dispatch} ran another article claiming that a veritable stampede of individuals had come from the Eastern Shore to the city of Norfolk. Four men who attempted to run the blockade in an open boat a week earlier had drowned.\textsuperscript{37}

The attitudes of the \textit{Dispatch} most closely resembled that of white Eastern Shore citizens. Although Lockwood approached with friendly intentions, some began to see him as a man who played favorites. General Lockwood took special care to defend "the

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Richmond Daily Dispatch}, November 25, 1861.
few marked men,” those known to be Union sympathizers, such as Robert Costin, William P. Moore, and Peter Bowden.\(^{38}\) This angered the Old Line Democrats. Some loyal residents wanted General Lockwood removed because they believed he was too lenient on the rest of the population, giving secessionists their old jobs in the local government.\(^{39}\) Similarly, some Union soldiers viewed General Lockwood as too soft on the enemy. George Leavitt, a member of the 5\(^{th}\) New York under Lockwood’s command, commented, “the least said about him the better if he is not a secessionist he is very much afraid of hurting the feelings of the rebels if his wishes had been carried out we should have given back the arms that we had taken and furnished them with powder and ball at least that is the opinion of the whole Brigade.”\(^{40}\) Members of Congress investigated Lockwood’s invasion, thinking his methods too lenient, pointing to the slow and deliberate movement of the Federal troops into Northampton County as evidence of his reluctance to capture Confederate soldiers.\(^{41}\)

Although citizens, soldiers, and Congressmen questioned Lockwood’s leadership, he did not lose his command, at least not while the Middle Department remained. The Eastern Shore of Virginia fell under the control of this department, from its creation in March 1862 until December 1863, when the region joined with the Department of Virginia and North Carolina at the request of General Benjamin Butler. The Middle Department saw five different commanding officers: John Dix was first; then, Major General John Wool served from June through December 1862; followed by Major

\(^{41}\) Barnes, *Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865*, vol. 2 of *Pungoteague to Petersburg*, 54.
General Robert Schenck from December 22, 1862; but Brigadier General William W. Morris took temporary command for periods of two to three weeks in March, August, and September of 1863. Finally, Brigadier General Erastus B. Tyler served as temporary commander between September 28 and October 10, 1863. Although the commander of the Middle Department had the final say in all affairs, from the invasion in November 1861 until June 25, 1863, when he went to serve with the Army of the Potomac, Brigadier General Henry H. Lockwood had direct control over the Eastern Shore. Lockwood’s presence provided a degree of continuity during a period in which many different officers commanded the Middle District. For all his detractors, he proved to be a practical and moderate administrator.

Lockwood’s practicality was evident or was most obvious in his treatment of private property. Under the first military regime — the pairing of Dix and Lockwood — only Confederate soldiers and overt secessionists on the Eastern Shore faced confiscation of private property, specifically land, homes, and horses. Although Union troops occupied former Confederate camps first, eventually they took over private homes and even used churches to house troops and stable horses, despite protestations of the citizenry. Initially, General Lockwood took possession of the home of Dr. Browne, a Confederate surgeon, as his headquarters. Miers Fisher’s plantation, Town Fields, became a hospital, and later, a relief station for displaced African Americans. Another house and farm belonging to Miers Fisher, Pocahontas, near Eastville, became a regimental headquarters. Cessford, the home of Mary Howard’s older sister Caroline

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Winder Kerr, served as Lockwood’s headquarters from late 1861 through 1865. Lockwood signed a promise not to interfere with the running of the plantation.44 Coventon, the home of Mary Winder Howard’s family where she wrote her diary, was also used by the Union.45 Essentially, only those families known to have led secession felt the indignity of Union soldiers living in their houses. Even so, Lockwood insisted on protecting that property when it was in use by Union troops.46 Likewise, Lockwood supported the confiscation of horses belonging to Confederate soldiers; however, he required his soldiers to return horses of civilians even without requiring them to take the oath. Soldiers generally adhered to Lockwood’s directives, although they blatantly commandeered other property such as straw, even against orders which prohibited it.47

Some residents welcomed Lockwood’s men to their property. One of the few loyalists in Northampton County, Robert S. Costin, brought Lockwood and his soldiers to Costin’s farm near Eastville and allowed them to camp there. Cavalry troops remained encamped there for three years. Soldiers provided Costin and his family protection. Costin reported, “We were in a great state of trepidation, and I would get a detail of soldiers to protect us and they would come there and not touch a thing and keep us from being marauded by other soldiers.”48 Of course, irregularities occurred. When a Union quartermaster promised his soldiers beef and could not get any, he killed one of Costin’s bulls. Costin complained, so Lockwood confiscated a bull from a rebel’s plantation and offered it to Costin as a replacement. Costin told Lockwood that he could not take it, and

44 Cessford, Eastern Shore Historical Society, Onancock, Virginia.
46 John A. Dix, January 14, 1862, OR, ser. 1 vol. 51, 519.
47 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 51.
no other restitution was ever made. Lockwood’s men used rails from Costin’s fence as fuel, leaving nothing behind. They also cut timber from his woods and took potatoes and corn from his fields. Costin believed that two of Lockwood’s staff officers intended to pay him but he never received any money for these losses. Protection, then, came with a price. 49

In addition to seizing the property of prominent secessionists, Union forces shut down disloyal newspapers. The Daily Recorder, a small weekly newspaper published in Drummondtown by A.S. Gootee and C. R. Coard, had espoused strong secessionist opinions calling President Lincoln’s agenda “coercive doctrines.” 50 Federal troops closed the Recorder’s office, commandeered the equipment, and began printing their own newspaper Regimental Flag from their camp in Accomack County. 51

Union authorities put public services into operation just as often as they shut them down. Union troops reestablished trade between the Shore and northern cities. The lighthouses returned to operation, and mail service was reinstated. Lockwood tried to end illegal smuggling by licensing boats, and prohibiting their movement at night. 52 On December 21, 1861, as a reaction to ongoing attempts to run the Federal blockade, he placed guards at the mouths of sixteen landings and creeks. If a soldier bought any food from a local, the native was required to eat a portion of it before the soldier was allowed

49 In 1880, Costin appealed to the Federal government for restitution, but again, received no compensation. In this case even the most prominent Union man in Northampton County ended up feeling bitter even though, early on, he experienced relief at Lockwood’s willingness to protect his family. Frances Latimer, Robert S. Costin of Northampton County, Virginia, 34-44.


to buy it. By early February, a telegraph line from Wilmington, Delaware, reached Drummondtown. Upon completion, it went to Cherrystone Inlet, farther down the Shore than ever before, and it then went underwater to Old Point Comfort, adjacent to Fort Monroe. When the telegraph line was completed, guards were posted every 300 yards. The telegraph line served as a frequent target for rebels, perhaps the only valuable target for Confederate agents other than lighthouses. Cutting the telegraph line became a crime punishable by death. This cable allowed direct communication with Washington D.C. and New York. Information travelled twenty four hours faster than before.

As a final matter of policy, General Dix wanted civil officials to remain in office. In response to an order from Governor Pierpont of the “Restored Government,” Dix and Lockwood called for new elections for justices in both counties to be held on January 25, 1862. Dix sent a letter to the County Clerk of Accomack informing him that if any of the county officials tried to stop the process, they would be imprisoned. Lockwood forbade the county government from meeting until they created a new government supportive of the Union. In an unexpected visit to Eastville with Dr. Gillett Watson of Accomack, candidate for the State Senate, Lockwood addressed the town on the courthouse steps. He expressed dismay at the lack of Union loyalty and informed the people that he had lists of 400 to 500 slaves in addition to horses, mules, and other property used previously in the service of the Confederacy. His background made him friendly toward them but if they refused to comply with the law “a higher power would demand the execution of the

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55 Barnes, *Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865*, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 54-5.
56 G. V. Fox, February 16, 1862, OR ser. 1 vol. 6, 650.
57 Barnes, *Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865*, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 56.
laws.” If they complied and voted in the election on January 28, he would not have their property confiscated. He assured them of his willingness to protect them and their property, pointing out, “I am myself a slaveholder, and my father before me held slaves.” He announced that until they had a government “responsive to the Constitution of the United States” his command would protect their property and personal safety. If they did not comply and did not vote in the election, there would be no peace, and he would treat them as enemies. Lockwood’s approach worked to keep the population compliant. The large turnout in the January election provided legitimacy for the new officials in the civil government. No new voting restrictions were imposed and the elections passed quietly. In Northampton’s elections, four officers of the court who had previously taken an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy were reelected, and nine new members were added. Voters in Accomack County retained five of the previous justices, but nine new individuals joined the ranks.

Naturally, Confederates derided the January 1862 elections. A report dated February 4, 1862 in the Richmond Daily Dispatch pointed to low voter turnout in the January elections as proof that “the people are not yet sufficiently subjugated to lend themselves to the dirty work of the bogus Government, backed up as it is by abolitionism.” In January 1862, “Hermes” in the Charleston Mercury claimed that Federal authorities were forcing the citizens of the Eastern Shore of Virginia to vote Union just as they had done Maryland.

59 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 54-5.
60 “From Eastern Virginia,” Philadelphia Inquirer, January 20, 1862.
61 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 55-8.
63 Charleston Mercury, January 10, 1862.
Unionists heralded the elections as a dramatic overthrow of the Eastern Shore planter gentry. A Baltimore correspondent for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported after a conversation with Union Colonel William H. Purnell that since the people of the Eastern Shore had been able to realize the error of their ways, they had come to understand that "the Federal Government and protection (were) much better than secessionism." Purnell went on to claim that ordinary citizens were "contented, prosperous, and happy."

The first telegraph sent from the Eastern Shore, dated February 22, 1862, described celebrations honoring George Washington's birthday and the participation of many citizens. The sender from the Union Relief Commission claimed, "The indications are that Secession in Northampton is disappearing."

Union soldiers expressed mixed opinions. After the first election of the occupation, one Union officer claimed, "I am satisfied that setting aside a few of the leading men, the middle class of the people there are now loyal and desire to remain so." Still other Union officers suspected that citizens were just being practical by "systematically" hiding their weapons. They were, so one soldier wrote, "only waiting for a chance to rise again."

The results of the election emboldened Eastern Shore Unionists. J. G. Potts, an outspoken Unionist, wrote his own proclamation, "An Address to the People of the Counties of Accomack and Northampton in General and particularly to the Mechanics, Tenants, and Laborers," urging commoners to stand up against the elites whom he titled "the small potatoe (sic) aristocracy," and drive them out of their places of power and

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65 "First Telegram from the Eastern Shore of Virginia," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, February 27, 1862.
66 Barnes, *Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865*, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 54-5.
honor into obscurity. He asserted that anyone who voted against the interests of the elite secessionists would find himself persecuted by them, often using legal means. He was especially bitter about what he saw as nepotism by the established elites to keep their own families in positions of dominance. Potts believed that the elites had manipulated the rest of the population to support the war. He recounted the burning in effigy of three prominent men with Union sympathies, Judge Edward Pitts, Mr. Abel T. Johnson, and Mr. William H. B. Custis, before Union occupation. He also told the story of a Drummondstown merchant, William C. Colbourn, who voted a Union ticket in an election. Many of Colbourn’s customers came in to settle their accounts with him, intending never to do business with him again. A local woman who owned a tavern had received threats that her house would be burned down unless she took down a sign that was put up by Union soldiers.

Potts referred to the time before the Union occupation as "the Reign of Terror." He claimed that he had been forced to serve in the 2nd Militia by Colonel Gunther. He also claimed that "in the time when the wildest excitement was raging," he had been accused of spying. According to Potts, Dix’s Oaths of Allegiance did not go far enough to sift the loyal from the traitors. He warned the people not to trust public officials who had sworn allegiance to the Confederacy and later changed to swear allegiance to the United States. According to Potts, these individuals were "able to swear allegiance to Satan for the sake of getting a doorkeepership in the lower world." Of course, Potts could have been using the Union occupation as an opportunity to bring down the

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68 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 49-51.
69 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 16-7.
entrenched elite, whom he resented. He believed that the too many of powerful elite
tained prominent positions simply by taking another oath.

Like Potts, those who claimed loyalty to the Union received rewards. On
February 15, the Virginia House of Delegates (of the Restored Government) began an
quiry into an allegedly disloyal justice who was still receiving a salary. During the
previous June, Judge E. P. Pitts, a Union loyalist, travelled with his family and a few
ervants to his farm in Ellicott’s Mills, Maryland. Judge Pitts returned to the Eastern
Shore after a meeting was held by members of the local bar which required him to take
the oath of loyalty to the Confederacy. After the Union occupation, officials removed all
other judges from their posts pending the new elections; however, they allowed Judge
Pitts to remain on the bench after taking the oath of allegiance to the United States.70
Other judges in Northampton County, such as John A. Simpkins, George P. Filchett, John
E. Nottingham, and George W. Smith, who had previously taken an oath to the
Confederacy, were removed from office. They were allowed to run in the new election,
winning back their seats on January 25, 1862.71 Pitts, who had connections among the
Union officers, was not removed, but instead retained his post.72 Surely, such favoritism
did not go unnoticed by Eastern Shore citizens.

Dix feared that Union supporters might be targeted and replied to letters of
concern, assuring them that all local officials had taken the oath of loyalty. Support for
the Confederacy continued during the general election on March 15, 1862, and Union
leaders never established complete control over secessionists’ activities.73 The Union

70 “Disloyal Judges,” Richmond Whig, February 18, 1862.
71 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 58.
72 “Disloyal Judges,” Richmond Whig, February 18, 1862.
ticket for election in Accomack County won, bringing in Gillett Watson as State Senator, Samuel Powell to the House of Delegates, John Ailworth as County Clerk, Edward K. Snead as Commonwealth Attorney, and William B. Smith as Sheriff.74

After the new elections, the number of arrests began to rise, albeit slowly. In February 1862, Isaac Smith, "a well-known rabid Secessionist," was arrested on charges of blockade running and providing aid and comfort to the Confederate forces. Union soldiers searched his home, finding a stockpile of supplies. He served thirty days hard labor under the supervision of the provost marshal, Lieutenant Foy.75 General Lockwood tightened security along the coast; he ordered all vessels and canoes to be brought into inlets where guards watched them. Union soldiers seized and condemned other craft kept at unsanctioned locations.76 These were hardly overreactions or paranoia. After the March election, raiders went after the precious telegraph. Someone cut the telegraph line about ten miles from the Eastern Shore.77 Federal troops caught the culprit and handed him over to General Lockwood.78 Just days after the attack on the telegraph cable, General Lockwood received orders to take most of the 3,400 soldiers from Virginia’s Eastern Shore and report to Baltimore. These men took part in McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign, leaving only a few cavalry companies to control Northampton and Accomack.79 Secretary of War Edwin Stanton assigned one of the navy’s fastest vessels, the Metamora, to guard the telegraph line between Fort Monroe and Cherrystone.80

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74 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 56-7.
75 “Arrested,” Regimental Flag reprinted in Daily Dispatch, February 24, 1862.
76 “Vessels and Canoes,” Regimental Flag reprinted in Daily Dispatch, February 24, 1862.
78 Albany Evening Journal, March 20, 1862.
79 OR, ser. 1 vol. 11 part 3, 30.
80 OR, ser. 1 vol. 11 part 3, 43.
By the spring of 1862, Eastern Shore residents had come to regret their decision to remain attached to the Wheeling Government. Correspondence dated May 1862 from C. Nottingham to her aunt indicated her displeasure. Speaking of the recent elections, she wrote, “Robert Custis was elected to go to Pierpont’s bogus legislature -- but refused to go -- so next week there is to be another election.” Nottingham viewed the Restored Government as a magnet for the Eastern Shore’s corrupt politicians or pretenders. Nottingham also said that Union forces expected to be accepted by a submissive population. Soldiers who had initially been anxious to socialize with the ladies of Northampton County, “to give us parties, dinners, and terrapin suppers,” had grown weary of their “decided coolness,” no longer referring to them as members of the fair sex, but instead as “female rebels.” She shared an incident that had occurred recently in the home of a relative. Helen Nottingham showed a group of girls a small Confederate flag she had just received in the mail from Baltimore. Union troops observed the gathering through the window and with “a thundering knock” demanded that they hand over the flag. Nottingham’s letters reveal an essential truth; the elections of January and March 1862 changed the relationship between occupied and occupier. After the elections, the occupied no longer held back their disdain for the army and the occupiers no longer accepted their insolence.

More than just the relationship changed. The number of Union troops also fell. Most of the invading troops had been sent elsewhere. By late March, all troops on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, as well as Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey who were

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81 C. Nottingham to Garrett family, May 1862, Garrett papers, Special Collections, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.
82 C. Nottingham to Garrett family, May 1862, Garrett papers, Special Collections, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.
not assigned to an army corps were called to Baltimore to participate in the Peninsular Campaign.\textsuperscript{83} In a June letter, Nottingham noted, "At first they came with thousands of their best troops, enough to eat us up – darkies and all."\textsuperscript{84} In short, as the tension rose, the Union troops departed.

The Dix-Lockwood regime changed the region dramatically in that mail, communication, and travel were restricted. The homes and personal property of individuals who openly sided with the Confederacy were seized, used, or sold by Union forces. War taxes weighed heavily on the people of the Eastern Shore, with a five percent tax levied on all property. According to the \textit{Richmond Daily Dispatch}, Federal tax assessors were accused of overvaluing property and slaves for the benefit of the government.\textsuperscript{85} Still, in other respects, very little changed. Local civil government remained in place but was watched carefully by Union officials. Preferring to remain attached to the government at Richmond, the Union army protected the property of quiet citizens and openly loyal ones. Citizens did not engage in any large, organized resistance movements. Dix and Lockwood attempted to secure the area for the Union and bring the population back into the loyal fold. They had greater success with the former than the latter. Union occupation did not reshape the fundamental social structure.

Union occupation policy began shifting in the fall of 1862. In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves throughout the Confederacy, weakened the viability of the institution even in those areas that remained exempt from it. Eastern Shore slaves began to exercise more independence. That year, military necessity stripped

\textsuperscript{83} General Orders, No. 102, \textit{OR}, ser. 1 vol. 11 part 3, 34.
\textsuperscript{84} C. Nottingham to Garrett family, June 11, 1862, Garrett papers, Special Collections, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.
\textsuperscript{85} "Northern Taxes," \textit{Richmond Daily Dispatch}, April 29, 1862.
Union forces from the Eastern Shore, sending them to battle, leaving very few soldiers to police the Shore and guard strategic targets. Noticing the departure of troops, citizens showed their dissatisfaction more openly than ever before, and the Union resorted to harsher punishments to quell uprisings. The Union army punished Eastern Shore citizens for unsolved cases of sabotage, even without certain identification of the perpetrators. Once the national government called for the recruitment of black troops from the area, slavery dissolved, further embittering the white population. President Lincoln tried to retain conciliatory policies, yet new Union army officials took the reins and carried out a hard war approach.

The shifting tension began in June 1862 when President Lincoln ordered Generals Dix and Wool to exchange commands. Dix believed this was a demotion; although Secretary of War Stanton assured him that was not the case.\(^6\) Dix received a new command, becoming the head of the Department of Virginia. Major General John Wool replaced him as commander of the Middle Department, to serve from June 1862 to December 1862. If the decision fit the needs of the War Department, it did not satisfy the desires of the Eastern Shore residents. Even Union sympathizers despised Wool. He increased controls on Confederate sympathizers, closed businesses, and restricted their movements. He ordered mail to be inspected and allowed the confiscation of secessionists' property. When citizens came to lodge complaints, he refused to meet with them.\(^7\)

Actions of the Accomack Court showed growing impatience with the federal occupation. The court protested to Colonel James Wallace when it learned that his troops

\(^6\) General John A. Dix to President Abraham Lincoln, June 1, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Know College, Galesburg, Illinois.

\(^7\) Sledge, "The Bitter Fruit of Secession," 65.
were keeping their horses on the courthouse green. On June 30, 1862, the court issued sympathies to the wife and relatives of James R. Hermanson, a lieutenant in the Confederate Army – Company F, 46th Virginia Infantry – and former local attorney, who died in the Battle of Seven Pines, the first battle in which a large number of Eastern Shoremen fought. He had enlisted in February 1862 in Norfolk, two months after the Union occupation. The citizens bristled under the yoke of Union control and began to show more overt resistance.

Changes in occupation policy decreased the willingness of Eastern Shore citizens to comply quietly with Federal forces. In August 1862, in the county seat of Drummondtown, a young man by the name of Bell walked past the courthouse where he was stopped by a Union soldier who asked him about a pin that he had on his vest. Bell explained that it was from his debating society during his college days. Not satisfied with that explanation, the soldier declared that it was really a “secesh badge.” A fight broke out between them and Constable William Addison Kellum came out of the courthouse to break it up. Another soldier hit the constable over the head with his musket and then an officer opened his skull with a sword. Kellum died a few hours later. Citizens who spoke out against the violence were imprisoned. More people were required to take the loyalty oaths. Union provost marshals controlled and suppressed any subversive activities among the citizens, carrying out midnight arrests, and jailing citizens as prisoners of the state. Any citizen suspected of disloyalty could be imprisoned without any evidence. Provost marshals wielded authority over all military prisons as well as all political prisoners. No uniform policy existed regarding the requirements on citizens to

88 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 59.
89 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 59.
90 "Outrageous Proceedings in Accomac," Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 11, 1862.
take the oath of loyalty. It was left to the commander in the field to determine policy. Provosts also determined whether or not to issue trade passes to civilians for commerce. This was dependent upon the citizen’s loyalty and sincerity as judged by the provost marshal. Provosts decided whether or not an oath of loyalty was necessary to issue supplies to the destitute. They were also responsible for catching deserters from the Union army and preventing blockade running.\(^91\)

Wool’s arrests provoked a response from Eastern Shore Unionists. Gillett F. Watson, an Eastern Shore Senator to the Wheeling Legislature, mentioned in a September 1862 letter to Governor Pierpont that he was leaving for Washington, D.C. with Judge Bowden in hopes of meeting with President Lincoln on “behalf of the few loyal persons of eastern Virginia.” Watson asked Governor Pierpont to protect the interests of loyal slaveholders in the area. He accused General Lockwood of granting papers of freedom to disloyal individuals.\(^92\) Watson hoped to protect the few openly Unionist citizens.

If the change in commanders caused trouble, so too did news of the Emancipation Proclamation. In November 1862, two months after Lincoln announced its imminent implementation, General John Dix requested that President Lincoln grant loyal status to the Eastern Shore counties to exempt them from the Emancipation Proclamation and also “in order that they might be relieved from the penalties of disloyalty and that the taint of disaffection might rest on the community... They are entitled to exemption by their loyal conduct during the last year.”\(^93\) Dix received the affirmative response he hoped for and


\(^{92}\) Gillett Watson to Governor Pierpont, quoted in *Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865*, vol. 2 of *Pungoteague to Petersburg*, 57.

\(^{93}\) John A. Dix to Abraham Lincoln, November 17, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Know College, Galesburg, Illinois.
explained that the people wished to be classed with the loyal districts and to be freed from the tax penalty of up to fifty percent. It seems clear that few of the citizens were truly loyal; however, they attempted to keep up the appearance of loyalty for tax breaks and protection of their slave property.

Major General Robert Schenck replaced Wool, commanding the Middle Department from December 1862 to December 1863, with a few temporary commanding officers serving two to three weeks at a time during that period. Schenck, a loyal Republican and supporter of Abraham Lincoln, had practiced law and served as ambassador to Brazil before the war. A distinguished brigadier general, he received wounds at the Second Battle of Bull Run that disabled him for the remainder of his life.

Schenck had his work cut out for him. Wool’s arrests had only angered the population, Unionists and secessionists alike. However, Schenck followed Wool’s policy, continuing to make arrests, but in a different area. Specifically, Schenck meant to damage the true bastions of secession, the county courts. During his tenure, Schenck oversaw the removal of pro-Confederate judges. Using this shift in judicial leadership, families of Confederate soldiers who died in the war sued the Wise family and other families of prominent Confederate leaders from the area. By early 1863, the Accomack Court awarded damages in cases filed by four individuals against former Governor Henry A. Wise, then a brigadier general in Confederate army, and other members of his family. The plaintiffs asked for monetary damages from the Wise family who were described as “non-residents of the Commonwealth.” In most of the cases, the court seized Wise

family property and sold it to award damages. Similar suits were filed against Louis C. H. Finney, the former commander of the 2nd Virginia militia now serving with the 39th Virginia Infantry. In like manner, his property was seized by the court. After three years of occupation, only two of the pre-war judges remained on the Accomack County Court. Union loyalists had nearly taken over.

During Schenck's reign, Union troops continued targeting freedom of speech. In an instance reported by Captain John H. Knight, two women drove into Drummondstown in a carriage shouting "Hurrah for Jeff Davis" and waving a rebel flag. General Lockwood ordered the confiscation of the carriage and two horses. Mrs. Saunders, another resident of Drummondstown, had two grey mares taken on the order of General Lockwood in early 1863 based on the claim that she was a "known violent secessionist." It was claimed that the Confederate quartermaster had given her one of the mares as payment for housing Confederate officers. In another case, a man was shot in the hip by a Union officer in retribution for cheering for Jefferson Davis.

In periods where Union control was strong, citizens appeared meek and willing to accept occupation in order to retain their citizenship and property rights. However, once the exigencies of war stripped away most of the occupying force in the summer and fall of 1863, sending them on to battle, citizens exhibited open hostilities toward the Union, refusing to take the oath of allegiance to gain any concessions from the Union army.

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96 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 60.
97 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 60-1.
98 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 60-1.
100 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 61.
By the summer of 1863, fewer than 350 Federal troops were stationed on the Eastern Shore.\textsuperscript{102} The Union army made a tactical decision that the troops were needed elsewhere, in spite of on-going problems in the area.\textsuperscript{103} Lockwood took many of his troops from the Shore to bolster the Army of the Potomac, even leading them at Gettysburg. The loss of Lockwood's experience was deeply felt by the Middle Department. Just weeks after Lockwood's reassignment to serve with the Army of the Potomac, Major General Schenck contacted him (he was then serving at Harper's Ferry) for advice on how to best deal with the situation on the Shore.\textsuperscript{104} In late July 1863, only one company of cavalry remained to patrol the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and they could do little to prevent "rebelpredations or contraband trade." Schenck wrote, "Contrabandists are having a high holiday, and secessionists are growing saucy, and threatening about draft and other matters."\textsuperscript{105} Lockwood responded that "two companies of cavalry and six of infantry, if of an active kind, and not too delicate, will hold in check any demonstrations on the Eastern Shore [of Virginia and Maryland]. The people are timid, and easily put down by a decided course."\textsuperscript{106}

Lighthouses, essential aids to navigation for pilots not well acquainted with local waters, once again became a common target of sabotage. On August 6, 1863, Captain W. P. Lord reported an attack on Smith's Island "by rebels who left these counties, aided by friends here," and returned to steal the lighthouse lights as well as boats. Total damages were estimated at $2,000. Union forces captured one of the culprits on the bayside.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{102} "Telegraphic News," Charleston Mercury, July 1, 1863.
\textsuperscript{103} Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 609.
\textsuperscript{104} William H. Chesebrough, Special Orders 170, June 25, 1863, OR ser. 1 vol. 27 part 3, 326.
\textsuperscript{105} Shenck to Lockwood, OR ser. 1 vol. 27 part 3, 738.
\textsuperscript{106} Lockwood to Schenck, OR ser. 1 vol. 27 part 3, 738.
\textsuperscript{107} Schenck to Halleck, OR ser. 1 vol. 29 part 2, 10.
General Henry Halleck responded that if more troops were needed to guard prisoners, they would have to come from Baltimore, and in general, "additional troops cannot at present be sent to your department." The message was clear – current troop levels would have to suffice.

Governor Pierpont weighed in on the situation, blaming the Eastern Shore’s exemption from the Emancipation Proclamation as the cause of growing unrest in the area, as the citizens grew emboldened. In a letter to President Lincoln he voiced these concerns:

The exception of the two Eastern Shore Counties of Virginia and four Other Counties on the other shore including the Cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth from the operation of your Proclamation of the first of January has not been attended with the beneficial consequences you anticipated. Instead of inducing loyalty it has in my judgment encouraged disloyalty; while the Military necessity which warranted the Proclamation was as urgent in the accepted Counties as in any other. The Military necessity has become [even?] now more obvious than it was then. Within the last few weeks the Cape Charles Light house has been destroyed by rebels or by traitors-- No such outrage could be perpetrated if the exception were revoked-- The necessary Military force for protection by recruiting from any Class disposed to enlist could be easily obtained. Blacks enough to form a substantial defense and security for the public property and the commerce

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108 Halleck to Schenck, OR ser. 1 vol. 29 part 2, 11.
protected by the Light House, could be easily enlisted if the exception were revoked.\textsuperscript{109}

Pierpont believed that the enslaved population should be emancipated so that they could assist in the protection of the region. He also believed emancipation would dampen the rebellious spirit welling up in the white citizenry.

In August 1863, Federal authorities threatened to break their previous agreement with former Confederate soldiers who had laid down their weapons and submitted peacefully when Union troops invaded the shore.\textsuperscript{110} After a prisoner exchange agreement between the two armies, Union officials tried to force former members of the Confederate 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia Volunteers to take the oath of allegiance or be sent to City Point for exchange. Lincoln disagreed with the decision stating, "Now my judgment is that no one of these men should be forced from his home who has not broken faith with the Government according to the terms fixed by General Dix." When his first correspondence went unheeded, Lincoln wrote Secretary Stanton a second letter on September 1, 1863, stating his dismay that Stanton defied his wishes by requiring the 400 former Confederate soldiers living on the Eastern Shore to take the oath, "As this and also the assessment for damages done to and at the lighthouse are very strong measures and as I have to bear the responsibility to them, I wish them suspended until I can at least be better satisfied of their propriety than I am now."\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{109} Pierpont to Lincoln, September 3, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field(DOCID+@lit(d2601800))
\textsuperscript{110} Portland Advertiser, September 5, 1863.
\textsuperscript{111} From Letters and State Papers of Lincoln by Nicolay and Hay, quoted in Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 610.
The president wanted to uphold earlier agreements and worried about the citizens rising up against Union forces in large numbers. General Schenck later required all of these former Confederate soldiers to take the oath of allegiance to the Union or become prisoners of war or be sent beyond Union lines. Major Henry Hayner defended Schenck’s actions, asserting that General Dix had never meant to extend protections to these men unless they submitted to the Union government. Hayner implied that the men crafted bogus reasons as to why they could not take the oath. Some claimed that, since they had already pledged loyalty to the Confederacy, they could not then swear an oath to the Union. Some claimed that they would no longer be able to communicate with friends or relatives in the South though mail could be sent under a flag of truce. Others indicated that they would be drafted if they took the oath to the Union. Hayner responded that disloyal status would provide no such protection and, in any event, the Union would not institute the draft in that region.112 Hayner and Schenck, both of whom remained unconvinced of the sincerity of these claims, looked to the president to enforce this requirement, demanding that these men submit to the oath of loyalty or be treated as prisoners of war. To refuse an order to do so amounted to nothing less than treason, a charge these Shoremen should not be allowed to escape. Lincoln’s decision to reverse the order angered the two Union officers.113

During this same week, an act of sabotage put the Cherrystone Creek lighthouse out of commission. General Schenck ordered a punitive assessment on the local citizens in response to the damage to the lighthouse and theft of eighteen hundred gallons of oil.

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112 Major Henry Hayner to Abraham Lincoln, September 10, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
113 Major Henry Hayner to Abraham Lincoln, September 10, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
These actions inflamed the general citizenry and heightened existing prejudices against loyalists and Federal forces in the area. Schenck required 212 residents of Northampton County to pay a fine of $20,000 for its repair, since he blamed the population for the crime. Lockwood granted exemptions for only nine known Union loyalists, among them Robert Costin, Peter Bowden, and John S. Parker. Citizens on the Eastern Shore protested and Lincoln took note of their sentiments, aware that civil unrest here could prove problematic for him in other ways. On September 1, 1863, President Lincoln suspended orders to require the 400 men of the 39th to take the oath, and also suspending the $20,000 after 161 of the 212 residents had already paid their share. Once citizens who had already paid their portion of the indemnity heard of Lincoln’s rescindment, they acted in a disrespectful way. According to Dr. Yerby of Eastville, citizens were relieved to hear of the suspension yet worried whether or not those who had paid would get their money back. He wrote, “The people feel deeply wronged and fear they won’t get it back. There was no cheering and not the slightest demonstration as the military will testify.”

While the president worried about overstepping the bounds of good government, Schenck sought retribution against the citizens, whether they were responsible or not.

Schenck did not see it in that way. He thought Lincoln’s actions had emboldened the Confederate citizens. Schenck urged President Lincoln to reconsider the matter and requested that he hear the report of Major Hayner. Hayner, Schenck’s subordinate officer, oversaw the assessment and collection of a tax on the people for the destruction

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115 Dr. Yerby to Joseph Segar, included in Joseph Segar to Abraham Lincoln, September 6, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
116 Joseph Segar to Abraham Lincoln, September 6, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
of the lighthouse and administered the oath of allegiance to certain individuals. Upset
with the president's interference in the matter, Schenck asserted, "I am perfectly satisfied
that the policy I was pursuing, under direction, and with approval, of the Secretary of
War, was the true policy, for the Union Cause in that portion of my Department. I am
just as sure that the representations which have been made to you to induce you to change
that policy are in many respects incorrect, and founded on motives lower than an
unselfish and thorough devotion to the government. Maj. Hayner is a man to be relied
on."117 Union army policy sought to tighten control over a population which dared to
show its disloyalty, while the president tried to uphold the protections that the U.S.
government had granted to the citizens at the beginning of Federal occupation. Union
army officers took on the hard war approach; meanwhile, the president hesitated.

Joseph Segar, the House representative from Northampton and Accomac Counties
who had championed the interests of his constituents to ensure an exemption from the
Emancipation Proclamation, countered the report of Major Hayner and appealed the
indemnity imposed on the white male citizens.118 Segar wrote a letter to the editor of
National Intelligencer defending the honor of the people of Northampton County,
asserting their innocence in the attack on the Smith's Island Lighthouse and the murder in
Northampton County. Vouching for the reputation of Mr. Stakes, the lighthouse keeper,
Segar claimed that nine men, all strangers to the area, used the threat of force to steal four
hundred gallons of oil and a boat in addition to disabling the lighthouse.119

117 Robert C. Schenck to Abraham Lincoln, Tuesday, September 8, 1863 (Affairs at Northampton, Virginia)
Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
118 Joseph E. Segar to Abraham Lincoln, September 7, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of
Congress.
119 Joseph Segar letter to the editors, Daily National Intelligencer, August 13, 1863.
Schenck sent Hayner to Washington to deliver his report on Eastern Shore affairs in person to President Lincoln. Hayner insisted that the attack on the lighthouse and the cutting of the telegraph must have been assisted by certain members of the community.

Hayner saw a dire situation in Northampton County where citizens’ animosity to the Union government had become overt ever since Lockwood left with the bulk of his command. Only Captain Lord remained, commanding fewer than one hundred men. The pendulum had swung to outright public support for the Confederacy, so Hayner argued, and, for that reason alone, the indemnity should remain in order to reassert the dominance of the Union. As in the summer of 1861, few, if any, citizens dared to espouse Unionist sentiments openly for fear of being singled out and losing their place within the social order. They were even willing to pay taxes as disloyal citizens. Disrespect and hostility toward the Union became the norm once again. Upon being asked by another man, to whom had he paid his tax payment, a Northampton County farmer and member of one of the first families of Virginia replied, “there -- to that son of a b---h with straps and brass buttons.”

Hayner contended that at least one or more members of the community helped the raiders carry out attacks on the lighthouse and the telegraph line. The frequency of attacks and the timing of the latest one indicated that some members of the community must have had some knowledge of the incidents and the identity of the perpetrators. In such a closed and isolated community, strangers would stick out, and yet, no one seemed to notice any new faces or unusual activity. To Hayner, the amount of open hostility

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120 Major Henry Hayner to Abraham Lincoln, September 10, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
121 Major Henry Hayner to Abraham Lincoln, September 10, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
toward the Union was enough to warrant disciplinary actions. In his report to the president he implored, "Though many may not be conscious of having been actively privy to or participants in the outrage upon the government property, the punitive effect of the infliction of the tax may nevertheless have a subduing humbling influence upon the people though the fine be somewhat vicarious in its character. Such an imposition may do good among such a people – among others it might not." According to Hayner, when the news of Lincoln's order to suspend the tax became known, the citizens expressed "both in looks and actions feelings of hate and triumph." Hayner believed that Lincoln's concession only emboldened the population and stoked the fires of their discontent, and he asserted vehemently his belief that the fine should be collected in full and no return of funds allowed unless and until full innocence of the people could be proven. He was certain that this type of indemnity was the only means to bring an end to the ongoing mischief and would surely get the attention of the disrespectful population. Hayner appealed, "And I most firmly believe that such a course will ensure the perfect safety of all the Light Houses along that Coast from like aggression and at least produce the conviction among a people that scarcely seem to know they have a government ruling over them – enjoying all its widespread and all comprehending benefits, with scarcely any of its burdens incident to a war of overwhelming magnitude -- that they have at least a Government to fear if not inclined to respect." Major Hayner lamented his own imperfect ability to describe the gravity of the situation, "How very far short I have come from communicating anything like the truth in its full strength -- of the uncompromising hatred these people with very few exceptions (alas, how few!) indulge towards the

Government and especially towards the administration -- and the blind, insane devotion for the Southern Confederacy longing for its success in a much higher degree than did the Israelites 'for the flesh pots of Egypt.'”

Apparently President Lincoln questioned his decision because two weeks later, he wrote to Governor Pierpont asking his opinion on the matter of the indemnity which the federal government had demanded of the citizens of eastern Virginia. Pierpont responded that the crime had been committed by a guerrilla group from Matthews County, not by locals. He assuaged Lincoln’s feeling of guilt by saying that punishing the citizens would only backfire, further alienating the Shore’s Unionists.

Adding insult to injury, six months later, citizens who had paid the indemnity promptly had still not received a refund from the government. Severn Eyre, a resident of Northampton County who had paid his portion shortly after the assessment, appealed to the president for the return of his money in March 1864. He explained the unfairness of being penalized for his obedience; while those who had resisted until after the president suspended the collection did not lose anything. Eyre requested the return of his funds which he believed were still in the hands of Major Hayner who collected them. There is no record as to whether or not Eyre saw the return of his money.

During the same period, Unionist judges and U.S. army officials struck out against citizens in an attempt to intimidate them into submission. Seemingly mundane matters took on added importance and were imbued with political meaning. On

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124 President Lincoln to Governor Pierpont, September 21, 1863, Pierpont Letters, Library of Virginia.
125 Governor Pierpont to President Lincoln, response to September 21, 1863 letter, Pierpont Letters, Library of Virginia.
September 3, 1863, Edward Snead, a Unionist judge in Accomack County’s civil government, wrote to Governor Pierpont to inform him of the difficulties that the sheriff and tax collector were having. According to Snead, many citizens had not paid their taxes in the hope of “an overthrow of the powers that be.” He requested a military officer demand payment of delinquent taxes, arrest any that refused to comply, and keep them incarcerated until they paid their taxes.\(^{127}\) Unwillingness to comply with government demands was seen as disloyalty and a political statement. Apparently the judge was certain that it was not an inability to pay, but unwillingness to pay.

Accusations of disloyalty forced some individuals to explain their actions from two years earlier, their loyalty to the Confederacy, and any actions they had ever taken against the Union. Thomas Lilliston sought to clarify the details of a matter which was being used to threaten Accomack County court officials over a payment that was made to a mechanic who had been contracted by the county court before the war to convert 100 flintlock muskets to percussion locks. It was Judge Edward Snead who brought up this issue to General Schenck and Governor Pierpont. Lilliston defended his innocence, noting that he had not voted in the majority, but was one of the three who voted against the measure. He also asserted that the guns had only been used for police purposes and had been solely under the control of the court. Additionally, he reminded the governor that all the members of the court had taken the oath of loyalty to the United States’ Constitution and had done nothing to break it. Finally, he said that he had turned over the guns to General Lockwood as soon as Union forces arrived in the county.\(^{128}\) Snead

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\(^{128}\) Thomas Lilliston to Governor Pierpont, September 13, 1863, Pierpont Letters, Library of Virginia.
implicated prominent men in the county and tried to intimidate them to reassert the power of the loyal civil government.

In November 1863, Union officers investigated members of the grand jury when they refused to prosecute four physicians charged with practicing medicine without a license. The doctors had not applied for new licenses which required taking the oath of allegiance to the Union. Union officials arrested the jurors and sent them to Fort McHenry, charging some with disloyalty to the Reorganized Government of Virginia and others for speaking out against Governor Pierpont. G. Taylor, a prominent citizen, defended the jurors, explaining that there had been a desperate need for doctors due to a diphtheria outbreak. General Schenck released the jurors on their promise not to oppose enforcement of the law. The physicians were also released once they took the oath of allegiance.¹²⁹ Union forces found themselves in a precarious position. They needed to take a tough stance to enforce their policies; however, due to their lack of troops, they risked losing control if they pushed the people too far. In this situation, Union officials sent a message demanding compliance with the law.

On October 15, 1863, Assistant Adjutant General E. D. Townsend issued orders applying the practice of recruiting of black soldiers to the Eastern Shore of Virginia.¹³⁰ The Adjutant General’s office issued General Orders No. 329 from President Lincoln establishing recruiting stations for colored troops in the state of Maryland. Curiously, two locations in Virginia, Chesconessex Creek in Accomack and Cherrystone Creek in Northampton, were listed as recruiting sites for the state of Maryland. Lists of those who enlisted were made public and slave owners who had taken an oath of allegiance to the

¹³⁰ E.D. Townsend orders, OR ser. 3 vol. 3, 887.
Union and had never aided the rebellion could apply for as much as $300 in restitution after they filed a claim with the Maryland Board of the Bureau for the Organization of Colored Troops. All slaves who enlisted would become free.\textsuperscript{131} Presumably, recruits from the Eastern Shore of Virginia were being counted toward Maryland’s quota. Once again, the Federal government treated Virginia’s Eastern Shore as an extension of Maryland to suit its own interests.

Finally the federal government got a breakthrough in the lighthouse sabotage case. On November 16, 1863, General Lockwood reported the capture of John Yeats Beall and his crew of fourteen. (In the fall of 1863, Lockwood returned briefly to the Eastern Shore before taking command of the Middle Department.) Beall and his crew claimed responsibility for the recent attacks on lighthouses along the coast. Lockwood recommended a trial by a military tribunal or a civil trial in Accomack County where he felt certain that a jury of twelve trustworthy men could be formed to decide their fate.\textsuperscript{132} In the meantime, Lieutenant Colonel William H. Chesebrough responded that the prisoners should be treated as pirates not prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{133}

Lockwood was displeased with the situation he found on the Shore. He accused civil government officials of appointing people of doubtful character who made questionable decisions. One such man was Mr. Taylor of Pungoteague who was often implicated in blockade running activities. Lockwood had previously ordered Taylor’s store closed because of his concerns about the man’s activities. Lockwood also reported that secessionist newspapers arrived daily at the Pungoteague post office and recommended that it be closed and the postmaster in Metompkin replaced. It seems that

\textsuperscript{131} “Negro Recruiting in Maryland,” \textit{Easton Gazette}, November 7, 1863.
\textsuperscript{132} General Henry H. Lockwood, November 16, 1863, \textit{OR} ser. 1 vol. 29 part 1.
\textsuperscript{133} Lieutenant Colonel William H. Chesebrough, November 21, 1863, \textit{OR}, ser. 1 vol. 29 part 1.
his advice was not taken in this instance because Cornelius Taylor remained in his post until 1867. Lockwood showed compassion for the population when he received orders to turn over all confiscated lands and account for any rents earned from them. As he notified the wife of one Confederate officer, he assured her that he would have to receive specific orders to make him force a woman out of her home.134 Lockwood was transferred in early December 1863, and the counties were put under the jurisdiction of the District of Virginia and North Carolina. Even after his transfer, Lockwood heard complaints about recruitment of blacks in the counties and wrote to the commanding officer in the area, assuring citizens that Col. Birney would investigate and handle any wrong-doing.135

In December 1863, General Robert Schenck resigned from military service to serve in the House of Representatives for his native state of Ohio. Schenck had won election back in 1862, so the War Department knew that it would have to replace him.136 General Benjamin Butler succeeded in adding the Eastern Shore of Virginia to his command, the Department of Virginia and North Carolina.137

Although Butler lacked experience as a tactical expeditionary commander, his skills lay in establishing control over an occupied territory by regulating businesses, maintaining services to the community, limiting movement of the citizenry, controlling the press, and establishing a network of spies.138 He adhered to an occupation policy which would allow civil government under a state of martial law. If local government

135 Mears, *The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the War of Secession*, 268.
and courts failed to support military rule, then Butler believed they should be removed from power. Once he stripped city hall of its power, wealthy locals lost their protection.\(^{139}\) On the day he returned to Virginia, he set up the *New Regime*, a newspaper staffed by uniformed Union soldiers operating a confiscated printing press.\(^{140}\) Through his efforts to subvert civil government, Butler became the nemesis of Governor Pierpont. Pierpont sought to secure special provisions and protections for Union loyalists, while Butler wished to strip civil government of its power and punish white citizens for disloyalty. Previous military commanders had restricted civil authorities from their means of revenue collection, and Butler continued to expand those restrictions. At the same time, he created new ways for the U.S. Army to generate funds by imposing a wide array of fees on citizens for both personal and commercial activities.\(^{141}\)

In December 1863, General Butler’s Department of Virginia and North Carolina extended its territory to include the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Brigadier General Edward Richard Sprigg Canby denied Butler’s first request to include the region as part of his district, saying that since Colonel William Birney had authorization to recruit on the Eastern Shore, Butler’s services would not be needed.\(^{142}\) Upon Lockwood’s transfer, Canby changed his mind, approving Butler’s request, joining the Shore to the District of Virginia and North Carolina. Immediately, Butler applied his policies. He gained allies by issuing licenses for trade and business, and Butler’s friends and business associates enjoyed a host of new opportunities, but he showed no concerns about upholding the

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140 Sledge, “Bitter Fruit of Secession,” 224.
142 Canby to Butler, December 15, 1865, *OR* ser. 1 vol. 4 part 2, 563.
protections Dix had promised the citizens in 1861. Instead, he believed that Eastern Shore citizens should learn to respect and obey the laws of the Union military. One resident noted in a letter to her aunt, "We are now joined to General Butler's command and are much restricted in all respects." Meanwhile, Lt. Colonel Frank J. White took over as district commander on the Eastern Shore. Unlike Lockwood, White did not identify with the people of the region. Instead, he hoped to forge a new social order where whites and blacks enjoyed equal rights and mutual respect.

In response to a secessionist upsurge, on December 8, 1863, General Butler issued General Orders No. 48 which announced that any citizen who would not take the loyalty oath could be expelled and sent into Confederate territory. On the same day, President Lincoln issued an amnesty proclamation which offered all citizens amnesty if they stopped supporting the Confederacy and vowed loyalty to the Union. Even though these pronouncements seemed to conflict, Butler published both and implemented his own orders to shut down all non-Union businesses within the Department of Virginia. Avowed secessionists had to leave the area. Of course, many people took the oath simply to protect their livelihoods and property. In early 1864, names of men and women who took the oath were recorded in Accomack. (No such records have been found for Northampton County.) No longer could secessionists pressure loyalists to side with the Confederacy without incurring personal loss. Southern notions of "personal honor" may have induced some to live according to the oath they had reluctantly taken. Butler's

144 Nottingham letter to Garrett family, January 6, 1864, Garrett papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.
145 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 610.
146 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 610.
General Orders No. 49 further expanded federal power. Those who refused to swear the oath of loyalty could be sent into Confederate lines and have their property confiscated by the government. In order to travel, get a business license, catch oysters, operate a boat, or practice a profession, each citizen had to take the oath. By imposing a wide array of fees, Butler raised a great deal of revenue.

During this period when nearly any civil privilege or commercial activity required pledging a registered oath of loyalty to the Union, some citizens requested exemptions and others questioned the sincerity of those who took it. Generally, those appealing for special consideration received no sympathy from the general. After he denied an appeal, Butler complained, "If they are not well disposed toward the United States Government, then they have no business to live under that government and should go to some country to whose government they are well disposed. There is neither conscience nor honesty in living under a government to which they are hostile, receiving the protection of its benefits and laws and returning no equivalent."

In a letter of complaint, Mrs. Mary L. Graves of Accomack County expressed her belief that the oath really meant nothing since it was a requirement, making it little more than a sign of submission to the federal government. Admonishing her disloyalty, Butler rejoiced that the school where Mrs. Graves taught had been closed since the previous Christmas, leaving her unable to pass on her flawed understanding of the Constitution to her students. He advised Mrs. Graves

148 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 610-1.
149 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 610-1.
151 Butler quoted in Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 349-50.
to follow her sympathies, hinting that he might send her beyond the lines.\textsuperscript{152} Since taking the oath was a prerequisite to engage in any legal political or commercial activity, many citizens took it whether they were loyal or not. If one wanted to exercise political rights or engage in most occupations, they had to be on record as having sworn the oath. The veracity of that oath could be highly questionable.\textsuperscript{153}

Butler showed outright disdain for most of the citizens of eastern Virginia. He was disheartened that few white Virginians joined the Union Army. Butler actively recruited and pardoned Confederate prisoners of war during the period from December 1863 to July 1864.\textsuperscript{154} B. T. Ames, an aging minister in Drummondtown without means to support his wife and daughters, appealed to Butler for sympathy and leniency in regards to General Orders No. 49. Half of his property was located within Confederate lines and the rest was in Drummondtown. With his servants gone, he could not even work his small farm. Of course, Butler showed no signs of special consideration, declaring that after “carefully looking in your letter I can find nothing which shows a spark of loyalty. I, then, can only say you must take your case as you have made it.” Ames presented himself as an innocent, harmless man caught up in unfortunate circumstances and desperate for help, and Butler remained unmoved.\textsuperscript{155}

If Butler’s policies influenced secessionist Shoremen, so too did his new soldiers. After Lockwood’s men left in the summer of 1863, Butler had to replace the occupation force with black soldiers recruited from Craney Island. In January 1864, Butler stationed

\textsuperscript{152} Benjamin Butler to Mrs. Mary Graves, March 14, 1864, \textit{Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler: During the Period of the Civil War}, (1917; Plimpton Press, 2008) vol. 3, 538-9,

\textsuperscript{153} Mears, \textit{The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries}, 610.

\textsuperscript{154} Sledge, “Bitter Fruit of Secession,” 245.

\textsuperscript{155} Correspondence between Ames and Butler, January 1864, \textit{Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler} vol. 3, 344-5,
black troops in Drummondtown, Cherrystone Inlet, and Chincoteague Island.\textsuperscript{156}

Governor Pierpont wrote to Lt. Col. White’s district office, warning that the use of black soldiers would stir up dangerous sentiments. He explained:

I know you would not leave your wife and daughters in the community of armed negroes, undisciplined and just liberated from bondage, with no armed protection....The Union men are justly frightened at the safety of their families.

The citizens are disarmed. I am happy to say that the Union cause was growing daily in those counties.\textsuperscript{157}

Governor Pierpont warned that this policy would alienate the entire white population and reverse what he characterized as recent gains in loyalty. With the Virginia constitutional convention on the horizon, and residents of Accomack and Northampton about to lose 6,000 to 8,000 slaves because of it, Pierpont questioned the wisdom of upsetting the white citizenry. He inquired, “Is it right now to torture both parties with the terrific apprehensions which must haunt them by the presence of these troops when all reflecting men must doubt the propriety of it?”\textsuperscript{158}

Some white citizens feared that black soldiers would commit atrocities, and their anxiety rose sharply. In January 1864, Butler responded to a letter from Elizabeth T. Upshur of Franktown in which she expressed concern that colored troops would be sent to the Eastern Shore. He dismissed her concerns, stating his belief that black soldiers were less aggressive than white soldiers since they had learned submissiveness from an

\textsuperscript{156} Lt. Col. E. H. Powell, January 1864, \textit{OR} ser. 1 vol. 33, 402.
\textsuperscript{157} Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period}, 291.
\textsuperscript{158} Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period}, 294.
early age. Butler’s response gave away his own racial prejudices. He wrote, “Experience, however, has shown that colored troops, properly officered, are less aggressive than white troops in the places where they are quartered, from the fact that they have been accustomed from their childhood to give up their will to the will of those above them.” He also discounted reports of outrages committed against the civilian population in North Carolina by General Edward Wild’s black brigade. Butler went even further, claiming that, if he did send in black troops, it would be to provide relief from the outrages committed by white guerrillas. He admonished, “Therefore calm your fears.” More abrasive than reassuring, he reminded this woman who commanded whom.

Other citizens, lamenting the dire situation argued or felt that stationing black soldiers could do no more damage than that which had already incurred. C. Nottingham wrote to her aunt, “I really don’t suppose it will make much difference to us — as to demoralizing our darkies — those that are left — the thing is impossible — for that object is already accomplished. The servants that remain have in many instances gone to work for themselves and thus have already struck for high wages at home.” In her opinion, black slaves had already gained so much leverage in society, the stationing of black troops there would not make the situation any worse.

The new black troops – a contingent from the 10th U.S. Colored Infantry – arrived on the Eastern Shore in mid-January 1864. Butler warned the regiment to keep strict discipline to ensure that no outrages were committed against the civilian population.

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159 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 289.
161 C. Nottingham to Garrett family, January 6, 1864, Garrett papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.
All accounts suggest that the soldiers of the 10th U.S.C.T. comported themselves well; however their stay was short-lived. After three weeks of occupation duty, Butler reassigned them to a different sector of his department.\textsuperscript{163}

As tensions heightened with news of the arrival of black troops, Shoremen anxiously awaited news from the Virginia Constitutional Convention. Governor Pierpont called for the convention to begin on February 13, 1864, and declared that there would be no ratification vote by the people to approve or disapprove the new framework. Dr. Arthur Watson of Accomack served as the committee chair of the Bill of Rights and Voter Qualifications committee. He favored giving the vote to all white male citizens, twenty-one and older, who had paid their taxes and had taken an oath of loyalty to the government. Watson wanted to deny suffrage to Union soldiers, and he wanted Confederate soldiers to wait five years in order to vote. In the end, the voter qualifications adopted by the convention (and voted against by Watson) included a section requiring the voter to swear he had not given any aid to the Confederacy since January 1864. Another section stated that voting for all state officers and members of the General Assembly would be done by ballot not viva voce.\textsuperscript{164}

Eastern Shore citizens complained often under Butler's regime, but most understood that conditions on the Eastern Shore were better than nearby areas of eastern Virginia, areas that had endured prolonged fighting and destruction. For months, C. Nottingham worried about her relatives in Williamsburg and whether or not they had enough food to eat. She urged her aunt to see Colonel Roberts at Old Point to request a permit so that she could flee to the Eastern Shore, for she considered it safer than the

\textsuperscript{163} Mears, \textit{The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries}, 608-12.
\textsuperscript{164} Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period}, 284-5.
Peninsula. Nottingham revealed that another woman, Mrs. Adams, had already done this, arriving from Williamsburg with her sons and all her household belongings. Adams now lived in Mappsville with her son-in-law.\textsuperscript{165} Despite the restrictions on business and travel, Eastern Shore residents realized they had it relatively easy. They had sufficient food, and elite families would still educate their children without interference. Secessionist sympathizers had to keeping silent.\textsuperscript{166}

Indeed, if any struggle occurred at all during Butler's regime, that conflict arose from considerations of freedom of speech. Butler disallowed open sympathy for the Confederate government. On the Eastern Shore, he set his sights on local churches. For decades, Methodists debated the issue of slavery which eventually divided the church into the Philadelphia Conference, and the Southern Conference. In 1860, a mass meeting in Pungoteague selected nine individuals and charged them with the task of driving out abolitionist Methodist preachers from Virginia. Once Virginians ratified the Ordinance of Secession, most of the Methodists in the commonwealth broke their ties to churches affiliated with the Philadelphia Conference.\textsuperscript{167} In the spring of 1861, church congregations ran off their Unionist ministers. Since the start of Union occupation, ministers generally showed neutrality, but they prayed openly for Jefferson Davis. In January 1864, Butler required all ministers to take the oath of loyalty or face expulsion.\textsuperscript{168} He replaced some of the ministers across his department, even jailing one resistor and assigning another to street cleaning duty until he recanted. Provost marshals monitored

\textsuperscript{165} C. Nottingham to Garrett family, January 6, 1864, Garrett papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.

\textsuperscript{166} C. Nottingham to Garrett family, January 6, 1864, Garrett papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.

\textsuperscript{167} Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 568-9.

\textsuperscript{168} Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 307.
churches and required congregations to pray publically for the President of the United States. On March 25, George C. Tyler, a loyalist resident and collection officer at the Internal Revenue Office in Onancock, requested that Butler enforce the same regulation on the Shore. Tyler believed that if the secessionist preachers were removed, "a great opportunity to mislead the ignorant and keep up the strife would be taken away and the people would have time to reflect more for themselves." Lt. Col. White investigated local churches and certified whether or not they were in compliance. White ordered that only churches affiliated with the Philadelphia Conference could assemble. He instructed all others to meet publicly to denounce the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In addition to limiting the words of preachers, Butler regulated the words of women. General Orders No. 49 required all women, ages sixteen and over take the oath of allegiance. This stunned a few Shore residents. Miss Mary L. Graves, who taught at Locustville Academy, wondered why women, who were not allowed to vote or participate formally in politics, were required to give a public account of their political views. She wrote Lt. Col. White asking him to explain. White replied that many women in the area had chosen to take part in the hostilities as spies, "It is within this region that many women have acted as spies, as mail carriers and abettors of treason. They have abused privileges and immunities granted only to their sex, as they have chosen to become active participators in the rebellion and must bear the penalties and restrictions attached to such a course....And as it must be taken voluntarily, no sophistical plea of

172 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 570.
duress can be admitted in its justification of its violation.” White’s words echoed those of his superior, Benjamin Butler.\textsuperscript{173} Truly, Union occupation required a full account of every resident’s personal sentiments.

Although not as contentious as free speech, Butler’s opinions on the confiscation of property added a new wrinkle to Union occupation policy. In January 1864, Butler issued General Orders No. 10, explaining and clarifying confiscation procedures. Private property could be seized but only to keep it out of the possession of the enemy or disloyal citizens. Private property could be taken from loyal citizens too for military necessity, “either for shelter, transportation, fuel or food, or from known enemies to be turned over to agents of the Treasury.” Finally, property could be taken or destroyed as a summary punishment for offences, such as, if a citizen fired a musket upon a body of troops, or sold poisoned food to Union soldiers.\textsuperscript{174}

In general, Butler’s confiscation orders placed more burdens upon Union occupiers than the occupied. According to Butler, officers seizing property had been reluctant to leave certificates. The general considered this bad policy. He explained the need for documentation to protect the U.S. government from unscrupulous petitions. Failure to document confiscation, he claimed, “expos[ed] the United States government to claims often unfounded but always exorbitant...It does not add to the responsibility of the officer but on the contrary is a protection both to himself and to his Government. No officer should do an act he is not willing to certify having done.” Each certificate required an accurate record of the items taken, the original owner (with a notation describing their loyalty), when they were taken, and the officer who took the items. If an

\textsuperscript{173} Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period}, 287.  
\textsuperscript{174} Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period}, 345.
officer determined to destroy a building, he must post notice "to the nearest prominent object." Any officer found to have taken or destroyed property without providing a certificate would face charges of committing "unauthorized and causeless plunder."\textsuperscript{175}

Although Butler and White concerned themselves with residents' loyalty and confiscated property, the Union soldiers focused their efforts to limit illegal activities, especially smuggling. For instance, Lieutenant J. W. Strong issued orders on March 6, 1864, requiring all stores to close at sunset and instituting a general curfew of 9 o'clock each night.\textsuperscript{176} Union troops had reason to be concerned. Eastern Shoremen caused damage where they could. On March 17, an unknown assailant shot a member of Company G, 3rd Pennsylvania Artillery, in the mouth as he guarded the cable box at Cherrystone. A wide search yielded no suspect. On March 18, Lieutenant Williams of the 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry tracked down and arrested five Confederate soldiers who were home on furlough and hiding out in Teackle Bennett's house. In response, White ordered all residents of Northampton and Accomack to register in his office within one month and declare their loyalty or disloyalty.\textsuperscript{177} Tensions grew and punishments increased. In early May 1864, Lt. Col. Frank White arrested John Thompson, James Brown, and Michael Mackey in Accomack County on charges of spying for the Confederacy and sent them to a military prison in Baltimore.\textsuperscript{178} Soon after, according to a circular dated May 9, 1864, Union officials ordered Eastern Shore provost marshals to

\textsuperscript{175} Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 346-7.
\textsuperscript{176} Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 375.
\textsuperscript{177} "Our Norfolk Letter," Philadelphia Inquirer, March 19, 1862.
\textsuperscript{178} "Local Matters," Baltimore Sun, May 13, 1864.
shoot on sight anyone caught in the act of blockade running, spying, or carrying rebel mail.\textsuperscript{179}

The telegraph station in Northampton County, on Cherrystone Creek and the submarine cable connecting it to Fort Monroe provided vital communications for Union forces, and, thus, continued to be targets for rebel saboteurs. A guerrilla band cut the telegraph cable between Fort Monroe and Cherrystone in early March of 1864. As a result, all messages from headquarters at Fort Monroe had to be brought to the Eastern Shore station for transmission. Just days later, on March 7, a raiding party destroyed the telegraph station at Cherrystone, brutally killed twelve horses, stole goods from boats in the harbor, commandeered the tugboat \textit{Titan}, and captured six Union guards and the ship’s crew.\textsuperscript{180} On July 14, 1864, General Butler sent the entire 138\textsuperscript{th} Ohio Infantry to protect the telegraph station in Cherrystone.\textsuperscript{181} Despite the reinforcements, rebel forces cut the cable again in late July. Although this was a seemingly minor episode, it had larger influence on the Civil War. On July 26, after noticing the problems caused by the unreliable cable, General Ulysses S. Grant recommended to President Lincoln that the four departments of the Susquehanna, West Virginia, Middle, and Washington be united under one command and controlled by a highly capable leader—meaning himself. He cited the need for efficient relaying of orders as well as other reasons, “some of which I would not care to commit to paper, but I would not hesitate to give verbally.”\textsuperscript{182} In the end, the vulnerability of the telegraph line from Cherrystone Creek to Fort Monroe helped Grant argue his case for a unified command in the East.

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\textsuperscript{181} \textit{OR} ser. 1 vol. 40, 249.
\textsuperscript{182} General Grant to President Lincoln, July 26, 1864, \textit{OR} ser. 1 vol. 40, 436.
\end{footnotesize}
The constant fear of saboteurs shaped day-to-day life on the Shore in a real way. It required all trade to pass through the prism of Union occupation policy. Essentially, residents required a permit to carry on business, and all business came second to Union confiscation. For instance, Butler set up saw mills for the benefit of the U.S. Army, freedmen, refugees, and, presumably, for himself. These sawmills supplied lumber to the U.S. Navy and provided revenue for the Department of Negro Affairs, Butler’s pet agency to protect black refugees. On the Shore, the U.S. government operated a lumber mill in Franktown. Littleton S. Read, a former lieutenant in the 39th Virginia, acted as superintendent of the government lumber mills. This is a rare example of a former Confederate serving in a Federal post. Later on, critics of Lt. Col. White would use this information to help oust him.

In the summer of 1864, Butler began an attempt to eliminate civil governments by holding elections, starting in Norfolk. Although only one-third of the eligible voters voted, Butler dubbed the special election a success. Consequently, he did his best to apply the same model to the Eastern Shore counties. In mid-November 1864, Lt. Col. Frank White, under orders from Butler, called for an election to remove the two counties from Governor Pierpont’s jurisdiction and put them under the military’s jurisdiction. President Lincoln himself stopped the vote from taking place. Having won reelection, Lincoln no longer needed Butler’s political support. Along with his orders to halt the

185 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 365.  
187 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 609-10.
election, President Lincoln attached a previously unsent letter detailing his concerns with Butler’s actions in Norfolk months earlier. He admonished:

Nothing justifies the suspending of the civil by the military authority, but military necessity, and of the existence of that necessity the military commander, and not a popular vote, is to decide. And whatever is not within such necessity should be left undisturbed. In your paper of February you fairly notified me of that you contemplated taking a popular vote; and, if fault there be, it was my fault that I did not object then, which I probably should have done, had I studied the subject as closely as I have since done. I now think you would better place whatever you feel is necessary to be done, on this distinct ground of military necessity, openly discarding all reliance for what you do, on any election.

Butler’s actions gave Eastern Shore citizens an opportunity to remove themselves from Butler’s department. Shortly after Lincoln’s rebuke arrived, Frank White informed General Butler that two prominent Eastern Shore citizens, Dr. Watson and Dr. West, had travelled to Washington to request that the region be reassigned to the Middle Department, then under General Lockwood’s command. Perhaps wishfully, White assured Butler, “A large majority of the people on this Shore oppose such a change.”

Though the people had resisted attempts to join formally with the state of Maryland, they much preferred Lockwood’s policies over those of Butler. When Butler heard that

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188 Sledge, “The Bitter Fruit of Secession,” 257.
189 Abraham Lincoln to Benjamin Butler, August 9, 1864, sent December 21, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
190 Lt. Col. Frank White to General Butler, July 30, 1864, OR, ser.1 vol. 40 part 3, 689.
"strong efforts [were] being made to have taken from this Department the counties of Accomack and Northumberland, commonly called the Eastern shore," he accused his adversary, Governor Pierpont, of being behind the effort, attempting to bypass his strict regulations preventing smuggling and the sale of whiskey.\textsuperscript{191} The prospect of having his control and profit-making potential reduced ruffled Butler's feathers.

The year 1865 brought yet another change to Union policy. Now, Eastern Shore residents had to register for the draft. The two counties had avoided the first three federal drafts, but after the fourth draft of December 19, 1864, the War Department decided to include Northampton and Accomack. Naturally, Eastern Shore residents sought ways to avoid service. B. T. Ames, a former Methodist minister, inquired to the provost marshal if he might be exempted since he was just a few months shy of forty-five, the maximum age for a drafted man. The provost marshal replied, "The Devil himself will be enrolled if found on this shore and of the prescribed age."\textsuperscript{192} No records indicate that the Union drafted any Shoremen into service. Quite simply, the war ended before the assistant provost marshals could put the draft into effect. However, the Eastern Shore raised one company of white volunteer recruits, Company A, First Regiment, Loyal Eastern Virginia Volunteers. Most of these men came from Chincoteague and farther north. Many of the men enlisted in January of 1864, but they were not called into service until June 30, 1864 at Cobb's Island.\textsuperscript{193} Each received $100 bounty and their duties consisted of shore patrol.\textsuperscript{194}

\textsuperscript{192} Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 610-1.
\textsuperscript{193} Eastern Shore of Virginia Register of Loyal Volunteers, http://www.esva.net/ghotes/misc/loyalvolunteers2.html.
\textsuperscript{194} Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 610-1.
Once General Edward Ord replaced Butler in command of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina on January 7, 1865, the emphasis shifted from governance to military defeat of the Confederacy. General Ord replaced all of Butler’s officers, including the Eastern Shore’s district commander, Lt. Col. White. In his place, Ord assigned General George H. Gordon, who assumed White’s responsibilities of governing: hospitals, poorhouses, refugee care, stopping illegal trade. Ord dissolved the provost courts, suppressed Butler’s newspaper, New Regime, reduced taxes, ended monopolies, and improved relations between the Pierpont government and the army. Ord ended martial law in Norfolk and Portsmouth, but Gordon did not end it on the Eastern Shore.

Confederate forces in Virginia surrendered in April 1865, and a few months after the war, U.S. Army leaders removed most occupation troops, even though the situation on the Eastern Shore remained turbulent. The Philadelphia Inquirer reported, “They have now been withdrawn even though their services are still needed. The white farmers and planters cannot or will not reconcile themselves to the changed situation of the negroes.” Only those army officers administering the Freedmen’s Bureau remained, and most of them left by August 1866. Federal authorities continued to use bonds after the war to force compliance with the law. For instance, government authorities required all men engaged in the oyster business post a $500 bond. Such a requirement gave citizens a reason to obey the letter of the law. If they failed, they stood to lose a substantial amount of money.

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195 T.S. Bowers, Special Orders No. 5, OR, ser. 1 vol. 46 part 2.
198 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 612.
By late July 1865, Federal authorities no longer used the Eastern Shore of Virginia as a military base, even though rumors still circulated about rebel attacks brewing in the area. On July 26, 1865, one report said that a group of rebels stole a steamer and were believed to be gathering on one of the barrier islands, conspiring to attack Fort Monroe to break Jefferson Davis out of his imprisonment there.

In the fall of 1865, some degree of normalcy began to return to life on the Eastern Shore. In September, federal post offices reopened across Virginia. John E. Nottingham, a former judge in the pre-war and early war years, was appointed postmaster in Franktown of Northampton County. Union occupation was at an end.

The story of Union occupation was one of an evolving policy, largely the result of Union troops not wanting to be there in the first place. Fearful that secessionist influences on Virginia’s Eastern Shore might incite rebellion in Maryland as well, the Union army invaded because of political concerns. The strategic location of the Eastern Shore gave the U.S. Navy an advantage in its attempt to control the Chesapeake Bay, which provided access to both Washington, D.C. and an invasion route to Richmond. With no chance of defending themselves, the citizens submitted and agreed to the Federal government’s conciliatory policies. Over time, Union occupation policies grew more institutionalized and occasionally more severe, and the citizens of the Eastern Shore did little to openly oppose them. Internal political divisions never disappeared and interrelationships between the occupiers and the occupied grew more complex. As wartime policies toward the white citizens changed, prewar fears became more consuming. As the years went on, citizens lost their slave property along with local

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200 *Philadelphia Daily Age*, September 8, 1865.
autonomy. The Union initially vowed to protect slave property, but later engineered its loss. When General Butler demanded the oath of loyalty to engage in any formal activity, it quickly lost its meaning and many just went through the motions in order to sustain themselves and their families.

Overall the Eastern Shore of Virginia served as a test case for Lincoln's occupation policy. Close ties to the crucial Border State of Maryland and the distinction of being the first area in the Confederacy to come under Union occupation made the Eastern Shore symbolically significant. The president took personal interest in the events there, wishing to win back and maintain the loyalty of the citizens. He struggled to uphold promises made to the people in order to uphold the legitimacy and honor of the national government, yet his generals' failure to uphold citizens' claims to slave property permanently disrupted the social order. Lincoln favored the maintenance of the civil government unless it was absolutely necessary to subvert it. General Benjamin Butler and his district commander, Frank White, believed that the situation required subversion. When Butler tried to dissolve the civil government through an election, President Lincoln stepped in and forbade it. With Butler's departure, the courts and civil government returned to power. In the end, this proved an untimely move. After the war, white residents used the courts to reassert their power, unraveling many of the changes enacted in the war and in the process of emancipation.
EMANCIPATION WITHOUT A PROCLAMATION

On Virginia’s Eastern Shore, evolving civil-military policies created a complex dynamic among the Union’s occupying troops, white slaveholders, freedmen, and enslaved people. As times changed, the rules changed with them. Initially, Union forces protected slave property. Even the news of the Emancipation Proclamation barely shaped the region because it did not apply to Union-occupied territories; however, once the government began recruiting black soldiers in the fall of 1863, the institution of slavery disintegrated quickly. Elsewhere in the South, the arrival of Union soldiers brought an end to the slave regime. As Eric Foner argued, “The presence of occupying troops destroyed the coercive power of both the individual master and the slaveholding community.”

As early as 1861, Union forces became a symbol of abolitionism; however, on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, Union troops protected the peculiar institution from 1861 through 1863. Historian Ira Berlin described cases in other parts of the South where Union invasion caused slaves to flee to Union lines where they received protection. If not, they remained on the land as their masters became fugitives, or they took advantage of the confusion and ran away. That scenario did not play out on the Eastern Shore. There, the U.S. Army returned slaves who ran away, and masters who fled as fugitives did so before any Union troops arrived. In an attempt to win back the loyalty of Eastern Shore citizens, the Federal government protected the property of all whites, except, of course, those who had taken up arms to fight against the Union. In the fall of 1863, recruiting drives for the U.S. Colored Troops offered slaves de facto

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freedom, and their families enjoyed government rations and protection on government farms and in houses of refuge. Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not directly free the slaves of Virginia’s Eastern Shore, the spirit of the proclamation, combined with recruitment of black troops, broke down the ties that had bound them to their masters. A mid-war labor shortage emerged, putting pressure on slaveholders to allow greater freedom to their slaves in the hope that they would remain at work. Whites resented the recruitment of slaves, and in early 1864, the use of black soldiers as the occupying forces on the Eastern Shore heightened tensions. Finally, the advent of a new constitution of the Restored Government of Virginia in 1864 brought de jure freedom everywhere on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, and yet, freed people faced challenges as they tried to sustain their families and receive fair treatment in the courts.

After the war, Freedmen’s Bureau officials tried to protect the Eastern Shore’s black population and to help them to integrate into the new economy and new social order. Bureau agents faced backlash from the white population that believed that the national government favored blacks. The biggest point of contention came from the fact that blacks now lawfully possessed guns, while whites were not allowed to own firearms. Only the civil courts remained to allow whites to maintain a degree of supremacy within the justice system. Bureau officials tried to overrule the civil court system but did not succeed because no large military presence remained stationed there. Periodically, whites’ animosity boiled over into mob violence and vigilantism. The anger and resentment that white Eastern Shoremen felt toward the Union transferred to local African-Americans after the war’s end.
Before Union troops invaded in 1861, two key factors defined antebellum slavery on the Eastern Shore: hiring out and fear of abolitionism. The hiring out of slaves occurred frequently in Tidewater Virginia. Census records from 1860 indicate that owners hired out ten percent of the slaves in Accomack County.³ A changing economy motivated large landowners to diversify crops, sell off small tracts of land, hire out slaves, and keep the wages for themselves.⁴ Slaveholding citizens of the Eastern Shore depended on multiple forms of slave labor. Not only did planters utilize them, but so too did small farmers and merchants. Mary Bayly managed her farm – Wellington – in Northampton County, running a small business making and selling butter. Bayly hired free blacks to serve as seamstresses and to do odd maintenance jobs.⁵ She supervised her own slaves, some of whom worked the land, while others worked as household servants, taking on complex jobs, such as curing hams. Her diary entries indicate that she weighed out luxury food stuffs such as brown sugar and coffee for her slaves.⁶ Whites on the Eastern Shore held a paternalistic view of slavery and believed that their slaves cared for them. Some slaveholders viewed household slaves as extensions of the family. In letters to her aunt, C. Nottingham, another female resident of Northampton County, closed with the remark, “All the servants send their love.”⁷

This supposed “fondness” went only so far. Eastern Shore citizens kept up a perpetual fear of slave rebellions, which they believed, came from abolitionist agitation.

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⁷ C. Nottingham to Garrett family, 11 June 1862, Garrett papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.
Henry Wise, former Virginia governor and native of Accomack County, declared in an address to the state legislature:

And since their [abolitionists'] violation it has defiantly proclaimed aloud that insurrection is the lesson of the hour – not of slaves alone but of all who are free to rise up against fixed government, and no government is to be allowed except 'the average commonsense of the masses,' and no protection is to be given against that power...They must be met and crushed, or they will crush us, or our union with non-slaveholding states cannot continue.  

Since 1851, Accomack County utilized slave patrols – essentially posses of deputized white residents – to curtail black gatherings. These groups patrolled the neighborhood of slave quarters, twice a week, searching for unlawful assemblies. By 1861, the regular police of Accomack County authorized and organized slave patrols in six magisterial districts.  

The arrival of the war altered the face of slave labor. First and foremost, Confederate commanders impressed slaves to build military fortifications, particularly a fort at Pungoteague.  

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9 Barnes, Eastern Shore Soldiers The Civil War 1858-1865, vol. 2 of Pungoteague to Petersburg, 2-4.  
10 It is unclear whether or not it was built by county order. The county did require men to work on roads for a certain number of days a year. It stands to reason that slaves were put work on these defenses. George S. Merrill to General John Dix, August 21, 1861, OR ser. 1 vol. 5, 581.
uncertain region, enslaved people on the Eastern Shore braved the risks and escaped. In the summer of 1861, residents attempted to fortify the most accessible creeks. Mary Howard recorded in her diary, “On Saturday, the negroes were called out, trees felled, and earthworks thrown up.”

Although the first escapees from the Eastern Shore fled because of Confederate policies, slave owners blamed Union actions for their trouble. Particularly, they concerned themselves with the actions of the Union garrison at Fort Monroe. In May 1861, Brigadier General Benjamin Butler took command of that fort. After he allowed three Norfolk slaves asylum inside its walls, hundreds of other escapees flooded into his lines from Norfolk and Hampton. Butler accepted them and put them to work, realizing that they would be utilized by the Confederates if he did not liberate them. Word spread through the black community, and slaves flocked to Fort Monroe and to Union ships enforcing the blockade of the Chesapeake Bay. Small colonies of runaway slaves developed on small islands in the Chesapeake and its tributaries, receiving protection from the Union navy.

The sirens’ call of freedom attracted the boldest of the Eastern Shore’s slaves. Perhaps two to three hundred slaves escaped the Eastern Shore counties between May 1861 and November 1861. They stole canoes and slipped away, often in the middle of the night. For some, desperation fed their bravery. They saw an opportunity to gain their freedom, and they jumped impulsively to seize it. Others went with watermen who knew

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the route and how to sail. Whatever the circumstances, dangers abounded. Adequate supplies of food and fresh water proved difficult to procure. The Chesapeake Bay churned up formidable waves capable of capsizing craft smaller than thirty feet. This area was known widely for its rapidly changing weather conditions. In an hour, a calm, sunny day could transition into a gale. Additionally, white men could capture the fugitives, return them to their owners for punishment, or, perhaps, sell them back into slavery. Making their way to the safety of Fort Monroe would have taken a significant amount of knowledge, skill, and good fortune. Yet, determining the number of slave escapes proved problematic because, in its May 1861 term, the Northampton County Court established a fund to hire boats to patrol the coast and catch runaway slaves. Twice they ordered the collector of levies to pay individuals “for the use of his vessel as a guard boat to prevent the escape of slaves from this county.” Thus, two men, Laban I. Gunter, who received twenty dollars, and John A. Simkins, who received twenty-four dollars and five cents, served as the county’s slave catchers. Although these men worked relentlessly, no evidence suggests that they captured fugitive slaves. Presumably, after November 1861, maritime slave-catchers did poor business, because the U.S. Navy had seized all of their ships, thinking the vessels were being used for smuggling.

It is not clear when the first Eastern Shore slaves fled the region, but the Augusta Chronicle reported that five slaves escaped from the Eastern Shore and traveled by canoe to Fort Monroe in mid-July 1861. Probably, these five people — whoever they were — were among the first people freed by the war from the two Eastern Shore counties. Of

course, more fled in the ensuing months, such that, by the end of the war, the Freedmen’s Bureau listed seventy-four blacks from Virginia’s Eastern Shore among those dependent on government rations at Fort Monroe.\(^\text{17}\)

Other fugitive slaves fled Virginia’s Eastern Shore by heading north. According to Ervin Jordan, the Delmarva Peninsula formed “one road for the passage of slaves to liberty.”\(^\text{18}\) Eastern Shore slaves already knew of the tales of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, two Maryland slaves who had fled to freedom by traveling up the Eastern Shore. Emboldened by the coming of the war, Eastern Shore slaves fled across the border into Maryland.\(^\text{19}\) On November 17, 1861, the *Cincinnati Daily Inquirer* reported that thirty-seven contrabands had entered Philadelphia following this path. This contingent contained a mix of slaves from the Dennis Plantation of Northampton County and the Decoursey Plantation of Maryland, along with others from adjoining estates. The runaways gathered in Somerset County, Maryland, where they received aid from members of the 4\(^\text{th}\) Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. They traveled along the state road avoiding large towns and made it to Wilmington, Delaware, before going to Philadelphia. According to the report, the general sense of alarm in the Border States aided their escape, as did sympathetic soldiers who provided them with passes, letters of introduction, and money.\(^\text{20}\)

If General Butler made no attempt to protect slave property on the Yorktown Peninsula, the same idea did not hold true for General Dix. As General Dix planned the


\(^{19}\) Carole C. Marks, *Moses and the Monster and Miss Anne* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 156-72.

invasion of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, he made an overt attempt to placate the slaveholding segment of the population by promising that Union troops would uphold their property rights, including slave ownership. Dix gave careful instructions to his officers, warning them not to allow slaves within the Union camps.\textsuperscript{21} He informed citizens of his policies by saying, “Special directions have been given not to interfere with the conditions of any persons held to domestic service; and in order that there be no ground for mistake or pretext for misinterpretation, commanders of regiments and Corps have been instructed not to permit any such persons to come within their lines."\textsuperscript{22}

Throughout the winter of 1861-1862, Federal policy on the Eastern Shore protected the peculiar institution. In fact, General Dix encouraged Union soldiers to track down fugitive slaves. The \textit{Regimental Flag}, the newspaper published by the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Delaware Infantry stationed at Camp Wilkes, accepted advertisements for the return of runaway slaves. One example announced a reward of twenty-five dollars for the return of John, “about five feet six inches high, of a dark chesnut color. The above reward will be paid if taken in Accomack or Northampton, or fifty dollars if taken out of the State,”\textsuperscript{23} When slaves escaped, soldiers sometimes chased after them and returned them to their owners.\textsuperscript{24}

Confederate sources, too, validate this initial impulse of Union soldiers to return runaways. The \textit{Richmond Whig} reported that Union soldiers stationed on the Eastern


\textsuperscript{22} General John Dix, “Proclamation to the People of Accomac and Northampton Counties, VA.” in Ira Berlin and others, eds., \textit{The Destruction of Slavery}, ser. 1 vol. 1 of \textit{Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867}, 79.


\textsuperscript{24} Ira Berlin and others, eds., \textit{The Destruction of Slavery}, ser. 1 vol. 1 of \textit{Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867}, 64-5.
Shore flogged slaves who came into camp and returned them to their owners. The author alleged that Brigadier General Lockwood made a speech in Drummondtown in which he assured the citizens that he would protect their rights as well as their slave property by catching and returning runaway slaves. Lockwood recommended that slaveholders impose harsh punishments — whipping for the first incident then shooting for the second. According to the author, Union soldiers reviled any policy that sought to turn them into "practical fanatical Abolitionists."25

Not only did Union soldiers return runaways, but Confederate officers could enter Union camps to look for them. Once, Benjamin Gunther – former Confederate officer and Accomack County Court Attorney – received his parole in Baltimore, he appealed to General Dix for permission to search the Union camp of Maryland’s Purnell Legion in Lafayette Park for the escaped slave of his niece, whom he believed had been brought there by Union soldiers on furlough. Dix declined on the grounds that he did not have the authority to “surrender fugitives from labor or from service” and suggested that Gunther seek a warrant from a civil magistrate. Gunther did so and received permission to enter the camp but was unable to find the fugitive.26

Of course, not all soldiers sanctioned the protection of slavery. A few broke regulations to help slaves gain freedom. According to the Wilmington (Delaware) Republican, a slave told troops the location of a buried cannon. Lockwood ordered him flogged and returned him to his owner who tortured and confined him. Soldiers heard

26 Major General John Dix to Brigadier General R. L. Thomas, OR ser. 2 vol. 4, 53-4.
about the treatment by his owner and interceded, brought the slave into their camp, and transported him to Baltimore.  

Due to the provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves in Union-occupied lands were not set free in January 1863. The tidewater counties of Elizabeth City, Princess Anne, Norfolk, York, and the Eastern Shore Counties of Northampton and Accomack were exempted because they were occupied by Union forces. According to the federal census, about 5,000 African Americans remained as slaves in the region after January 1. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to southeastern Virginia, white residents viewed it as a threat. The knowledge that slaves in other parts of the South received formal emancipation from the national government implied that the institution itself was dissolving. One Eastern Shore woman complained to a Union army officer, “If slavery is to be abolished in the States in rebellion it will be next to worthless in those States or portions excepted.” The proclamation put the Union army in the precarious position of having to determine whether blacks on the Eastern Shore were free, due to confiscation, escape, or whether they had been free before the start of the war. 

Eastern Shore citizens imagined that the situation was worse than it was. Two Confederate men from Accomack ran the blockade, arriving in Richmond. They told the Richmond Whig that General Lockwood had issued “free papers” in advance of the Emancipation Proclamation. They claimed that he liberated 250 slaves in one day and

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27 Boston Evening Transcript, March 19, 1862.
30 Major Henry Hayner to Abraham Lincoln, 10 September 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
31 Grimsley, Hard Hand of War, 135-9.
allowed them to remain in the area, forcing their former masters to support them even though they no longer had use of their services. These accounts are certainly untrue, as not a single Union account substantiates this claim.

In the summer of 1863, the Union army sent much of its occupation force elsewhere to fight in military campaigns in Pennsylvania. Fewer than 100 troops remained to maintain order. The reduction of occupying troops emboldened Eastern Shore citizens to show their Confederate sentiments more openly. Union troops, angry and frustrated, took slaves with them as they left camp and boarded the steamer *Kennebec*. Some of the owners arrived at the *Kennebec* to claim their slaves. Union troops under the command of Major Henry Hayner, Captain Maginnis Hoyt, and Lieutenant Evans of the artillery refused to return the slaves and treated the men in a rough manner, tossing them in a blanket. Afraid for their own safety, the slaveholders left and complained to Joseph Segar, House representative from the district, who sent a telegraph message to President Lincoln. In Major Hayner’s report dated September 10, 1863, the only mention of the incident detailed accounts of slave owners looking for their slaves. Both slaveholders refused to take the oath of allegiance, which, Hayner argued, would have entitled them to search for their lost slaves. Not only does this account indicate the unwillingness of the Eastern Shore citizens to submit to Union authority, but it also points to the earliest moments of the dissolution of Eastern Shore slavery. Even though the Eastern Shore was exempt, the Emancipation Proclamation had begun the process of weakening slavery. If these men had been confident in the longevity of the

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32 “The Latest from the South,” *Richmond Whig* reprinted in the *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1863.
33 Joseph Segar to Abraham Lincoln, 7 September 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
34 Major Henry Hayner to Abraham Lincoln, 10 September 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
institution of slavery, they might have been more willing to take the oath to regain their property. As it stood, slavery was slipping away and even the thin ranks of occupation forces could prevent slaveholders from catching their quarry.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation failed to offer Eastern Shore slaves their decisive moment of liberation, the recruitment of U.S. Colored Troops served the purpose. On October 3, 1863, Secretary Stanton issued General Orders No. 329 which called for the recruitment of black troops in the states of Maryland, Missouri, and Tennessee due to “the exigencies of war.” Federal authorities recruited able-bodied free persons, slaves of disloyal individuals, and slaves of loyal owners who gave their consent. Loyal owners who provided proof of ownership received $300.00 from the federal government. Credit for these recruits went towards the quotas of troops for the respective state and county.35 Faced with the choice of accepting a white manpower draft or the recruitment of blacks (including slaves), residents of Maryland chose the latter.36 No quota applied to Virginia’s Eastern Shore counties; however, Maryland recruiters used the two Virginia counties as if they were their own. In compliance with the President’s orders, General Robert Schenck established recruiting stations for colored troops in Maryland and on the Eastern Shore of Virginia as soon as General Orders 329 became known. Slaveholders who had taken the oath of allegiance to the Union – who swore they had never taken up arms against it or given aid to rebels – could be paid restitution by the national government if they lost their slaves to recruitment. Anyone

35 General Orders No. 329, President Lincoln, October 3, 1863, OR ser. 3 vol. 3, 860-1.
offering a slave for enlistment received $300. Upon enlistment, the owner submitted a form of manumission, and the new recruit was then officially free.\footnote{\textit{Negro Recruiting in Maryland}, \textit{Easton Gazette}, November 11, 1863.}

The recruitment of black soldiers proved unpopular on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The $300 bounty helped alleviate some of the sting; however, white citizens had no quota of their own to fill, and the success of the recruitment sapped their labor force. Apparently, Union officers recruited slaves with or without their owner’s permission. Under the provisions of General Orders 329, slaves who did not have their owners’ permission were required to wait thirty days for their owner to protest. Only after one month of waiting could they formally enlist.\footnote{Amy Gray Crittenden, \textit{Southern Sympathies}, 140-4.} Still, recruiting did not favor the slaveholders. These slaves went to Baltimore to muster in, and owners had no means of transportation. If an Eastern Shore slave left with a recruiting party, he was gone for good. General Lockwood redressed Brigadier General William Birney, superintendent of U.S.C.T. recruitment in Maryland, headquartered in Baltimore, for illegal tactics used by his men. T.W. Jacobs of Northampton County reported to Lockwood that recruiters forced his slaves into service, which was against the General Orders 329.\footnote{Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period}, 268-9.}

Recruitment through coercion was not allowed, but it appeared to happen, at least occasionally. Mrs. Candis Goodwin, a former slave from Northampton County, recalled how Union soldiers forced her future husband Jacob into the Union army against his will.\footnote{Mrs. Candis Goodwin, interview, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Virginia Narratives vol. 17, Federal Writer’s Project, United States Work Projects Administration, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.} No doubt, recruiters from Maryland did not care if a slave remonstrated. They sought to fill their quota.
The bulk of black men who enlisted in the Union army from the Eastern Shore did so between September and November 1863. The Accomack County Court recorded the manumission of fifty-three recruits.\(^{41}\) The Northampton County Court Order Book shows similar records of manumission entered soon after the war but dating back to the time of enlistment. Some men travelled to other places, such as Hampton Roads, Jersey City, or New York City, and joined the Union navy, most enlisting between the summer of 1863 and 1864.\(^{42}\) Isaac H. Carrolton, Confederate Provost marshal, posted names of men in the U.S.C.T., whom the Confederate army captured and held in the Eastern District Military prison as of November 30, 1864. Of the twenty-eight he listed, two were connected with the Eastern Shore of Virginia. John Heath lived on the Shore, and John Jones was arrested there.\(^ {43}\)

The institution of slavery weakened despite the region's exemption from the Emancipation Proclamation. Commenting on the survival of slavery on Virginia's Eastern Shore, a journalist from the *Troy Weekly Times* wrote, "We believe it was Daniel Webster who said that the Eastern Shore is the only place in the Western continent where inhabitants preserved intact the primitive habits of two centuries ago. The Accomack and Northampton were the true Elysian of the slaveholder." Despite two years of Federal occupation, he noted, "the population of this part of Virginia is, however, honeycombed to the core [with secession sentiment]." The journalist delighted in the thought that, though the area avoided emancipation and large-scale destruction unlike the rest of

\(^{41}\) Kirk Chapman Mariner, "Slave Manumissions of Blacks Who Entered the Union Army," ES Photocopy book 10 no.12, Bib ID #456468, Eastern Shore Public Library.


Virginia, General Butler would make an impact by enlisting a large number of blacks, he predicted that the experiment of paid labor would bring an end to slavery, at which time the white population would look for ways to rid itself of its black population. His prognostications proved insightful. Soon after the War Department annexed the Eastern Shore of Virginia to Butler’s command, he ordered additional recruiting of black soldiers there. Butler, in his attempt to join the Eastern Shore to his department, boasted of his ability to recruit large numbers of blacks from the area.

The issues of conscription and recruitment of black soldiers played a prominent role in the 1863 election for the U.S. House of Representatives. Incumbent Joseph Segar defended his voting record in a public proclamation to the people of Accomack and Northampton. He assured them:

Fellow citizens of Accomac and Northampton: I gave no vote to arm negroes against white men...it is true that I have sustained a vigorous prosecution of the war as the surest, in fact the only hope of peace, but no mortal consideration could have induced me to employing such an instrumentality as the armed enlistment of the negro. Had I given such a vote I would have dared not show my face on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, for I should have expected to be hung on the first tree I could be dragged to, with limbs strong enough to dangle me by.

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45 Alexandria Gazette, December 30, 1863.
46 Butler to Secretary of War Stanton, December 14, 1863, OR vol. 1 ser. 29 part 2, 536.
47 Joseph Segar, “To the Voters of Accomac and Northampton,” April 10, 1863.
Gillett Watson questioned the veracity of Segar’s claims. According to Segar, Provost Marshal General James B. Fry had assured him that the law that applied to all congressional districts in the Union would not be enforced in Accomack and Northampton counties. Secessionist votes determined the outcome of the election, with Watson accusing Segar of pandering to Confederate leanings while showing no sympathy to Union loyalists. According to Watson, Segar stooped so low as to claim responsibility for the region’s exemption from the Emancipation Proclamation. Correspondence from President Lincoln to Joseph Segar verified that Segar did in fact intercede on behalf of the white citizens of the Eastern Shore to appeal for the exclusion of the counties from the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln admitted that it had been a mistake on his part not to exclude them from the preliminary “summer proclamation.” The president wrote:

Both yourself and Gen. Dix, at different times, (Gen. Dix in writing) called my attention to the fact that I had omitted to exempt "Eastern Shore of Virginia" from the first proclamation; and this was all that was needed to have me correct it—Without being reminded by either him or yourself, I do not think I should have omitted to exempt it from the final Emancipation Proclamation; but at all events, you did not allow me to forget it—Supposing it was your duty to your constituents to attend to these matters, I think you acted with entire good faith and fidelity to them. 

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48 Gillett Watson, To the People of Accomac and Northampton Counties, (Portsmouth, Virginia: The Virginian, 1863) 7, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
49 Abraham Lincoln to Joseph Segar, 23 April 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.
President Lincoln intended for this exemption to foster loyalty to the Union from the Eastern Shore. Although Joseph Segar appealed on behalf of his constituents, Lincoln had already elected to exempt it.

When Benjamin Butler’s command expanded to include the Eastern Shore in December 1863, he exhibited a commitment to improving the lives of the black population more than any of the previous commanders, actively providing relief assistance and legal protections. Butler asserted that freedom meant “liberty to work, and to be protected in the full enjoyment of the fruits of labor.” He prohibited the impressment of blacks except in cases of military necessity, although forced recruitment still occurred. In order to protect blacks from injustice in the civil courts, Butler ordered all cases between blacks and whites be heard in the military courts.50

In his General Orders 46, Butler escalated efforts to recruit black troops and asserted the need for government to “exercise more and peculiar care over [freedmen] than over its white citizens.”51 By this, he offered rations and employment to family members of recruits. The army also provided full rations to army laborers and their families, as well as the families of deceased soldiers.52 For every black recruit from the Eastern Shore, his department paid the Superintendent of Negro Affairs $100 to be used for the benefit of the recruit’s family. In addition, each man got a bounty of $10.00.53 Military authorities classified any act or expression against the recruiting of blacks,

52 Ira Berlin and others, eds., The Destruction of Slavery, ser. 1 vol. 1 of Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867, 68.
53 Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period and in the Reconstruction Period, 268-71.
against relief to refugees, or against activities of missionaries as criminal offenses to be tried in military courts.\textsuperscript{54}

The recruiting of black soldiers and the establishment of government farms weakened what remained of slavery on the Eastern Shore. General Butler created a "Negro Department" headed by Lt. Col. J. Burnham Kinsman and divided it into four districts, each with a superintendent to oversee the care of refugees.\textsuperscript{55} Accomack and Northampton counties, along with St. Mary’s County of Maryland, made up the Fourth Department under the authority of Professor C. S. Henry.\textsuperscript{56} In Butler’s mind, this Negro Department would right the wrongs of centuries by providing for freed people and protecting them, "In consideration of the ignorance and helplessness of the negroes arising from the condition that they have heretofore held, it becomes necessary that the Government should exercise more and peculiar care and protection over them than the white citizens, accustomed to self-control and self-support so that their sustenance may be assured, their rights respected, their helplessness protected, and their wrongs redressed, and that there may be one system of negro affairs."\textsuperscript{57} So Butler believed, the government should take care of them, because they could not take care of themselves.

Butler instructed all of his superintendents of the Negro Department to assume that all blacks they encountered were free or were claiming freedom under the protection of the U.S. Army.\textsuperscript{58} The superintendents had instructions to provide each freed person with protection and put them to work cultivating the land. Superintendents distributed

\textsuperscript{54} Sledge, "Bitter Fruit of Secession," 263.
\textsuperscript{55} Sledge, "Bitter Fruit of Secession," 257-67.
\textsuperscript{57} Benjamin Butler, \textit{OR} ser. 3 vol. 3, 1139.
\textsuperscript{58} Sledge, "The Bitter Fruit of Secession," 263.
tools, farm implements, and horses. Butler insisted that it was the responsibility of the Negro Department to see that all able-bodied individuals worked and that blacks should not be defrauded in contracts. Department officials were also instructed to take charge of all lands and property set aside for or given for the use of freedmen by charities or the government. Lands confiscated from Confederate soldiers and sympathizers became “government farms” where free people resettled from contraband camps and army posts. Typically they worked under share-wage agreements.

Butler warned his men not to allow slaves to bring their masters’ property with them as they fled “with the intent to come within our lines for protection” or to join the Union army. Although Butler would have preferred to see Southerners stripped of their wealth, he was not ready to impose a harsh confiscation policy. He wrote, “While the theory adopted by some officers that all the property in the rebel states belongs to the Negroes because it is the product of their labor is theoretically true, yet is not such a truth as can be made the foundation of Government action. Therefore, Negroes, while they are to be induced to join our marches or expeditions are not to be allowed to bring any other than their own personal effects which have belonged to them, or such property as the officer commanding may order.”

Lt. Colonel Frank White enacted Butler’s policies. Slaves were no longer kept out of Union military camps, and white residents lost all means of reclaiming runaways.

60 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, Swem Library Special Collections, William and Mary Library, 298.
61 Ira Berlin and others, eds., The Destruction of Slavery, ser. 1 vol. 1 of Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867, 94-5.
62 Butler quoted in Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, Swem Library Special Collections, William and Mary Library, 348.
63 Mears, The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries and in the Reconstruction Period, 608-10.
As slaveholders watched their slaves escape to Yankee camps, some became embittered against all blacks. Their former belief that their slaves were loyal proved nothing more than a dream. Colin Clarke, a Tidewater planter, expressed an “utter, thorough, and deep disregard with the whole race.”64 One Eastern Shore man was imprisoned for his refusal to allow a former slave to claim her belongings, beating her with a club, and tearing her dress.65

The steady collapse of slavery in Accomack and Northampton put pressure on white citizens to keep their agricultural system functioning. According to C. Nottingham, by January 1864, white men substituted as labor on privately owned farms in Northampton County. Her father travelled to the upper part of Accomack County in search of white men willing to work. She confirmed that most slaves had either left to work elsewhere or they demanded wages which farmers were unwilling to pay.66 A letter dated January 18, 1864, sent by Anne Thom, discussed the problem of getting enough labor to make farms sustainable. She believed that farmers “have lost all their labor and know not how to obtain more.” Working on their own, they were not able to produce enough to support their families, and she feared they would have to bring in “the foreign element,” which meant immigrants from the North.67

The recruitment of the U.S.C.T., the establishment of government farms, and the actions of the army brought de facto freedom to the Eastern Shore, de jure freedom arrived a year later. The Virginia Constitutional Convention met from February 13, to

66 C. Nottingham to Garrett family, January, 6 1864, Garrett papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, MSS9974-a, University of Virginia Library.
67 Anne Thom, January 18, 1864, in Thom papers, Mss1 T3602 c4, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
April 11, 1864, and its delegates dealt with the troubling issues of slavery and black voting rights. Seventeen delegates from counties and cities which had come under Union control since the war began met in Alexandria. Thomas H. Kellum, state senator from Accomack, protested on behalf of his constituents, arguing that the president exempted this region from the Emancipation Proclamation for good reason and that the convention had been called in haste without allowing ample time for people to consider the proposal. In addition, he protested that the people of the state would not be given a referendum on the proposed amendment.\(^6\) Dr. Arthur Watson, a Union man, and William H. Dix, who had been a Confederate supporter, represented Accomack and William P. Moore, an old line Whig, represented Northampton at the convention.\(^7\) Of the three Eastern Shore delegates, only one of them, Moore, voted against the abolition of slavery. Generally slaveholders who supported the prospect of emancipation called for owners to be compensated. Edward Snead, Accomack’s Unionist Commonwealth Attorney, had written to Governor Pierpont in December 1863 expressing his views in favor of emancipation, “I am in favor of immediate emancipation with compensation to loyal owners.”\(^8\)

Another provision called for revenue from the sale of real estate confiscated for the non-payment of direct federal taxes to be used to repay loyal Union men after the war ended for their losses due to the war of any escaped or emancipated slaves or unjust imprisonment. Moore suggested the proposed constitution be put to a ratification vote by the people of the state. All three of the Eastern Shore’s delegates voted in favor, but the motion was denied by a vote of ten to seven. On April 7, 1864, the constitution passed

\(^6\) Mears, *The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period*, 276-7.
\(^7\) Mears, *The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period*, 280.
\(^8\) Mears, *The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period*, 280.
by thirteen votes to four. Watson and Moore voted against it, but Dix voted in favor. Governor Pierpont and a majority of the delegates denied a ratification vote because they knew the citizens would refuse it. Few Virginians, even among Union loyalists, supported abolition, considering it a radical and unnecessary measure. The resistance to abolition shown by Northampton County’s delegate provides a strong indication that this southernmost of Eastern Shore counties still tried to cling to the old social order.

As the new constitution set free slaves in the occupied Virginia counties, it created a housing dilemma for the newly freed. Some of the properties of Confederate soldiers, confiscated by congressional order, became hospitals, providing care for the elderly and the sick. The Eastern Shore contained two hospitals, Townfields in Northampton County and Woodburne in Accomack County, both of which occupied lands confiscated from Confederates. Even after the disappearance of slavery, some freedmen chose to remain on the land of their former masters and work for wages. After gaining his freedom, Peter Cox chose to stay and continue to work for his former master, Robert Costin of Northampton County. In 1879, Cox testified in front of a special commission, “I am about sixty-six-years old, and work and live on Mr. Costin’s farm, and want to die on here. I was here all through the war and belonged to Mr. Costin before freedom came and was a farm hand and worked in the fields.” Either Cox was fairly content or, being in his early fifties during the war, he shied away from the challenge of forging out on his own. He represented an example of a freedman who chose to remain on the land where he had lived as a slave and work for wages for his former owner.

72 Mears, *The Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 608-10.
Lt. Col. Frank J. White, provost marshal on the Eastern Shore, became superintendent of Negro Affairs in October of 1864. Although he had long worked with General Butler, White departed from the general’s policies. White believed that even-handed policies could bring whites and blacks together and, thus, create a healthy, prosperous society. He disagreed strongly with Butler’s paternalistic approach toward the black population, asserting that former slaves must be taught the virtues of hard work so that they would be prepared to fend for themselves and able to lead independent lives when Federal authorities withdrew at the end of the war.⁷⁴ A true disciple of free labor, Lt. Col. White saw the possibility for blacks to realize their worth, and at the same time, gain respect in the eyes of the white population.⁷⁵ In a letter to General Ord dated February 1865, White reflected on his course of action which marked a significant departure from Butler’s policies. While Butler saw the government as emancipator and protector, White viewed it as teacher and facilitator. White believed that slavery had ingrained bad habits and character flaws in the black population that had come to think of idleness as a virtue. By demanding industriousness and supervising fair labor contracts, while allowing the free market to set wages, White hoped to provide freedmen with the traits and skills they would need to flourish after the military presence disappeared. By protecting the rights of all and reestablishing a free market system, he sought to begin mending the divide between blacks and whites that lingered after emancipation and the resolution of the war. He wrote:

My duties were to take charge of, protect and assist the contrabands (freed negroes) of this district to aid them in sickness or distress and to see that their rights as free men were protected. I then, as now, commanded the US forces on this Shore. My duties in that office being, as I conceived, in addition to the ordinary duties of commanding officer, to see that all loyal citizens were protected in such civil rights as they could properly exercise while still residents of an insurrectionary district, and make such regulations for the benefit of the community as, in the absence of competent civil legislation, could only be made or carried out by military authority.  

White believed that by teaching the black population the value and honor of work, and providing supervision and support as they learned to conduct their own business affairs, they would be empowered with the tools they would need to make their own way in the world. He recalled his disappointment and disgust at the lack of initiative and self-respect among the former slaves; however, he came to view those shortcomings as products of their previous bondage. White explained:

Upon taking charge of the superintendency I found that the colored population was in a demoralized condition, women wanting in chastity, the men living in idleness and subsisting in great part by theft. All were suffering the evils inevitable upon such a condition. To this rule there were some honorable exceptions. These poor people were only carrying out the lessons inculcated by

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slavery. Forced labor had brought them to view idleness as the greatest blessing freedom could bring... They punished their former owners by idleness and dishonesty. 77

White believed that Butler’s policy of isolating blacks on government farms would bring them long term harm, slowing their development. 78 He saw the government farms as “communistic” and vowed to improve the lives of freedmen by introducing them to the realities of the marketplace where they might learn the value of their labor. 79 He explained his rationale to General Ord, “In view of these facts and to encourage industry and to prevent idleness, to show the adherents of slavery the value of free labor, to teach the contrabands the importance of honest toil and the blessings attached to it, and to vindicate emancipation, I issued the following orders (General Orders 81).” 80

White’s late-war policies marked a definitive change in the lives of freedmen on the Eastern Shore. The contract labor system remained in place through the end of the war. White provided public education for black children and adults through his collaboration with the New England Freedmen’s Aid Society which sent five teachers. He also conveyed the need for money to build schoolhouses and to help aid the aged and infirmed, who needed blankets and clothing. 81

Most likely, White simply misread the intentions of the newly freed. According to Eric Foner, freedpeople did not want to accept white supervision. They wanted to

77 Lt. Col. Frank J. White to General Ord, quoted in Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession, 356.
80 Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 357.
81 Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 365-6.
work hard, but as subsistence farmers only. Southern planters, meanwhile, held a
disdainful view of black labor. Blacks, they believed, lacked self discipline, economic
rationality, and ambition. As white Southerners saw it, with freedom, their black
neighbors were free to work. Contracts written by planters attempted to regain the same
degree of control over freedmen in their personal lives as well as in their work. Lt. Col.
White shared those views to some extent, believing that they must be compelled to work
and their contracts supervised in order to inculcate within them the principles necessary
for them to become wage earners. 82

In order to counter what he called “the demoralization of the Colored population
of this District,” White ordered that “all colored persons in the region should engage in
some steady employment.” White instituted a contract labor system in an attempt to
respect the rights of former masters, providing, as he hoped, regular employment and fair
rates of compensation to freedmen. 83 Lt. Col. White required all blacks without steady
employment hire themselves out within thirty days. White’s policy tried to appease both
sides. For instance, all labor contracts were made in the offices of the Superintendent of
Labor in an effort to protect blacks from being exploited. Yet, White showed the belief
of white citizens who suspected that, as a direct result of slavery, the Negro population
“had become idle, dishonest, and demoralized.” 84 He ordered a census of the black
population and required all those over fourteen-years-old who were not already in steady
employment to “engage themselves under written contract at a fair renumeration;

82 Foner, Reconstruction, 128-37.
83 Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 365.
84 MS Letter White to Col. Saunders, November 5, 1864, Wilton P. Moore, “Union Provost Marshals in the
contracts must be made for a period not less than three months nor more than one year. 85

Employers paid fees for each contract—fifty cents for three months, one dollar for six months, and two dollars for one year. White exempted black employers from paying contract fees. Fees contributed to the fund went towards care of the sick and infirmed. Northamptor and Accomack counties each provided one asylum for the care of "the old, infirm, and diseased." White allowed exemptions for oystermen, midwives, mechanics, and skilled laborers who had regular daily employment. Overall, ten percent of the black population "who procured work daily" fell outside his restrictions.86

White hoped to inculcate a sense of personal responsibility in freedmen, believing that government handouts and what he saw as an over-emphasis on rights obscured the importance of hard work and self-reliance. White defended his system, citing the profitable use of lands that had not been cultivated for three years. He set aside all fees for the care of the aged and helpless, allowing "over four hundred objects of charity" "to live in comfort."87

Despite his restrictive approach to employment, White believed that no black person could get a fair trial in the civil courts, so he advised that whenever an employer had a complaint against a black employee, that complaint should be filed with him in his office. Additionally, he wanted all labor agreements to "be made in writing and filed in [his] office" so that he would have the relevant information to verify the employment of

85 Springfield Weekly Republican, March 25, 1865.
"the laboring population." Also in Special Orders No. 81, White established expectations that black individuals would be held accountable for their actions just as white individuals. Cruel treatment or improper conduct by an employer constituted violation of the employment contract. White promised that all black men who worked hard and lived honestly could count on government help if their employers mistreated them or cheated them. In December 1864, White held meetings with white citizens encouraging them to hire free blacks. He believed, perhaps optimistically, that they had started to come around to the idea.

If White thought that he was making progress, that came to an end when General Grant fired him and Butler. General Ord and General George H. Gordon summarily replaced all of Butler’s subordinates and officers including the Negro Superintendents because of their concerns regarding corruption, illegal trade, and the overstepping of military regulations. Ord – who, for all purposes, replaced Butler – concentrated on military efforts that supported Grant’s campaigns around Petersburg. General Orders 21 installed Gordon as commander of the District of Eastern Virginia. Ord dismantled Butler’s extensive apparatus for the uplifting of freedmen, but retained the contract labor system that White had pioneered, for it gave control back to white citizens, reduced costs, bolstered military efforts, and was intended to foster reconciliation with the white

90 Frank J. White to Benjamin Butler, December 30, 1864, Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler vol. 5, 444.
population. White remained loyal to Butler during this purge and the subsequent military investigations into Butler's dealings and governance. In January 1865, White wrote to Butler, "I shall remain here to answer those who would injure you through your provost marshals, then I will resign if I can no longer serve you."  

How helpful was White's system? It seems that White went out of his way to try to help the black population, but some black citizens viewed his contract labor system as too restrictive. White pushed for all workers to obtain monthly or yearly contracts. Many freedmen who wanted to work as watermen or casual laborers objected to the system which they saw as an infringement on their new-found freedom. Problems also existed with the execution of policies by the Department of Negro Affairs. White appointed local citizens to act as superintendents of labor (Dr. George G. Tyler, Dr. Arthur Watson, and Teackle Elliot in Accomack; and William F. Moore in Northampton). White's subordinates, chosen from the white population of the Eastern Shore, pushed beyond his directives with oppressive results. In defiance of his orders, they required blacks to work for below-market wages, and in some cases, to work only for food and clothing. His officials required independent black farmers to make formal contracts to hire their own dependents. In 1865, White assigned the duties to commanding officers at posts in the area.

B. L. Parish complained about White's tactics and those of his subordinates. He reported:

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95 Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 365.
97 Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction Period, 365.
Lt. Col. Frank J. White, who is in command here and who has none but the most Rabid Secessionist Rebels in his employ as Clerks, agents, and advisers, have been and are hiring out by force all the Free Coloured people of this District including all who were born free, many who have Families and Farms (all are included) and who have always been and respectable Citizens have to hire their Sons and Daughters, wives & husbands and a fee of two dollars and five cents is demanded and paid on each one so hired.98

According to Parrish, department officials did require contracts and fees for family members in contradiction to the letter of General Orders 81.

Shortly before his firing, White attempted to dispel criticism. When accused of mistreatment, White defended himself, asserting, "the freedmen are all furnished with homes and paid good wages." He dismissed complaints as hogwash, writing, "I have not yet, after three months experience of this system, found a single case of improper treatment on the part of an employer."99 In his letter of February 16, 1865, White narrated the story of a local black man, Griffin Collins, who allegedly led a small group of black people who, since emancipation, refused to work and resorted to theft. Collins urged others to ignore the contract labor rule. Disappointed to learn of Major General Ord's support for White's orders, Collins wrote an inflammatory letter to the Secretary of War, accusing White of placing unfair restrictions on blacks. Collins rented a farm and


employed his sons as laborers. White offered to overlook the usual requirements of labor contracts as long as Collins promised to keep his sons employed industriously. In essence White attempted to prove that his rules could be bent according to circumstance. However, evidence supports B. L. Parish's accusation of corruption against White.

Reports of dissatisfaction with Lt. Col. White's performance came from both white citizens and freedmen. Freed people had envisioned freedom as a life of self-sufficiency. They had hoped to be free of white supervision, but the contracts into which they were pressured robbed them of that hope. White residents, meanwhile, resented the notion that now they had to pay their workers and treat them humanely. If they failed to do so, they could be tried by a military court with black witnesses testifying against them. This change of circumstances grated on their sensibilities. In February 1865, General Ord completed an investigation of White's district and found only a few complaints that held any merit. In a letter dated February 6, 1865, White assured General Ord that, if put to a vote, the majority of white citizens would endorse abolition, a gross distortion of public opinion, to be sure. He also claimed the bitterness between blacks and whites was dissipating. This optimism failed to satisfy Ord, who replaced White as military commander with Captain Edwin A. Evans.

Lt. Col. Frank White lost his command not because Ord disliked his system, but because Ord considered him a corrupt administrator. In the end, Ord retained the overall structure of White's contract labor system and even used it as a model across much of the South. General Ord praised the reduced involvement of government and the rise in

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industriousness that resulted, "White and black have learned that they are laboring in a Common Cause for their mutual benefit."\(^{102}\) White remained oblivious to the oppression of his labor practices which ensured a minimal level of subsistence for the freedpeople. Instead of bridging the gap between the black and white populations, the rift widened as a result of substandard enforcement. Soon after arriving, Captain Evans reported complaints of unjust contracts, noting "considerable dissatisfaction amongst them on account of the system of forced contracts which was adopted at the beginning of this year." Evans explained that White’s officers forced free blacks and former slaves to make contracts that were unjust and harmful but recognized that "the System has no doubt prevented a considerable amount of vagrancy."\(^{103}\) Evans’s assessment made it clear that contract labor closely resembled slavery; however, the prevalence of vagrancy proved too difficult to ignore. To appease the white population, the U.S. Army had to appear like it was rounding up black idlers and putting them to work. Thus, Ord decided to continue White’s system. He believed this approach could restore trust between the white population and the Union.\(^{104}\) Soon, a new institution – the Freedmen’s Bureau – took up White’s mantle.

The national government created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in March 1865 to help people survive resource scarcity caused by the war. It also set aside abandoned and confiscated lands for use by loyal freedmen and refugees. Colonel Orlando Brown, the bureau’s assistant commissioner for the state of

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Virginia, aimed to transform the freed population into wage-earners. The mission of the Freedmen’s Bureau included protecting freedom, supervising labor agreements, and helping able-bodied freedmen find work.\(^{105}\) S.C. Armstrong, the bureau’s superintendent over the Eastern Shore, instructed his agents to supervise labor agreements closely and warn the freedmen to avoid contracts that were “loose and vague.”\(^{106}\) On the Eastern Shore, the Freedmen’s Bureau controlled thirty-four tracts of land, one of which was 1,000 acres owned by the nephews of former Virginia governor Henry Wise. Landowning whites were embittered because, “the Government took from us our slaves without paying us for them and we will never forgive or forget.”\(^{107}\) Each male freedman received no more than forty acres protected for use for three years, with yearly rent no more than six percent of the property’s tax appraisal in 1860. If one paid the assessed tax value of the parcel, he could purchase it outright.\(^{108}\)

Month by month, the Freedmen’s Bureau exercised more control over society. It possessed jurisdiction over freedmen’s courts, which heard cases involving blacks and labor contract disputes between whites and blacks. The Freedmen’s courts lasted a year. In May 1866, once Virginia passed a state law admitting testimony of blacks in civil court, General Brown withdrew the Freedmen’s courts from the state. The Freedmen’s Bureau also ran schools and bureau officials established “Lincoln Temperance Societies,” which were intended to keep blacks from using intoxicants.\(^{109}\) The bureau even involved


\(^{107}\) “From Eastern Virginia,” Philadelphia Inquirer, August 19, 1865.


itself in politics, for it expected each bureau officer to make sure that all free men were registered to vote.\textsuperscript{110}

On the Eastern Shore, the bureau dealt with only a small number of refugees. Lists of indigent freedmen collecting assistance from the Freedmen’s Bureau between March and June 1866 in Northampton County numbered 123. Eighty-seven of those originated in the county; the rest came from nearby areas: twenty-two from Accomack County, three from Chesapeake, and ten from Norfolk. Bureau officials listed twenty-four in Accomack County, all residents before the war.\textsuperscript{111}

The bureau insisted on neatness, order, and obedience, and it forbade gambling and disorderly conduct. It called for black veterans and those entitled to bounties or pensions to come to the office for help with the paperwork at no cost.\textsuperscript{112} On March 1, 1866, Lieutenant Charles White, Assistant Superintendent of the Freedmen’s Bureau, discussed the hostilities that whites harbored against the Freedmen’s Bureau. The bureau organized schools in the area to serve about a thousand black children and adults. Whites received no such services. Lt. Charles White reported trouble collecting rents because many were simply unable to pay. Instead of confiscating their personal property to pay for it, he just extended their leases for another year at the same rent and hoped for better results in the future.\textsuperscript{113} Resentment grew among whites who knew that if they failed to pay their property taxes, the government would confiscate and sell their land.

\textsuperscript{110} Alderson, “The Freedmen’s Bureau in Virginia,” 41.
\textsuperscript{111} Elizabeth Cann Kambourian, \textit{Names of Destitute Freedmen Dependent upon the Government in the Military Districts of Virginia} (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2009), 10-1.
\textsuperscript{113} White to Col. O. Brown March 1, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, 1865-72, Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publication, reel 73.
Confederates returning home had to wait for third-party leases on their property to expire before they could regain their property, knowing that they would not be compensated for any damages, loss of personal property, or rents collected by the government.\footnote{Colonel James Bates, March 30, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, 1865-72, Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publication, reel 73.} The white population held such bitterness that, when the military presence ended, problems ensued for the black population.\footnote{“From Eastern Virginia,” Philadelphia Inquirer, August 19, 1865.} Tensions continued, yet Union troops mustered out of service and left the Shore to return to their homes. White citizens did not adjust to the new social order. Freedmen complained that white farmers refused to pay their contract wages.\footnote{“Affairs on the Eastern Shore,” Philadelphia Inquirer, August 3, 1865.} Whites complained that blacks lived as vagrants, plundered livestock, committed outrages, and met secretly. One issue stood out above all others; whites resented that freedmen could possess firearms while they could not.\footnote{Alderson, “The Freedmen’s Bureau in Virginia,” 1-16.} Following the invasion, the Union army required white citizens turn over their weapons, and, after the war, whites waited for the reinstatement of those rights.

Vigilantism emerged. Some white mobs committed lynchings. In 1866, multiple murders occurred, several of which were racially charged. In April, an especially brutal murder of a white woman was perpetrated by John Holden, a black man whose request for money she had refused. Mrs. Drummond, the victim, was the wife of Captain John Drummond, who had served on slave patrols before the war.\footnote{Barnes, Pungoteague to Petersburg, 4.} A black woman was attacked similarly with an axe and left for dead, but she survived to relay the story. The citizens of Pungoteague immediately went in search of the culprit, captured him, and
hanged him without a trial.\textsuperscript{119} According to the \textit{Baltimore Sun}, the black man had been a Union soldier. Either unwilling to wait for justice to be carried out or too suspicious of civil authorities to mete out justice, white citizens took the law into their own hands.\textsuperscript{120}

Given the disturbing scenes of violence, the Freedmen's Bureau thought it best to restrict gun ownership on the Eastern Shore. On April 2, 1866, George H. French wrote to Orlando Brown about the situation he found in the Drummondtown office shortly after his arrival. White residents told him stories of murders committed by freedpeople, and the new agent apparently believed them. In response, he confiscated the firearms owned by black veterans and gave them to his superior, Captain Flagg, saying, "I don't think it would be best to have them returned to them again, as they do not hesitate to use them at any time."\textsuperscript{121}

Confiscation of firearms did nothing to end the slaughter. By spring 1866, white and black Civil War veterans fought an all-out guerrilla war on the Eastern Shore. In early April, three black men in Bellhaven approached a group of white children and began discharging their weapons without cause. Bureau authorities arrested the men, took their guns from them, and held them on bond of $100 each. Despite the fact that they had also threatened the lives of several whites, Major George H. French reported, "everything (was) quiet now and he (didn't) anticipate any further disturbances."\textsuperscript{122} Yet all was not quiet. During the same month, according to Seymore James, some of the

\textsuperscript{119} "Murder and Lynch Law in Accomack County," \textit{Baltimore Sun}, March 18, 1866.
\textsuperscript{120} April 16, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, 1865-72, Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publication, reel 73.
\textsuperscript{121} French to Brown, April 22, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, 1865-72, Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publication, reel 73.
\textsuperscript{122} French to Brown, April 4, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, 1865-72, Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publication, reel 73.
white men in the area blackened their faces to disguise themselves, forced their way into
the homes of discharged black soldiers, and stole their weapons.123 Organized mobs
swept through neighborhoods, trying to intimidate freedmen and run them off of the
Shore. The situation spun out of control and beyond the ability of the Freedmen’s Bureau
to handle effectively.

In late July 1866, the murder of a white man by a black man set off a dramatic
reaction by the white community. About 300 white men organized themselves into a
quasi-military force and began to force their way into homes of blacks to take weapons
and valuables. At the trial, white men told the judge that they would kill any black man
who gave evidence to testify that the black defendant had fired in self-defense. When the
bureau official sent the witnesses home, whites followed them and shot at them. Once
again, the civil court system failed to provide justice and maintain order. The
Freedmen’s Bureau called in troops from Fort Monroe, and their presence quieted the
area, but only temporarily.124 French told Acting Assistant Adjutant General James A.
Bates, “Some have been compelled to leave their houses and crops to save their lives.
This band is about nightly disarming all colored people and they not only take arms but
money where found and valuables of any kind.” Those who resisted, became targets.
More than 125 colored people lost possession of their firearms. According to French, no
civil jury would convict a white man on testimony from a black man. When he spoke to
jurors about the particulars of the case, they feared for their own lives and property if

123 Seymour James, June 30, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Records of the
Field Offices for the State of Virginia, 1865-72, Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm
Publication, reel 73.
124 French to S.C. Armstrong, July 25, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands,
Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, 1865-72, Washington, D.C.: National Archives
Microfilm Publication, reel 73.
they voted in favor of conviction. Military authorities were unable to stop mob rule, and civil authorities were not inclined to stop it.

In August 1866, a gang of about fifty white men from the Hunting Creek area forced their way into homes and forcibly disarmed black residents. French arrested some of the men but did not know what to do. The civil authorities in Drummondstown seemed unwilling to arrest the men and try them. French vowed to arrest more but wondered if they would be brought to justice. Freedmen's Bureau officials did not trust civil authorities to prosecute whites for such crimes. Major French received a telegram from Major General Nelson Miles with instructions not to turn over prisoners on writ of habeas corpus until he was certain that the civil authorities would provide justice in the courts. On August 17, in an attempt to suppress the violence, a detachment of fifty troops from Company F, 12th U.S. Infantry, arrived on the Eastern Shore in the tug Geneva at the request of Freedmen's Bureau officials. For the first time, the Eastern Shore endured the occupation of regular troops, not volunteers, testifying to the growing level of violence.

A letter to the Baltimore Sun in March of 1867, from a source described as one of the most prominent citizens of Accomack County, expressed despondency and a "fearful looking for what is to come." This citizen spoke about the difficulties of the situation when he or she wrote, "A want of confidence, a perfect stupor and an indisposition to attempt anything or to form any plans for the future, is the inevitable consequence of the

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127 "The News," Plain Dealer (Cleveland), August 20, 1866.
position of matters." This individual, who presumably spoke for others as well, portrayed a society that was still numb from the collapse of the prewar social order and economy; a society still trying to find its bearings.

An interesting case emerged in February of 1868. A white man, John J. Joines, shot a black man, Jim Holden, when Joines ordered Holden to leave his kitchen, and he refused to do so. J. P. Sherman, a law enforcement officer, arrested Joines and later released him on a bond of $500 to appear in court in March. The treatment of this man, who had protected himself and his property, incensed the white community. On August 31, a racially motivated riot broke out. Whites using guns, knives, and sticks attacked and injured several black citizens. Two white men were wounded in the melee. Local authorities took no steps to punish the rioters who committed the violent attacks.

The postwar violence had an effect on the population. Between 1860 and 1870, the African-American population for the two counties fell by sixty-nine individuals, whereas the white population increased by 2,106 individuals. The white population grew at a rate of 6.7% in Northampton and 15% in Accomack. Considering those rates of increase, one can infer that 1,582 African-Americans left the Eastern Shore during this decade. Considering the enslaved people made up about 66% of the black population, it stands to reason that at least 1,044 people escaped enslavement on the Eastern Shore of Virginia or left for safer environs after the war had ended. The Philadelphia Inquirer

128 "From Accomack County, Virginia," Baltimore Sun, March 20, 1867.
reported census figures from Accomack County in August 1865 indicating the white population remained about the same but the black population declined by 3,000. About 2,000 black men from the county joined the Union army. If 1,000 escaped slavery in Accomack County, then perhaps 1,000 escaped from Northampton County.

If anything might be said about the collapse of slavery on the Eastern Shore, it came from a steadily evolving and ever-changing Union military policy. On reading Dix’s proclamation, slaveholders wanted to believe that their slave property would be protected and their social hierarchy preserved. General Dix’s policies went a long way to protect the rights of slaveholders over their chattel. However, Butler’s contraband policy inspired slaves in the area to risk their lives by embarking on a journey to freedom. The recruitment of black soldiers on the Shore foreshadowed the freedoms granted by the new constitution of the Restored Government of Virginia. Those who enlisted got their freedom and sustenance for their families in the form of government rations. A contract labor system, instituted by Lt. Col. Frank White, attempted to instruct free blacks to become independent wage laborers, though it seems to have been widely despised and riddled with corruption. In the post-war period, blacks tried to transition into lives of freedom and self-determination, while still receiving no protection from the civil court system. Whites, bitter that the old order was gone, tried to grapple with what they viewed as preferential treatment for blacks. Former Confederate soldiers and sympathizers eventually reclaimed their confiscated lands, and blacks found it difficult to survive when these men formed paramilitary bands. The Freedmen’s Bureau, with all of its good intentions, lacked the manpower to usher in the kind of dramatic change that it had hoped for and proved unable to quell the intense racial animosity that lingered.

Without Union forces standing by, white mob rule dominated and prevented blacks from receiving justice.

In some respects, the Civil War brought sweeping changes for the African-American population on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Abolition provided them with the freedom to make their own personal decisions, choose their own occupations, and keep their families together. Still, with limited access to land and education, African-Americans faced a difficult journey to improve their lot. Unfair treatment in the courts and rampant white vigilantism caused these new citizens to tread cautiously through many obstacles and into an uncertain future.
RUNNING THE CHESAPEAKE BLOCKADE

Early historians of the blockade, such as Francis B.C. Bradlee asserted that Union occupation of the Eastern Shore ensured Federal control over the Chesapeake Bay.¹ More recently, Civil War naval historian Robert Browning reminded readers that the Union Navy controlled the Chesapeake Bay from the beginning of the war.² Both assume that because Union forces patrolled the Chesapeake Bay as early as 1861, nothing of importance took place there. Large merchant ships rarely sailed into the Chesapeake with cargoes of contraband for the Confederacy. However, innumerable small boats slipped through the Federal blockade under the cloak of night transporting supplies of food, clothing, weapons, ammunition, and medicine vital to the Confederacy.³ Blockade runners from the Eastern Shore, in small vessels of twenty to thirty feet, linked the region to the Confederacy, bringing information, newspapers, mail, and people. This traffic has not been adequately studied. Ports farther south, such as Wilmington and Charleston, those that remained unoccupied by the Union until 1865 have been considered important trade lifelines to the Confederacy. Large, British-built, state-of-the-art steamships, outran slower Union vessels to bring in cargoes of contraband supplies and to carry out shipments of cotton, the Confederacy’s chief source of revenue. The Confederacy enjoyed plentiful maritime resources in the bay thanks to the efforts of watermen on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. An untold number of small shipments that added up to a significant volume, provided vital aid to the Confederacy. Eastern Shore residents, armed with an intimate knowledge of the landscape, commonly traversed the bay in small

¹ Francis B.C. Bradlee, Blockade Running During the Civil War, 166-90.
² Robert M. Browning, Jr., From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron During the Civil War (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 219.
³ ORN, ser. 1 vol. 7, 638-41.
boats, powered by sail and oar, in spite of the Federal cordon. In 1860, 300 to 400 inhabitants of Virginia's Eastern Shore owned workboats or made their living as watermen. Others owned boats of their own, supplementing their income and sustaining their families by fishing or gathering oysters. Rebel sympathizers on the Eastern Shore routinely engaged in smuggling—carrying arms, powder, goods, and uniforms—across the bay to aid the Confederacy.

The Union high command understood the importance of the bay and its position in their greater naval strategy. They planned to use ships to cut off commerce to the main shipping centers in the South. Stephen Wise referred to the Civil War action as "the first modern blockade." Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet correctly guessed the Confederacy's naval strategy. Southerners believed that cotton would be their salvation. They thought that cotton was vital to the health of the British economy, and thus, they expected England to serve the industrial needs of the South during the war. Lincoln and his Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, pledged to stop this exchange before the Confederacy developed warships to protect its deep water ports. The U.S. Navy of 1861 lacked the ships and manpower necessary to impose a blockade along the entirety of the Confederate coastline, so it concentrated its resources on vital areas. Thus, the bay became one of its primary targets.

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5 "The Coast Contrabands," December 12, 1861, Correspondence of *New York Tribune* in *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 12, 1862.
8 Robert M. Browning, Jr., *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron During the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 1-16.
James Soley, an early historian of the blockade, believed that the blockade itself caused few problems for the Confederacy. Subsequent writers agreed. Writing in the 1920s, Francis Bradlee argued that trans-Atlantic trade sustained the Confederacy until January 1865 when Wilmington fell. The majority of Confederate arms and ammunition came through the blockade: two thirds of its gunpowder, sixty percent of its small arms, and one third of its lead shot. In addition, all of the paper for Confederate cartridges, most of the cloth and leather used for shoes and uniforms, and uncountable quantities of medicine, chemicals, and metals came through the blockade. Modern historians give the blockade more credit, noting the coincidence of its completion in 1865 and the Confederate defeat.

For good or bad, the U.S. Navy never developed a strategy for the Eastern Shore. Once the Union gained nominal control over the Chesapeake, its priorities shifted down the coast, to target Charleston and Wilmington. The U.S. Navy sent its best warships elsewhere, leaving the Eastern Shore untouched. With too few vessels suited to the shallow coastal waters and too few Union sailors with adequate knowledge of the local waters and location of channels, the Union navy could not expect to eliminate illegal water traffic. Even with supplementary shallow-draft vessels procured by the U.S. Army and Treasury Department, the U.S. Navy faced an impossible task. The Federal blockade failed to stop the smuggling of goods or the transport of news, mail, and individuals between the Eastern Shore and the Confederate mainland.

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9 Bradlee, *Blockade Running During the Civil War*, 45-52.
In short, the U.S. Navy, War, and Treasury Departments found the Eastern Shore was a tough nut to crack. All three cabinet posts failed to regulate watermen’s activities. Acting Master William Budd of the U.S. Navy expressed a typical opinion, “Large numbers of men and quantities of supplies are constantly being carried into Accomac County, Va. and from there transferred to the York and Rappahannock Rivers, leaving the eastern Shore of Virginia by way of Pungoteague, Onancock, and Cherrystone inlets, the means of transportation across the bay being small schooners and large rowboats, the trips are made principally by night.”¹² The Eastern Shore’s small craft could not be caught easily. On January 21, 1863, Captain Foxhall Parker wrote to Rear Admiral Samuel P. Lee, commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, saying, “I have to state that I have long been aware that a contraband trade is carried on between Baltimore and Richmond by way of Accomac County, and have used my best endeavors to put a stop to it... The smuggling is carried on principally in large canoes, and is, I learn, on the increase.”¹³

Contraband traffic from the fleet of log workboats was not the only problem. With no securing force, attacks by Confederate guerrilla bands continued throughout the war. Even after the Federal government implemented its blockading strategies, numerous rebel raids damaged lighthouses, cut telegraph cables, stole cargoes, and seized or destroyed merchant ships and Union gunboats. However, unlike smuggling, Union leaders took an entirely different view of these destructive activities, treating them as acts of piracy punishable by death.

¹² Acting Master Budd, July 25, 1861, ORN, ser. 1 vol. 4, 586.
¹³ ORN, ser. 1 vol. 8, 473-474.
Of course, to understand the importance of Virginia’s Eastern Shore in the maritime war requires an understanding of its place within Union naval strategy. When the Civil War began in April 1861, President Lincoln relied on advice from Lieutenant General Winfield Scott to pressure the Confederacy by blocking its imports and exports and then bisecting southern territory with attacks by the Union army. \(^{14}\) Secretary Welles wanted to cut off all access to the Confederacy, even by neutral nations. \(^{15}\) Secretary of State William Seward preferred a diplomatically-announced blockade, one that would keep out any rival nations. Even though it lent an undesirable air of legitimacy to the Confederate States, Lincoln agreed with Seward’s plan and ordered the navy to commence its operations.\(^{16}\)

Further, seizure of the Chesapeake Bay represented a military imperative. Both the James and Potomac Rivers flowed into it. Whoever controlled the bay controlled access to the two capitals, Richmond and Washington. Virginia seceded only days after Lincoln called for military action, but the Union retained control of Fort Monroe on the Yorktown Peninsula. To protect the garrison, the U.S. Navy needed to control the waterways of Hampton Roads. Confederate forces constructed coastal batteries at Norfolk to prevent Union vessels from advancing up into the rivers, but large merchant ships could not run the blockade into Norfolk or the Hampton Roads basin so long as a U.S. squadron was anchored off of Fort Monroe.\(^{17}\) In short, no body of water shaped the

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\(^{17}\) Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 20-45.
outcome of the Civil War more than the Chesapeake Bay. The U.S. Navy realized this and made sure to dominate it by the end of April 1861.

In the Chesapeake, the Potomac Flotilla operated in the upper bay, guarding the entrance to the Potomac River and the Atlantic Blockading Squadron patrolled the lower bay. On May 1, Gideon Welles appointed Silas Stringham as commander of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron (initially called the Coast Blockading Squadron), comprised of fourteen vessels with headquarters at Hampton Roads. Welles charged Stringham with protecting the coastline from Alexandria, Virginia, to Key West, Florida. Stringham thought that twelve to fifteen ships would be sufficient for a "strict blockade" of the bay. However, by August, the fleet moved off for other targets, the Confederate forts along the Outer Banks, leaving scant resources for the coverage of the bay’s inlets and creeks. On July 1, 1861, the U.S. Navy had twelve vessels in the bay, but just weeks later, that number had dropped to seven ships, as Flag Officer Stringham sent five to assist with the campaign against eastern North Carolina. Stringham also stationed the Mount Vernon at the mouth of the York, the Daylight at the mouth of the Rappahannock, and sent the Penguin and the Albatross to patrol the Eastern Shore. Two ships could hardly expect to regulate the Eastern Shore’s armada of fishing boats.

It did not take long for Stringham to realize that Eastern Shore residents still communicated with the mainland. Captain John Faunce brought the Harriet Lane down the Atlantic coast to Hampton Roads and reported ongoing illegal trade on the seaside, in

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18 Mills, *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War*, 34-47.
19 Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 1-16.
21 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 754-6.
22 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 756.
Chincoteague Inlet and Hog Island, a barrier island.\textsuperscript{23} Regretting his earlier optimism, Stringham requested that Welles dispatch four more steam ships -- small ones -- to patrol the eastern and western shores of the bay.\textsuperscript{24} Stringham sent his ships on patrol, but they turned up few arrests. After a one-week cruise up the seaside coast of the Eastern Shore, the captain of USS *Louisiana* reported little secessionist activity. With renewed confidence, Stringham detached the *Louisiana* to the North Carolina expedition.\textsuperscript{25} It proved to be an ill-considered move. As soon as the ship left, rebels at Chincoteague Inlet extinguished the light, allowing cover for their smuggling activities. On September 18, the same day that Gideon Welles announced the transfer of Stringham and the arrival of his replacement Goldsborough, Commander H. S. Stellwagen wrote to Gideon Welles informing him of the desperate situation at Chincoteague. Rebel forces trained nearby and threatened the small community of loyalists on the island. Perhaps Stellwagen knew of the change of command taking place or he could have believed that the gravity of the situation made it appropriate to report directly to the Secretary of the Navy. Whatever the case, he requested the assignment of a U.S. gunboat to Chincoteague Inlet on a permanent basis to protect the people and curtail smuggling. Welles replied indicating his displeasure that an expedition to the Eastern Shore had not been made a priority earlier.\textsuperscript{26}

Because Stringham had been unwilling to send ships to pacify the Eastern Shore, it fell to an army officer General Benjamin Butler to order the first Union naval forays to the troublesome region. They did not go well. One of the first reconnaissance missions,

\textsuperscript{23} ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 74-5.
\textsuperscript{24} ORN, ser. 1 vol. 6, 46.
\textsuperscript{25} ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 92.
\textsuperscript{26} ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 234-5.
one sent to put an end to a smugglers' route between Cherrystone Creek and Mobjack Bay, came under fire. Lieutenant Pierce Crosby led this mission utilizing three steamers from Fort Monroe – the Cadwalader, the Fanny, and the Adriatic – with a combined force of 220 men. A masked battery fired on the ships from shore, killing an estimated ten to twenty men.\textsuperscript{27} The Cadwalader ran aground, and faced an impending rebel attack, Union sailors hurriedly emptied the steamer of much of her coal in order to lighten the load, and allow the Fanny to pull her off. The Federal ships and men escaped unscathed and burned two locally-owned schooners, including the schooner Passenger, owned by the captain of the Cherrystone Guards.\textsuperscript{28}

Although Crosby’s expedition burned two ships, the near disaster proved a terrible embarrassment for the navy. The three ships had retreated, and one had temporarily run aground. The failed expedition suggested that the Eastern Shore would be harder to quell than first believed. In early September, Silas Stringham counted up the ships comprising the forces of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. He had eighteen in all, but eight of those patrolled the coast along North or South Carolina. He had ten additional ships, but all were unavailable to patrol the bay because five were assigned to the Potomac River and five languished in northern ports in need of repair. In short, he had only ten vessels to patrol the Chesapeake Bay and the vicinity: the mouths of the James and York Rivers, the Hampton Roads basin, and Cape Henry.\textsuperscript{29} Further, the vessels in the fleet were not well-suited to the shallow water and after five months of operation, many were in various states of disrepair. For instance, on September 6, 1861, William Chandler of USS Dawn reported a failed pursuit of a small boat coming across

\textsuperscript{27} “Incidents of the War,” (New York) \textit{Commercial Advertiser}, August 8, 1861.
\textsuperscript{28} “Northern News,” \textit{Richmond Examiner}, August 12, 1861.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{ORN} vol. 1 ser. 6, 192.
the bay from the Eastern Shore. The shallow waters and a mysterious, ongoing leak encumbered the Dawn, a 400-ton screw steamer with a thirty-four man crew and two guns. When it closed in on the smuggling ship, its deep draft forced it to circle around a shoal, losing precious speed. With the onset of night and bad weather, the Dawn lost sight of the boat, which disappeared into Mobjack Bay.  

Stringham demanded more ships, but Welles refused to provide them.  

In late September, Stringham engaged in a furious debate with Assistant Secretary Gustavus V. Fox, who called his abilities into question. Fox commented on reports that numerous small boats were able to pass through the blockade of the Outer Banks and inquired as to why the department did not receive any reports from the ships involved in the pursuit. Insulted, Stringham resigned. He wrote, “I have labored night and day with the vessels at my disposal to blockade the Southern coast and perform all other duties entrusted to me...After all my labors in behalf of my Government with the means provided me, it is truly unpleasant to be censured by newspaper editors and anonymous correspondents; but when received over the signature of my official superior I have but one recourse left me, which I respectfully, though regrettably ask, which is to be relieved from my present command and be permitted to serve my country in her hour of trial in a more humble and consequently less responsible position.”  

With Stringham’s resignation, the Navy extended the blockade to New Orleans and reorganized it, dividing it into four squadrons: the North Atlantic, the South Atlantic, the

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30 ORN, vol. I ser. 1, 6, 204.
33 Stringham to Welles, September 16, 1861, ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 216-7.
East Gulf, and the West Gulf Blockading Squadrons. Welles named Louis M.
Goldsborough as Flag Officer of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, charging him
with the task of controlling sea transport in Virginia and North Carolina, and instructed
him to intensify the blockade around the Eastern Shore.34

Goldsborough reiterated Stringham’s need for smaller, faster ships. Shortly after
assuming command, he requested small boats to patrol the shallow waters of the Shore.
Inspections of ships in the fleet revealed rotting timbers and lack of armor plating. Some
of the newly-acquired vessels – those purchased by the navy from private owners –
lacked any guns at all and had to be outfitted for war. By October, after two successive
officers had made similar complaints, Gideon Welles took the hint and started sending
reinforcements. Unfortunately, Welles sent large ships not well-suited to the task of
patrolling shallow coastal waters, including for example, the USS Congress, an 1800-ton
sailing frigate with a 406 man crew and fifty guns.35 It required twenty-two feet of draft,
making it useless for duty against the Eastern Shore. Another newcomer, USS
Chippewa, a 507-ton screw steamer with a crew of eighty men and four guns, arrived
from New York in late December, but it required eleven feet of draft, making it equally
useless.36 For a time, Goldsborough kept only two ships on station at the Eastern Shore –
USS Louisiana and USS Albatross – but he soon lost the Albatross in February 1862
when it was condemned for repairs.37

35 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 351.
36 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 490.
37 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 668.
Goldsborough’s saw one improvement, during his tenure. The U.S. Navy recruited pilots familiar with local waters in the form of freed slaves. In early November 1862, Commander Samuel Magaw of the USS Freeborn reported the capture of slaves in a skiff returning from Maryland to the Eastern Shore on a supply run. He requested permission to employ one of those individuals, Mr. Rollins, as a master’s mate or a clerk since he had knowledge of the area. Locals with specialized knowledge of the waters brought valuable expertise. Goldsborough’s squadron may have lacked the appropriate ships, but they now reduced the risk of hitting shallows without warning.

One glance at a map of the Eastern Shore and its tributaries indicates the difficulties which any naval force – let alone Goldsborough’s ill-prepared squadron – would encounter trying to control all water transportation in the region. In its condition in 1861, the U.S. Navy could not control the entirety of the Shore’s coastline, which extended six hundred miles. The York River and Mobjack Bay area, a notorious hotbed of rebel guerrilla activity, served as a common destination for blockade runners travelling from the Eastern Shore. Chincoteague, on the seaside, and Hacks Neck/Pungoteague, on the bayside, staged the most bothersome smuggling activities. In a report regarding illegal trade between Baltimore and Richmond, dated January 19, 1863, Acting Rear Admiral Lee complained that the geography of the area presented insurmountable difficulties:

> With this limited means it is impossible to maintain inviolate the blockade of a coast so extensive and so indented with navigable waters as the western shore of

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38 ORN, ser. 1 vol. 5, 145.

39 Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 125-8.
the Chesapeake. I have from time to time (see my Nos. 192, 234, 239, etc.) informed the Department of the frequent operations of the naval force in that vicinity, in the destruction of boats, canoes, and other craft which might be used in carrying out such illicit trade as that referred to in the enclosed.\textsuperscript{40}

Inhabitants familiar with the maze of creeks, coves, and marshes possessed a huge advantage over the U.S. sailors. Unmarked channels dealt unwelcome surprises to pilots unacquainted with local waters. Sandy shoals along much of the coastline presented real dangers for vessels that required five feet or more of draft.

The shape of the Shore was not the only problem. Weather, too, caused distress. The third largest inland body of water on the east coast of the United States, the Chesapeake Bay presented many nautical challenges. Northeasterly storms, typically occurring between November and April, created rough conditions along the seaside and in the southern portions of the bay. Cold fronts from the north or west formed eight to ten foot swells. Fast-moving cold fronts triggered severe thunderstorms, especially in the spring. Gales hit the bay frequently between September and May. Certain tidal conditions combined with strong winds to create a chop. Fog occurred whenever warm air rolled in across the perpetually cold bay water. In short, treacherous conditions occurred throughout much of the year. Even summertime had its perils, including tropical storms.\textsuperscript{41}

The men who ran the blockade used those conditions to their advantage.

Chesapeake Bay blockade runners were a mix of Confederate soldiers who ran messages,

\textsuperscript{40} Acting Rear Admiral Lee, \textit{ORN} ser. 1 vol. 8, 450-1.
residents of the Eastern Shore motivated by secessionist leanings or a desire for profit, shiftless northerners wishing to make money, and guerrilla fighters who wanted to slip across the bay to attack targets on the Eastern Shore. As a group, Eastern Shore blockade runners were a hard assortment to categorize, diverse, and even a little mysterious. Southern sympathizers from the North, men such as Levi White and another man known only as “Sable,” ran goods from Baltimore down the bay to Confederate forces in Virginia. Some ran the blockade regularly — men such as Thomas Johnson of Onancock, the brothers James, John, and Teackle Bennett, and Major Guy, all from the Pungoteague area.42 Watermen from the Shore, like Captain John Kelso — from Pungoteague — sometimes used their occupation as a convenient cover to run illegal goods to the Confederacy. Confederate guerrillas — such as John Taylor Wood, John Yeats Beall, and Thaddeus Fitzhugh — used the area of York and Mathews counties and Mobjack Bay as their base of operation, striking Union vessels, outposts, and lighthouses. In short, the men who became blockade runners varied and their service depended on their goals, which also varied.

Blockade runners typically used small boats such as skiffs and log canoes to elude Union forces. Log canoes, the preferred workboats of watermen, were made when boatwrights carved the hulls out of seven logs joined together, with one or two masts, but no jib.43 They ranged from about twenty to forty feet long. Requiring only six inches to three feet of water, canoes were especially well-suited to make the undetected trips across the bay.44 Skiffs were even smaller, up to twenty feet long, with one sail and a set of

44 Mears, The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and Reconstruction, 531.
Both used small sails and padded oars to slip quietly through under the cover of darkness.

Illegal trade began in the summer of 1861. Not only did supplies for the Confederacy come southward through the Chesapeake Bay from northern states to the Confederate-held shore, but goods also flowed south down the Delmarva Peninsula and across the Maryland/Virginia line. Private citizens ran goods to the Eastern Shore for transport to Virginia’s mainland, particularly to Richmond. The peculiar geography of the bay predetermined the Shore’s role in the system of trade. If smugglers shipped their cargoes farther south to other ports, the trip would have been three times the distance and taken more time. Further, with Union troops occupying the Outer Banks, it was not likely that goods would have reached Richmond. As a result, Pungoteague, Onancock, and Cherrystone Creeks, on the bayside, and Chincoteague Inlet, on the seaside, became havens for blockade running. In early February 1862, the *Regimental Flag* reported the capture of a secessionist leaving Pungoteague Creek “with a boat load of stores for the Confederates” the previous Sunday night. The Northern Neck, the land between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers, served as a preferred landing spot because it provided easy and quick access to Richmond. On July 22, 1862, a writer for the *New York Herald* wrote from Washington, “There is constant intercourse between the rebels of Accomac and Northampton counties on the Eastern shore of the lower Chesapeake Bay and those of the Western shore. They cross the bay in smart little canoes” from

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46 Barnes, *From Pungoteague to Petersburg*, 91.
47 Mills, *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War*, 73.
49 Mills, *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War*, 164-73.
Pungoteague to the Piankatank and Mobjack rivers on the western shore. They went west during the night and came back in open daylight with newspapers and mail.\(^{50}\) Mobjack Bay provided the entry point to this area as well as a maze of inlets to distract and confuse the U.S. Navy.

Blockade runners kept few accounts of their activities, so the most valuable primary records came from Union sailors who observed their tactics. Acting Master William Budd scouted out the situation on the Shore in the USS Resolute. After a close escape from a Confederate attack by men advancing from Horntown, Budd reported the existence of a conduit for smuggling, one that connected Maryland to Accomack County. From there, small schooners and canoes transported the goods from Pungoteague, Onancock, and Cherrystone Creeks across the bay to the York and Rappahanock Rivers.\(^{51}\) The cargo came from the North where supplies remained plentiful. From ports convenient to the Atlantic, goods were shipped down to the seaside, especially around Chincoteague, and then unloaded and shuttled across the Eastern Shore. The contraband was then packed onto small watercraft, which slipped across the bay under the cover of darkness.\(^{52}\) Typically, men working in pairs, using a horse and cart, transported goods along back roads on dark nights. They hid goods and even sails for their boats in beds and other places in homes until they made their next trip.\(^{53}\)

Another important route for Confederate aid came from Baltimore through bayside ports of the Eastern Shore and then into Mobjack Bay. In June 1863, J.D. Husbands, Jr., acting master of the USS Western World, intercepted “a number of men

\(^{50}\) Cleveland (OH) Plain Dealer, July 28, 1862.
\(^{51}\) Mills, Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War, 73-4.
\(^{52}\) “The Coast Contrabands,” December 12, 1861, Correspondence of New York Tribune in San Francisco Chronicle, January 12, 1862.
\(^{53}\) Mears, Hacks Neck and Its People, Past and Present, 73-4
and three women” in two boats from the Eastern Shore as they reached shore at Stutt’s Creek in Mathews County. Husbands captured two members of a group waiting onshore to meet the incoming boats. The two prisoners, Evert Everson and L.J. Handy, a quartermaster in the Confederate army, carried $472 in Confederate script, $191.78 in gold, and a $500 note payable in Baltimore. The blockade runners from the Eastern Shore with whom they did business bought goods from merchants in Baltimore and delivered them to Confederate agents in Mathews County. In this case, they attempted to land goods worth over $1,000.

In the Chesapeake Bay, most blockade runners carried basic necessities that were scarce in the Confederacy, such as coffee, salt, flour, medical equipment, blankets, and clothing. The Confederate army had a great demand for medicine, hospital supplies, artillery, and ammunition. Any industrially-produced goods would have come from the north because the Eastern Shore lacked the capability to produce them. Foodstuffs shipped from the Eastern Shore might have been produced there. Whatever the case, Shore-based blockade runners carried a variety of cargoes.

Both Union and Confederate forces recognized the material effect of the Eastern Shore’s blockade runners. In September 1861, the USS Yankee captured the sloop T.J. Evans with nine bales of waterproof blankets, four guns, four boxes of ammunition, and six cases of surgical equipment. Confederate general, former governor, and Accomack County native Henry A. Wise told his troops at the Battle of Chaffin’s Bluff that they were being supplied by the folks back home. He explained to them how Shoremen ran

54 ORN ser. 1 vol. 9, 46.
55 ORN, ser. 1 vol. 4, 649.
the blockade in small boats at night “but they sent clothes and medicines and food.” In late August 1861, Silas H. Stringham reported that shipments of gunpowder from Philadelphia and New York were coming in at Chincoteague. From there, the ammunition was transported across the Shore to Cherrystone Creek, where it was smuggled across the bay to Dividing Creek above the Rappahannock River. According to this report, large boats came out of the Rappahannock to load up with powder, returning to the mainland to deliver cargo to rebel armies.

Levi White of Baltimore, a frequent blockade runner started out by smuggling Virginia military buttons into Richmond. After a short time, he described himself as “a special agent of the Confederate States Ordnance Department,” and began procuring a wide array of items such as five hundred pounds of potassium for Confederate musket caps. Over the next few years, he frequently sailed up and down the Chesapeake Bay carrying contraband.

Blockade runners also transported mail, newspapers, and people. The Federal blockade cut off communication with the Confederacy, and Eastern Shore residents yearned for information and hopeful news about the progress of the war. Illegal mail captured by the Union could bring imprisonment for the mail carrier and trouble for anyone implicated in the correspondence. A February 1862 edition of the *Regimental Flag*, the Union newspaper temporarily published by the 2nd Delaware in Accomack County, told of blockade runners who ran into trouble and nearly perished bringing mail across the Chesapeake Bay to the Eastern Shore during the night. Federal troops found a bag of mail lost in the confusion and investigated local citizens. The contents of a letter

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56 Barnes, *Pungoteague to Petersburg*, 65.
57 Stringham to Welles, August 31, 1861, *ORN* ser. 1 vol. 6, 153-4.
58 Mills, *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War*, 38-9.
from Dr. Browne to his wife led Union troops to her home in search of a box of papers that the doctor had asked her to send.  

Few excursions proved as dangerous as those that smuggled people. In general, two types of people tried to leave the Shore, refugees and Confederate recruits. Refugees wishing to cross the bay hired experienced watermen with boats to sneak them past Union vessels on patrol during the night. A few families left the Eastern Shore in advance of the Union invasion out of fear of what it might bring. Miers Fisher’s wife and children left their home – the plantation known as Pocahontas – and braved the perilous voyage across the bay because they believed Union occupation would be unbearable. Other refugees came from farther north. In late August 1861, two Confederate sympathizers living in New York City made their way home to Norfolk by passing through the Eastern Shore. Enduring many hardships, they went first to Baltimore and then to Cobb’s Island, where they crossed the bay in a small boat which some “ladies and gentlemen had accrued passage at a high price."

Even before the Union invasion, young men left the Eastern Shore, crossed through the blockade, and went to Middlesex or Gloucester County or to Yorktown to join the Confederate army. One sixteen-year-old recruit from Accomack County, George Scarborough, ran the blockade in a boat full of supplies. Colonel Smith, leader of Confederate forces in Northampton County, crossed the bay with his officers and some

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61 *Daily Dispatch*, September 2, 1861.
devout secessionists in his unit to join Confederate military units in Norfolk. According to local accounts given to Captain Merrill, leader of the Union cavalry unit that brought Dix’s proclamation under a flag of truce, about 400 men crossed the bay to join other Confederate units in advance of the invasion. Even after the Union established control over the Eastern Shore, a small number of devoted secessionists crossed the bay to join the Confederate Army.

Whatever their cargo — provisions, mail, or people — smugglers used a variety of strategies to evade detection by Union officials. Some used small boats which they kept hidden during the day. Others used fishing or oystering permits to provide justification to be on the water. Some registered their boats illegally in Maryland to avoid scrutiny by Union officials. Others used slaves or hired laborers to bring goods illegally to the Shore. Another ploy involved exploiting legal permits to trade goods. On July 4, 1861, J.W. Livingston of USS Penguin stationed at Tangier reported to Silas Stringham that the steamer the Wilson B. Small had from Baltimore into Pungoteague and unloaded cargo there. The boat had a permit to trade, but only as far as Great Annemessex River in Somerset County, Maryland. The crew took advantage of the legal permit they had been granted and used it to make illegal runs.

Most blockade runners from the Eastern Shore used log canoes with oars and a sail, often waiting for nights that were especially dark and stormy to make their voyages. Although recorded stories are few in number, blockade runners incurred terrible risks, particularly from the weather. For instance one night, as John Bennett and two other men

64 Mills, Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War, 94-5.
65 Mills, Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War, 95.
67 ORN, ser.1 vol. 5, 768.
were returning to Occohannock Creek, a bad storm hit just as they came upon a Union camp. Bennett refused to land the boat as the other two men had wanted. Instead, he cut the mast and reset it later, allowing them to make it home undetected.68

Early on, Union forces could stop smugglers only by nabbing them on land. For instance, men from Colonel Wilkins' Eastern Shore regiment arrested Isaac Smith at his Accomack County home around midnight.69 As rumors abounded of the blockade runners' prowess, those who frequently eluded authorities became targets for Union soldiers in the area and faced death sentences if they got caught. James Bennett, one of the most notorious for eluding capture, escaped arrest although Union officials jailed his pregnant wife for one month, forcing her to sleep on the cold, hard ground in her cell. Soon after the ordeal, she died in childbirth, and those close to the Bennett family blamed her treatment at the hands of Union forces. Federal troops attended her funeral in hopes of capturing her husband. Believing he would be executed if captured, Bennett hid in the nearby woods and watched from afar.

Bennett eluded Federal troops on other occasions too. Once, while visiting the home of his friend, he jumped out of a window, swam across a creek, climbed a tree, and hid out under a bridge in order to escape. On another occasion, Federal troops came to Bennett's house looking for him. His relatives told them that he had gone out, though he was really hiding in the house. Hours later he emerged, dressed as an old man, bent and unsteady. He commented on the weather and escaped.70 Another time, Union troops captured him at his home. Playing on his captor's sympathy, he asked for one last drink

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68 Mears, Hacks Neck and its People, Past and Present, 75.
69 "Affairs on the Eastern Shore of Virginia" reprinted from the Regimental Flag camp newspaper in Easton Gazette, March 1, 1862.
70 Mears, Hacks Neck and its People, Past and Present, 74.
from the well he had used his entire life. While the soldier waited for him, he dumped the bucket on the soldier. Soaked with water, the soldier’s gun refused to fire, and Bennett ran off into the night. On June 3, 1865, nearly two months after the end of the war, James Bennett surrendered. He received no punishment, Union officials released him just nine days later.

The prying eyes of the occupation forces encouraged the blockade runners to disguise their activities in innovative ways. Sometimes, they gave difficult chores to slaves and free blacks forcing them to transport goods that came in from the seaside to the bayside. Naturally, the Union’s land troops had a difficult time differentiating between these black smugglers and those who worked for the U.S. government. A writer for the San Francisco Bulletin showed his disdain for the Confederates’ use of blacks to aid their military efforts when he wrote, “Hence, while professing the policy of quiet, the rebel leaders have employed their seeming masterly inactivity in the most cunningly devised plans of patient, secret, persevering action.” If free black residents sometimes stymied Union efforts to catch smugglers, so too did unscrupulous Federal agents. A U.S. collector on Deal Island issued illegal licenses, enabling some Virginians to register their boats in the state of Maryland in an attempt to avoid scrutiny. Indeed, this action enabled the enigmatic runner known only as “Sable.” Agents flouted the laws, according to Hiram Barney, a custom house collector in New York City. He complained in a letter to Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase that, “Southern merchants come continually to this city to make purchases of goods, and prepare for their being forwarded

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71 Mears, Hacks Neck and Its People, Past and Present, 75.
72 Miles and Miles, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia: Confederate and Union, 193-4.
74 Mills, Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War, 164-82.
to their homes with contemptuous disregard of the restrictions sought to be imposed upon them."\(^{75}\)

For the rest of the war, the U.S. Navy struggled to catch runners in the act of smuggling. Just as the Union army did not quite know what to do with the Eastern Shore – namely under which jurisdiction it best fit – the U.S. Navy also found it difficult to assign clear boundaries of jurisdiction along its coast. In September 1861, Gideon Welles split the Potomac Flotilla from the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, causing confusion.\(^{76}\) Neither division accepted that the Eastern Shore as its responsibility. The Potomac Flotilla patrolled the upper bay. Probably, this flotilla had no jurisdiction, but its southernmost post, Station H, which included Smith’s Point, the southern side of the Piankatank River, and the Rappahannock River, came close to the blockade running routes.\(^{77}\) In December 1863, fifteen boats made up the flotilla which patrolled from Alexandria at Station A to the Piankatank and Rappahannock at Station H. From April to December 1863, four boats were assigned to Station H. (At that time, he had *Resolute*, *Fuchsia*, *Anacostia*, and *Currituck* patrolling.)\(^{78}\) Although the flotilla lacked sufficient boats to be able to patrol its vast shoreline, it often lent one or two of its ships for service in the lower bay. For instance, in April 1865, E. Hooker, commanding the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) Division of the Potomac Flotilla, explained to his commander, F.A. Parker of the Potomac Flotilla, that USS *Freeborn* would be a better vessel to station at Cherrystone than the *Periwinkle*, for the *Freeborn* could handle the narrow channels.\(^{79}\)

\(^{75}\) Hiram Barney letter to Salmon P. Chase, quoted in Mills, *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War*, 74-8.
\(^{76}\) *ORN* ser. 1 vol. 6, 233-4.
\(^{77}\) *ORN* ser. 1 vol. 5, 380.
\(^{78}\) *ORN* ser. 1 vol. 5, 257, 273, 360, 380.
\(^{79}\) *ORN* ser. 1 vol. 5, 562.
The twenty ships of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron failed to stop the blockade runners. In February 1862, only one ship patrolled the mouth of the bay, but more patrolled the coastline of the Shore.\textsuperscript{80} Only when apprised of a threat, did Flag Officer Goldsborough send one or two ships to the Eastern Shore, but they usually arrived too late to catch a smuggler. In August 1862, Goldsborough requested a revenue cutter of light draft be stationed to patrol between the York and Rappahannock Rivers to deter the illegal trade that continued between this area and the eastern shore, but the Treasury Department ignored the request.\textsuperscript{81} The North Atlantic Squadron increased its number of ships used to patrol the bay, reaching twenty-two by June 1863, but only five patrolled the York River area.\textsuperscript{82} In June 1864, that number rose to eight guard ships, but, all in all, few vessels ever patrolled the vast coastline of Accomack and Northampton.\textsuperscript{83} Welles never chose to blockade the Shore.

Nevertheless, action occurred. Whenever a ship from the Potomac Flotilla or the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron received a distress call, Welles encouraged ship commanders to make sail for the Eastern Shore. As previously mentioned, on September 18, 1861, H.S. Stellwagen reported a dangerous situation in Chincoteague, calling for a ship to be stationed there. Explaining that the people of the island were Union loyalists, he implored that action should be taken to defeat the rebels who threatened them, stop ongoing smuggling, and secure lighting of the Assateague lighthouse. Gideon Welles's

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 6, 603.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{ORN}, ser.1 vol. 7, 631.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 9, 54-5.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 10, 157.
response showed his desire for captains to take the initiative, "Can not an expedition be
got up for the eastern-shore counties?"\textsuperscript{84}

In this instance, the Chincoteague expedition went ahead. On September 30, Flag-Officer Goldsborough sent Alexander Murray in USS \textit{Louisiana} to blockade Chincoteague Inlet with orders to remain there as long as possible.\textsuperscript{85} On October 2, 1861, Gideon Welles sent a confidential report to Goldsborough informing him of the constant smuggling into Chincoteague Inlet by secessionists from Worchester County, Maryland, who were bringing in goods from New York to rebels on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.\textsuperscript{86} Three days later, Murray reported a successful expedition in Cockrell (Cockle) Creek, near Chincoteague Inlet, where his men destroyed a schooner being outfitted by rebels as a privateer. Twenty-three Union sailors, led by Acting Master H. K. Furniss, landed in two small boats and met a force of 300 secessionists. They succeeded in their mission and killed an estimated eight rebels in the process. One navy sailor was severely wounded and three slightly injured.\textsuperscript{87}

Goldsborough gave Murray authority to use his discretion when dealing with any boats in Chincoteague Inlet. If a boat appeared to be trading in Maryland or Delaware and its papers were in order, he should let it pass. However, if Murray believed it was trading in Virginia or its papers were not in order, he had the authority to seize the vessel or destroy it immediately. He also charged Murray with protecting the loyal citizens of Chincoteague Island. Goldsborough informed Murray that permits for the people of

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{ORN} ser. 1 vol. 6, 234-5.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{ORN} ser. 1 vol. 6, 271.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{ORN} ser. 1 vol. 6, 278.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{ORN} ser. 1 vol. 6, 289.
Chincoteague to trade with New York and Philadelphia would likely be secured, but, until they were, no trade should be allowed.\textsuperscript{88}

Murray was more successful, but only by using unconventional tactics. On October 28, 1861, Murray reported that twenty-five of his men and five islanders left on a mission to investigate rumors of a steam-powered mill being used to build fortifications against the Union army. The nighttime expedition found a mill but nothing to confirm the reports. The group ventured up the creek and destroyed one schooner and two sloops. The naval operations did well, but Murray desired to move on. He recommended that the men of Chincoteague be armed and organized so that he could be free from protecting the island and attend to other matters, "The activity of my little command is much impaired by the necessity of my close protection to Chincoteague."\textsuperscript{89}

The Chincoteague operation illustrated the Navy's limited commitment to the mission of stopping maritime traffic from the Eastern Shore. Only in case of emergency did a ship arrive and even in those cases, that vessel left for its old station after a few days. These policies displeased the policy-makers in the U.S. Army. General Lockwood preferred that the navy keep a ship on station. On February 6, 1862, Lockwood appealed to the Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, for an armed vessel to be stationed at Chincoteague for "large numbers of unruly men frequently assemble and make hostile demonstrations against the peace of that loyal community." Lockwood went on to say that he had armed loyalist Mr. Caulk with a howitzer and 50 rifles, but Caulk came back and insisted that an armed vessel was needed. Lockwood requested help from the Treasury Department, because he thought it was a matter of protecting the loyal citizens

\textsuperscript{88} ORN ser.1 vol. 6, 335-7.
\textsuperscript{89} ORN ser.1 vol. 6, 366.
and also securing government revenue. Chase forwarded Lockwood’s letter to Gideon Welles and suggested that the navy deal with the problem, “As this is a matter which seems properly to belong to your Department, I refer it to you for such action as you deem proper.” Dutifully, Goldsborough sent USS Albatross to Chincoteague, which seized a schooner in March 1862 – the Elizabeth Anne of Accomac – because it carried improper papers. Of course, the USS Albatross did not linger for long.

The U.S. Navy did little to placate the army, largely because naval commanders blamed the army for causing the blockade runners by issuing too many permits. General Lockwood, eager to live up to General Dix’s promises and placate the citizens, began granting permits for water travel immediately upon following the invasion without consulting the navy. On November 25, 1861, George A. Prentiss, commander of USS Albatross, reported from Cherrystone Inlet the nightly passage of boatloads of men leaving the Shore from Fisherman’s Island and escaping to Cape Henry. Even though the navy knew about the movement, it did little to stop it. Prentiss inquired if his orders had changed since the submission of the Eastern Shore to the Union Army and wondered to what extent he should honor Lockwood’s permits. In this case, he simply let the smugglers sail past him.

When it became obvious that confused naval officers failed to give chase to suspicious canoes, General Lockwood intensified his policies regulating water travel. He ordered that all canoes and vessels be brought within guarded inlets. Any vessels discovered elsewhere would be seized and destroyed. Vessels could operate legally.

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90 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 642.
91 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 689.
92 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 453.
93 ORN ser. 1 vol. 6, 453.
between sunrise and sunset; any boats doing otherwise would be seized and
condemned.\textsuperscript{94} He required all oystermen to sail by permit only, with the exception of
Chincoteague, which he set apart from other communities as an exemplar of loyalism.\textsuperscript{95} General Lockwood granted a permit to Captain John Kelso, a well-known oysterman and
master of the schooner \textit{John Cooper} from the Pungoteague/Hacks Neck area, allowing
him to dredge for oysters and sell them in loyal states.\textsuperscript{96} Apparently, Kelso used the
permit, which gave him a legitimate reason to be on the water, as cover for illegal
activities. A letter from Amos Tuck to President Lincoln implicated John Kelso of
Pungoteague in smuggling medicine and other contraband supplies across the bay to the
Severn River in Mobjack Bay.\textsuperscript{97} Lockwood had enabled the enemy.

Kelso’s illicit actions demonstrated a larger problem. The large number of people
reliant on fishing complicated the enforcement of the blockade. The navy, the army, and
the Treasury Department issued permits to fishermen, but the system lacked coordination
and uniform boundaries. In September 1862, Commodore Andrew Harwood,
commander of the Potomac Flotilla, reported that a schooner he searched near the Eastern
Shore carried a year-long permit issued by “the surveyor of the port of Accomac Court-
House” H. P. Parker. The form looked legitimate, but Parker had no right to issue it.
Harwood warned that the Treasury Department’s practice of allowing subordinates to
issue permits would surely “lead to vexatious complications.”\textsuperscript{98} Such a system lent itself
to abuse and fraud. At first, the navy put no restrictions on fishermen. In September

\textsuperscript{94} “Affairs on the Eastern Shore of Virginia” reprinted from the \textit{Regimental Flag} camp newspaper in
\textit{Easton Gazette}, March 1, 1862.
\textsuperscript{95} Mills, \textit{Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War}, 91-3.
\textsuperscript{96} Mears, \textit{Hacks Neck and Its People, Past and Present}, 38.
\textsuperscript{97} S. P. Lee, January 19, 1863, \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 8, 473.
\textsuperscript{98} Harwood to Welles, September 26, 1862, \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 5, 102.
1862, when Admiral S. P. Lee took over command of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, he established restrictions stating that the catch was for consumption by locals and Union forces only. Further, oyster boats were no longer allowed to pass through the blockade. Fishing boats could go to the mouths of rivers and in the bay, but had to stop at guard vessels where they might be searched. Oyster boats, large open boats with large cargo holds ideal for smuggling, often ventured beyond the designated boundaries anyway, since few vessels patrolled the area.99

Ongoing attempts at smuggling brought frequent changes in the rules that limited oystering vessels. As a matter of business, oystermen wanted to go beyond the outer line to harvest the beds that they had planted a few years earlier. Lee tried to accommodate a few boats at a time, but the situation became unmanageable. Fishing regulations changed too, and were governed different authorities.100 When General Benjamin Butler added the Eastern Shore to his Department of Virginia and North Carolina, Admiral Lee revoked all fishing permits and instructed fishermen to apply for permits through Butler. When Commander Foxhall Parker took charge of the Potomac Flotilla, he began issuing fishing permits once again and allowed his commanding officers to do the same.101 With so many contradictory instructions, watermen simply ignored Union authority altogether.

The lack of coordination between the army and navy was the cause of the Union’s failure to end the blockade running. A sloop owned by James Woodey, an Accomack County resident, made regular trips every eight to ten days carrying goods across the bay to Bluff Point or White Point. Acting Master William Street sent ashore a crew to shore which captured the mainland contact person. Although Street learned the name of the

99 Browning, Jr., *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 139.
100 Browning, Jr., *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 138-41.
101 Browning, Jr., *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 140.
smuggler, he chose not to inform the army, instead hoping to catch the sloop – whose name was unknown – so he could collect the prize money. As Street said, he vowed to “keep a sharp lookout for her.” Because Street did not alert Union soldiers on the Eastern Shore to track down James Woodey, he escaped punishment.102

Union forces were well aware of their failures. A writer for the Philadelphia Public Ledger noted that, “Vessels have for some time past been trading with the Eastern Shore of Virginia, which is now under the control of the U.S. Government, and guarded by its troops.”103 Strangely, this reality has escaped the historians. According to Robert Browning, the U.S. Navy developed a system in which they posted guard ships at the mouth of every major creek, inlet, and river in addition to patrolling the entrance to the bay itself.104 Evidence indicates that this was not the case. A simple survey of the Official Records proves that Union officials struggled to monitor water traffic. The blockade amounted to a wide net with holes so big that it was rarely able to catch its prey.

By the fall of 1863, questions about the responsibility for patrolling the Eastern Shore became too hard to ignore. Rear Admiral S.P. Lee of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron instructed Commodore Harwood, commander of the Potomac Flotilla, that the Eastern Shore was not within the limits of his department. He explained, “I would observe that neither the Piankatank nor the eastern shore, under my instructions, is within the limits of this squadron, whose blockade begins at the south side of the Piankatank. I have got all the force I can possibly spare for that purpose in the Chesapeake, including some vessels badly in need of repair. We are very weak on this, as we are on all other parts of the blockade.” Miffed at the confusion and accusations

102 W. Tell Street, Acting Master, March 31, 1863, ORN ser. 1 vol. 5, 251.
103 “Vessels Seized by a U.S. Cruiser,” Philadelphia Public Ledger, April 15, 1862.
104 Browning, Jr., From Cape Charles to Cape Fear, 5-12.
that laid the blame on him, Harwood wrote to Gideon Welles about the unprotected status of the Eastern Shore and enclosed a copy of Lee's correspondence. Harwood complained, “I would beg leave to draw the attention of the Department to the eastern shore of Virginia as being neither within the jurisdiction of Acting Rear-Admiral Lee nor of myself. In fact, having the guard of the paroled prisoners at Point Lookout and the blockade of the Piankatank and Rappahannock rivers, I cannot at present spare more than one of the sailing schooners to guard the eastern shore.” Welles settled the matter, replying that he had “instructed Acting Rear-Admiral Lee to consider the eastern shore of Virginia as within the limits of his command.” Only by 1864, did the U.S. Navy finally issue a clear directive to patrol the area.

When it came to getting results, much of the destruction of blockade runners' vessels stemmed from actions taken by the U.S. Army. To achieve this, Union soldiers set up camps in a few strategic locations. After the Union invasion, one such camp was established on Pungoteague Creek on Mount Airy, a farm owned by Smith K. Martin. The local militia burned the steamboat wharf there prior to the Federal takeover, but Union troops rebuilt it and used the wharf for shipping and receiving troops and supplies. A camp of about 100 Union troops was stationed there through much of the war. Officers approached the Crockett family who lived across the creek, asking if they would rent out rooms. The Crocketts declined; however, the officers explained that they would be staying there no matter what, and the family ought to accept the money while it was being offered.

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105 ORN ser. 1 vol. 5, 360-1.
106 ORN ser. 1 vol. 5, 361.
107 Mears, Hacks Neck and Its People, Past and Present, 70-4.
The numbers of Union infantry on shore patrol increased as the war carried on. Men from the 1st Maryland Infantry were stationed in Chincoteague, Cherrystone, and Drummondtown and were replaced by men of the 10th U.S.C.T. in January 1864. The 1st Regiment, Loyal Eastern Virginia Volunteers, Company A, played a vital role as a unionist coast guard, patrolling the seaside shoreline for smugglers and rebel activity.

Just as U.S. troops attacked boats on land, so too did amphibious forces work for the Confederacy. The Shore served as the backdrop for many clandestine attacks on Union military vessels, northern ships, and communications. A rash of guerrilla activity flared up in mid-1863 in the absence of General Lockwood. A series of attacks occurred, and General Schenck feared the situation might escalate out of control. On August 5, 1863, William State, lighthouse keeper on Smith Island, reported an attack two days earlier by a group of between eight and nine men who stole or destroyed all the working parts of his lighthouse. They remained encamped on the island, posing a threat to all government property. He felt his life was in danger and believed the lighthouses at Cherrystone and Hog Island might also be targeted.

Hog Island, a barrier island on the seaside, proved to be a hub of the guerrilla activity. On October 10, 1863, Rear Admiral Lee reported that expeditions to root out guerrilla activity between Mobjack Bay and the Eastern Shore yielded only one prisoner, E. McGuire, “acting master of the rebel Navy” from the area of Hog Island. The York River and Mobjack Bay area, another hotbed, served as a common destination for blockade runners travelling from the Eastern Shore. Roving guerrilla bands presented a

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108 ORN ser.1 vol. 33, 402.  
111 Rear Admiral Lee, October 10, 1863, *ORN* ser.1 vol. 9, 206.
constant threat to the Union forces in the area.\textsuperscript{112} John Yates Beall, leader of a group referred to as the Marine Coast Guard, used Mathews County as his headquarters and hideout.\textsuperscript{113} Guerrilla groups enjoyed a great deal of help from inhabitants in the area who provided material support and kept their whereabouts secret. John Yates Beall’s group disabled the Cape Charles Lighthouse and stole twenty-five barrels of sperm oil from Union forces. He also cut the telegraph line that linked Old Point Comfort to Cherrystone. In the summer of 1863, his group broke up a camp of contraband slaves and acquired weapons. They cut the telegraph line between Fort Monroe and Washington, crossed the bay, and then disabled the Smith Island lighthouse.\textsuperscript{114} With two boats, the Raven and the Swan, and eighteen men, he set out to attack Union shipping. In four days, they took seven boats. Beall tried to take his prize cargo to Richmond but he ran aground.\textsuperscript{115}

In retaliation, a combined Union naval and army force combed the area of Mathews County. Three navy ships and four army gunboats patrolled Mobjack Bay, and the East, Piankatank, and York Rivers. Infantry and cavalry searched the entire area looking for the group also known as the “Confederate Volunteer Coast Guard.” Union forces destroyed one hundred and fifty boats they found in the area and captured eighty head of cattle “en route to Richmond.”\textsuperscript{116} Cavalry captured fourteen prisoners, four of whom were commissioned Confederate officers and several were members of Beall’s

\textsuperscript{112} Browning, From Cape Charles to Cape Fear, 125-8.
\textsuperscript{113} Robinson, The Confederate Privateers, 221-3.
\textsuperscript{114} Mills, Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War, 214-38.
\textsuperscript{115} Robinson, The Confederate Privateers, 222-7.
\textsuperscript{116} Major General J. G. Foster, October 10, 1863, ORN ser.1 vol. 9, 208-11.
Marine Coast Guard. The rest of Beall’s group was believed to have gone to the Eastern Shore.\textsuperscript{117}

After laying low, Beall and his group went across the bay again to Chesconnessex Creek on the Eastern Shore to capture a Federal gunboat. They found a schooner and took it as a prize. Beall stayed on the captured boat and sent most of his men to hide onshore. In the dark of night, they chose a hiding spot. In the morning, they realized their position was exposed. An inquisitive fisherman seemed unconvinced by their claim that they were from Baltimore on a hunting trip. In a few hours, two barges full of Union soldiers surrounded them and captured Beall. The prisoners were taken first to Fort Monroe, then to Fort McHenry. In November 1863, General Lockwood, returned from military campaign and asked to see them tried by loyalist locals in Accomack County. The commander at Fort McHenry vowed that they would be tried as pirates.\textsuperscript{118} Union authorities charged Beall with this criminal act, tried him by a military commission, and executed him by hanging.\textsuperscript{119}

Beall’s execution did not end the threat of the “Confederate Marines.” In the fall of 1864 and into the following winter, sporadic attacks on Union vessels continued and the Potomac Flotilla retaliated by destroying thirty-one boats and two scows. Lieutenant Colonel Frank White received information of an upcoming attack but proved unable to thwart it. On February 26, 1865, he instructed the sergeant in command at the Cherrystone Creek telegraph station to prepare for an attack. He requested that the assistant adjutant send two patrol boats from Cape Charles and install a small infantry

\textsuperscript{117} Acting Rear Admiral S.P. Lee, October 3, 1863, \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 9, 207-9.
\textsuperscript{118} Mills, \textit{Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War}, 214-38.
force at Cherrystone.\textsuperscript{120} He asked Brigadier General John R. Kenly in Baltimore to send two companies of cavalry to Drummondtown. He complained, "I have but 250 men, detached at posts over eighty miles apart."\textsuperscript{121} The next day he sent his only boat with ten men to guard the Hog Island lighthouse.\textsuperscript{122}

The marine guerrillas received no leniency from Union authorities, but smugglers did not share their fate. Captured blockade runners received light punishment. For instance, Union troops arrested Thomas Fitchett, keeper of the Cape Charles lighthouse, and on January 22, 1863, charged him with attempting to run the blockade. General Lockwood sent him to Fort McHenry. The Union army held him in Fort Delaware for one month before releasing him.\textsuperscript{123} Considering that Fitchett worked directly or indirectly for the army and was caught defying Union policy, his sentence was surprisingly light. Others caught around that same time and charged similarly also received a month in prison before their release, contingent upon taking the oath of allegiance.\textsuperscript{124} Even though running the blockade was potentially punishable by death, Union officials released most of the perpetrators immediately or within a few days, upon taking the oath of allegiance to the Union.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{120} Lieutenant Frank J. White, February 26, 1865, \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 46 part II, 710-1.
\textsuperscript{121} Frank J. White, February 26, 1865, \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 46, part II, 711.
\textsuperscript{122} Frank J. White to Major W. Hoffman, February 26, 1865, \textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 46, part II, 723.
\textsuperscript{123} Miles and Miles, \textit{Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia: Confederate and Union}, 193-4.
\textsuperscript{124} The following are listed among those processed at Fort McHenry. Lawrence Johnston of Northampton was charged on Dec 23, 1861 and released January 29, 1862. John Miles of Accomack was charged on November 25, 1862 and released December 15. Rea Hall and J. W. Hall, both of Accomack, each served a month in April 1863 for blockade running. Miles and Miles, \textit{Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia: Confederate and Union}, 193-4. In July 1863, the steamer \textit{Reliance} caught Michael, J.W., and Basil Gladdings (all from Accomack County) in a canoe attempting to run the blockade with supplies. Union forces released them once they had taken the oath of loyalty. "Local Matters," \textit{Baltimore Sun}, July 28, 1863.
\textsuperscript{125} Authorities registered Benjamin Beloat of Accomack County as a political prisoner on November 18, 1863 and recorded his date of disposition the very next day. Union officials charged John Corbin with blockade running on June 16, 1863 and released him just four days later. Authorities charged John Fitchett
Punishments took a severe turn in December 1863 once Benjamin Butler took command of the Eastern Shore. Under Butler’s command, accused smugglers were charged with piracy.126 Beginning in March 1864, Union authorities ordered shops to close at dark and restricted citizens to their homes with a nine o’clock curfew. In May, Lieutenant Colonel Frank J. White ordered officials to shoot blockade runners on sight, even those suspected of conveying goods, mail, or spies.127

Butler’s agents took over twenty-two smugglers in a single round up. Provost Marshal Lieutenant Robinson, one of Butler’s subordinates, jailed all of the blockade runners from Hacks Neck.128 Robinson required each to take the oath of loyalty and pay a $25 fine in order to be released. Only one, John Bennett, refused. Federal troops hanged him for short periods in an attempt to get him to talk. Defiant in his devotion to the southern cause, he insisted that he would die first.129 None of the prisoners received the death penalty; however, a month in jail accompanied by a fine and the oath of loyalty sent a message throughout the community that General Butler would not be as forgiving as previous commanders of the Shore.

Butler did not follow through on his promises to execute blockade runners as pirates or to shoot any suspects on site. Punishments during the period varied significantly depending on the circumstances. He probably wanted to capitalize on his

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126 Elijah Hickman of Accomack was charged on November 13, 1863 and released February 4, 1864. Richard Hickman, also of Accomack, was charged with piracy on November 18, 1863 and was not released until November 19, 1866. Miles and Miles, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia: Confederate and Union, 193-4.
128 The following individuals were held for one month in the Eastville jail: John Stevens, Noah Foster, Major Guy, James Kilman, George Trader, Teackle Bennett, James Hornsby, Jacob Jester, John Waterfield, Lorenzo Kilman, John Bennett, Solomon Charnick, William Waterfield, Peter C. Taylor, Samuel Kilman, Samuel Savage, Margaret Bennett, Sarah A. Stevens, Mary A. Bennett. Miles and Miles, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia: Confederate and Union, 193-4.
129 Mears, Hacks Neck and Its People, Past and Present, 74.
reputation as the “Beast of New Orleans” and hoped to scare citizens enough to dissuade them from running the blockade or engaging in other illegal activities.

Although General Butler and his provost marshals wanted to limit the number of smugglers, they often cared a great deal more about collecting fees and taxes. Butler’s Special Orders 74 allowed blockade runner Thomas Johnson to make steamship runs out of Onancock Creek. Although Johnson had once made unauthorized voyages carrying goods and medicine between the Eastern Shore and Richmond, and although three of his relatives were incarcerated at Capitol Prison, Johnson got the privilege because he was willing to pay fifty cents per passenger. After the war, Johnson owned more houses than any other individual in Onancock and ran a successful shipping business. Fees relating to boating became a way of filling the U.S. Army’s coffers. Boats exporting goods to the North for sale had to pay a three dollar clearance fee plus an export fee of one percent. Union provost marshals collected this money which reverted to the authority of General Butler’s occupation government. Butler’s harsh policies enriched the military government and his own pocket.

When all was said and done, U.S. forces continued to feel the sting of failure. Writing on March 8, 1865, Commander Foxhall Parker of the Potomac Flotilla described the problem of illegal activities carried out by oyster boats, “On York River I found that oyster schooners were allowed to proceed to West Point, and to have free intercourse with the shore.” In the same letter to Secretary of the Navy Welles, Parker related his orders to his men. He stationed a vessel at the mouth of Mobjack Bay full time, rather than once a month and he restricted oyster schooners to no more than ten miles up the

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120 Mears, *The Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and Reconstruction*, 402.
121 “Patriarch of Eastern Shore,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, March 5, 1905.
river above Yorktown. Gunboats supervised oyster boats under instructions to allow no contact with the shore or anyone outside military lines.\textsuperscript{133} This strict order indicated that oystermen from the Eastern Shore continued to engage in smuggling goods to the mainland even at this late point in the war. Naval officers wielded authority to determine loyalty of watermen by their behavior at sea, yet they lacked the manpower and boats needed to enforce their regulations.

In short, the Union navy blockade of the Chesapeake Bay never sealed the Eastern Shore as tightly as the U.S. government had hoped. Although large merchant ships did not run the blockade there, many smaller boats did so successfully on a regular basis.

O.S. Glisson, commander of USS\textit{Mount Vernon}, wrote on October 1, 1861, “there are some small vessels running into creeks some ten to fifteen miles above this place and landing cargoes of sugar, coffee, salt, etc. from the opposite shore. The vessels used are of such light draft that they can run up the small creeks where I cannot follow them even if I had orders to leave my station off Rappahannock to pursue them.”\textsuperscript{134} This statement was as true in 1865 as it was when uttered in 1861.

The unique topography and extensive shoreline of the Eastern Shore of Virginia gave those familiar with it a great advantage. Numerous shallow creeks and inlets with unmarked channels created a labyrinth in which experienced watermen could vanish. Unclear delineations of responsibility led to confusion and necessitated a coordinated effort between the Potomac Flotilla and the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Overlap between the army, navy, and treasury saw the departments working at cross purposes. With convoluted, conflicting regulations and ineffective permit systems, many

\textsuperscript{133}\textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 5, 524-5.
\textsuperscript{134}\textit{ORN} ser.1 vol. 6, 297.
smugglers could break the rules in the light of day, making profits for themselves and bringing in supplies that benefited the Confederate cause. Oystermen and fishermen also took advantage of the ever-changing rules, knowing that the navy could not enforce them. Throughout the war, illegal cargoes coming in frequent small shipments provided meaningful aid to the Confederacy. Successful attacks on strategic targets, namely the telegraph line at Cherrystone and the many lighthouses on the bayside and the seaside, broke down Union communication and created navigational problems for military and merchant ships. For all the changes that the Civil War brought to the citizens of the Eastern Shore, keeping them off the water was not one of them.
CONCLUSION

What did the Civil War mean to Eastern Shore history? Lack of support from the Confederacy meant that once the Federal invasion came, the Eastern Shore was ill-prepared to defend itself. The population submitted peaceably. Thus, in the takeover, the people were spared the devastation and suffering that occurred in so many other areas of the South. Due to the U.S. government’s desire to win back the loyalty of Eastern Shore citizens, at first, they were treated relatively well. The Union erred on the side of protecting the rights and especially the property of the citizens. Lincoln and his advisors doubted that broad support for the rebellion existed, and they believed that conciliation would help end the war quickly.\(^1\) General Dix protected slave property out of fear of antagonizing Eastern Shore citizens.\(^2\) Over the course of the war however, rebels attacked Union communications systems and the lighthouses important to Union naval operations and merchant shipping. Under the surface, secessionism remained popular among white citizens.

As hard war policy emerged in the fall of 1862 incorporating fear and intimidation, soldiers took citizens’ property and received no reprimands from their officers.\(^3\) Citizens fortified civil liberties and saw their property confiscated. Emancipation came not through the presence of Union soldiers, as it did throughout the rest of the South. Instead, the process followed the model of the Border States described by Eric Foner, where the recruitment of slaves into the Union army brought freedom on

\(^1\) Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 1-16.
the Eastern Shore. The peculiar institution was wrenched away from the slave society, leaving the African-American population to find its bearings in a system of free labor.

The end of slavery did not cause an upheaval of the social order because as the black population remained an underclass with limited rights for another hundred years. The economy relied on agriculture. White farmers had to employ laborers, and fair wages and humane treatment were not characteristic of the new contract labor system. With increased steamboat service and the coming of the railroad in the 1880s, Eastern Shore farmers and watermen met the increasing demand from the growing cities of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston creating an economic boom which lasted until the 1920s. Due to population increases, large estates were divided up to create more small farms that could be cultivated by two or three men. Between 1880 and 1925, average farm acreage declined from 86 to 46.1 and the number of farms in Northampton and Accomack increased from 2,997 to 4,856. Immediately following the Civil War, racial unrest plagued the region as whites reestablished their dominance in spite of African American efforts to exercise their newfound rights and autonomy. Segregation developed on the Eastern Shore as it did throughout the South. Blacks lived in separate areas and attended separate churches. The Virginia Constitution of 1902 established segregated schools. In 1905, the state imposed restrictions which disenfranchised most of


the African American community. Though no longer a slave society, African American citizens Eastern Shore remained subjugated.

Economic factors and southern nationalism shaped the Eastern Shore’s decision to secede. The long-standing reliance on slavery seeped into the psyche of yeoman farmers, pushing middle and lower-class whites to join forces with the elite/planter class in support of secession. The Federal invasion of the Eastern Shore began an experiment of conciliatory occupation policy. In many ways, the Eastern Shore operated as the first test case of Union occupation. As General Dix reminded Lockwood, “Please bear in mind that the ulterior object of the expedition – to bring these counties by their own voluntary action back into the Union.” The U.S. Army and Navy learned many lessons that helped them elsewhere, but the experiment of nurturing loyalty failed on the Eastern Shore. Though President Lincoln wanted to continue to appease the population, the U.S. Army developed hard war policies which solidified the white population’s resentment of Union domination. At first, it looked as if a more assertive policy would do the trick, but when troop levels thinned in 1863 on the Eastern Shore, outright resistance caused Union control to diminish. Timed with the arrival of the black soldiers, this caused a shift in public opinion from which occupying forces never recovered.

In addition to experimenting with loyalty, the Eastern Shore of Virginia hosted another experiment – Frank White’s contract labor system. Union policies regarding the care of newly freed people shifted from 1864 to 1865. In Butler’s paternalistic system,
the military government taxed white citizens heavily and spent liberally to support the African-American population on government farms established on confiscated lands. By contrast, Frank White instituted a contract labor system based on the principle of free labor. Based on free market concepts, White tried to instill the values of hard work and independence in the African-American population by ensuring all freedpeople over fourteen-years-old had regular work arrangements. Though plagued with problems, White’s system, which minimized costs and involvement for the government, served as a model for Reconstruction across the South. In many ways, the labor arrangements in the South for the next twelve years stemmed from the Eastern Shore’s Civil War.

By examining microcosms like Virginia’s Eastern Shore in the broad confines of the Confederacy, one can gain a greater appreciation of the complex dynamics and processes that shaped the course of events in the Civil War. The Eastern Shore of Virginia found itself on the fringes during the Civil War, yet the events that occurred there are essential to understanding the war’s legacy.
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