

## Chapter 8

### Civil War Louisiana

True to its complex past, Louisiana had ties to both the Confederacy and the Union during the Civil War, providing men and supplies to both sides. Its women, children, slaves, and elderly nursed the wounded and sick, helped feed soldiers from their own gardens, stockpens, and fields, and made clothes, blankets, flags, and equipment for the troops. Soldiers who wore the blue and the gray included native and foreign whites, immigrants of all nationalities, free blacks, and slaves, as well as women, who served as army nurses and *vivandieres* (canteen women).

The Civil War changed life in Louisiana. Some of the state's finest young people—men and women, white and black—fought and died or were wounded; others departed with their units for another state and stayed there. On the homefront the elderly, women, and children had to fend for themselves while defending their communities from frequent raids. Many were left without children, husbands, or parents for the long, as well as the short, term. Some Louisianians viewed the changes that war wrought in a positive light: freedom for slaves, the vote for black men, and economic opportunities for those allied with the Union cause. The war devastated others, especially those who lost loved ones or were caught in the path of opposing armies. For better or worse, the Civil War was a major turning point in the history of the nation and the state and in the lives of their people.

#### Election of 1860

Vote tallies from the 1860 presidential election indicated that in November of that year the Louisiana electorate opposed the ideals of the Republican party yet was reluctant to secede from the Union. A plurality of Louisiana voters chose John C. Breckinridge, nominated by "fire-eating" secessionists who severed their ties with northern Democrats and formed a separate southern Democrat faction. However, the combined votes for northern Democrat Stephen A. Douglas (7,625) and Constitutional Unionist John Bell (20,204), both of whom touted the sanctity of the Union, outnumbered those for Breckinridge (22,680). Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln did not even appear on Louisiana's ballot.

Unionist sentiment was especially strong in New Orleans, where in the November election the vote was three to one against secession. Vote tallies totaled 5,216 for Bell, 2,998 for Douglas, and 2,645 for Breckinridge.

## Preparing for War

Once Lincoln was actually elected, however, sentiment in New Orleans and all Louisiana changed rapidly. One visitor described post-election emotions in the Crescent City:

**The excitement about the result of the election seems to increase fast. The most talk I hear now [in New Orleans] is about the state of the country. Some anxiety appears to be felt as to the result. The Southern people think the result of the election is a sort of declaration of hostility by the North. Nearly every day Lincoln's effigy is hanged in the principal streets and squares. When it is run up it is saluted with the firing of cannon & cheers. Secession is openly talked of, apparently with increasing confidence in its success. (Schultz, "New Orleans in December 1860")**

As early as Christmas 1860, Louisianians flocked to form local defensive units, resplendent with flashy uniforms and shiny, loud weapons. Private military groups included the "Crescent Rifles," "Minute Men," "Home Guards," and "Defenders of Southern Rights." Even firemen turned soldier and organized the Fire Brigade. Convened in December, a special session of the state legislature established a military board headed by the governor and authorized to appropriate half a million dollars to arm and equip companies. Fighting fervor ran high, especially on Christmas Day: "There appears to be about the same amount of firing of guns, crackers and the like as at home on the 4 of July, also parading of military companies, of which there are a great many here, more being constantly organized to oppose the 'Lincoln party'" (Schultz, "New Orleans in December 1860").

By January 1861 Louisiana's political and military leaders were preparing to seize the reins of government from federal officials and to defend their state against a northern attack. As he departed Louisiana in January, the same visitor noted the aura of rising expectations: "The excitement had steadily increased up to the time of our leaving, and 'Pelican' flags were flying in all directions, companies drilling &c."

Governor Thomas Overton Moore organized military units throughout the state. Just before Louisiana seceded from the Union on 26 January 1861, state troops and militia companies seized public property that belonged to the federal government. Five strategic points were identified and taken:

1. the United States arsenal and barracks at Baton Rouge (10 January)
2. Forts Jackson and St. Philip near the mouth of the Mississippi River, which guarded the upriver approach to New Orleans (11 January)
3. Fort Pike on the Rigolets, guarding entrance to Lake Pontchartrain (14 January)

4. United States barracks near New Orleans (14 January)
5. Fort Macomb on Chef Menteur Road, guarding the eastern water approaches to New Orleans (28 January)

With the capture of the Baton Rouge arsenal, Louisiana solved its critical firearm shortage, at least for the time being. In fact, state troops confiscated so many arms that they were able to send some to Mississippi for that state's defense.

## Secession

South Carolina seceded from the Union on 20 December 1860, and in a chain reaction, six other Deep South states quickly followed suit. On 7 January 1861 Louisiana voters elected delegates to the state's secession convention: 80 immediate secessionists, 44 cooperationists, who wanted to delay action and consult with other slave states, and 6 uncertain. The press and public's militant attitude also influenced the secession convention's vote. One of the leading proponents of slavery and secession in Louisiana was New Orleans Presbyterian minister Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer, "the golden orator of Southern Rights." Such popular pressure and a pro-secession convention majority combined to make Louisiana the sixth state to secede, on 26 January 1861.

### Motivations for Secession

Louisiana was an anomaly among the eventual eleven Confederate states in that it had very strong economic ties to the North and logically should have stayed in the Union. Whereas most of the agricultural South decried protective tariffs enacted by northern legislators as detrimental to the cotton trade, powerful Louisiana sugar producers and distributors supported such tariffs. They relied upon tariffs on sugar imported from Cuba, Brazil, and other nations to compete in the United States market. In fact, much of Louisiana's trade in all products was with the northern states.

Like other southern states, however, Louisiana resented northern dominance of its economy. Lower population growth due to lack of opportunity and competition with slave labor, along with less canal and railroad mileage and a significantly smaller, almost stagnant, manufacturing capacity, reinforced Louisiana's and other southern states' sense of economic subordination to the North. Northern firms also controlled banks, access to credit, and major wholesale and retail enterprises.

The slave labor system was a major bone of contention. While northerners touted the merits of free labor and industrial capitalism, southerners argued that slave labor was productive and profitable and that masters treated their slaves better than industrialists treated wage laborers. Above all, slaves represented a major capital investment that owners would not relinquish without generous compensation. Southern political rhetoric revolved around states' rights and the individual's right to property, especially slave property. Southern slaveholders particularly resented federal enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, part of the Compromise of 1850.

Even though Abraham Lincoln swore only to contain slavery where it already existed, the Louisiana electorate feared that if elected, Lincoln would move to abolish slavery throughout the United States. Actually, Lincoln had no power to abolish slavery singlehandedly in a state where it already existed. This perception of a threat to state sovereignty and a "southern way of life" propelled Louisiana's political representatives to vote for secession. A *New Orleans Daily Crescent* editorial shortly after Lincoln's election expressed the sentiments of many of its readers: "The southern people, driven to the wall, have no remedy but that of political independence ."

Many Louisianians, be they white or free black, slaveholders or not, took exception to what they perceived as northern infiltration and destruction of "the southern way of life." Throughout the antebellum period northern reformers attacked the slow pace of southern life, low worker productivity, lack of educational facilities and other public services, and the southern penchant for gambling and drinking, especially noticeable in Louisiana. Northerners attributed most of these deficiencies and bad habits to the debilitating effects of slavery. Southern defenders responded by attacking the cold, inhumane character of industrial capitalism with its exploitation of child and female labor, filthy living arrangements in dreary tenements, pollution, and loud, driving, unrelenting machinery. To many white southerners, the living and working conditions of their slaves compared favorably with those of factory workers. (Of course, they never bothered to ask the slaves themselves.)

The issues of social control and racial superiority also contributed to Louisianians' defense of slavery and decision to secede. At the time most whites, including many abolitionists, believed that they were superior to persons of African descent simply because of their race. Thus, they thought it essential to maintain dominance over the "inferior race." If the institution of slavery were dismantled, whites thought they would lose all means of control and total chaos would reign. (After Reconstruction in both the North and the South whites found ways other than institutional slavery to maintain their position of power.)

When analyzed carefully, the several factors and influences that contributed to secession and civil war can be reduced to the primary component of slavery and the slave system. The southern slave system and way of life were primarily but not solely economic in nature. They also incorporated social, racial, religious, intellectual, and emotional factors that when woven together provided a formidable defense against what many southerners considered to be unnecessary change. Their world was threatened by a modernizing nation. In the end, differences between North and South seemed to outweigh similarities in the minds of contemporary actors.

## Post-Secession Preparations

Following the official declaration of secession, increasing numbers of Louisiana men rushed to organize and join military units in support of the Confederate cause. Inspired by European and African campaigns, the Zouave craze, with its flashy uniforms and style, swept across Louisiana and the rest of the country, North and South. The colorful romance associated with Zouave units helped increase their enrollment.

By November 1861 Louisiana had enrolled 23,577 troops in Confederate service. According to a Richmond source quoted in the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, "the Pelicans have done better in proportion to their population than any other Confederate state outside Virginia" (23 August 1861). These volunteer contributions to Louisiana's military defense reflected the strong spirit of southern patriotism throughout the state, but also revealed and exacerbated the chaos and the lack of standardization that plagued the state's military efforts in the early years of the war. The absence of a central organizing authority cost the state heavily in terms of money, lives, and battlefield success.

In February 1861 the secession convention claimed for its own the New Orleans Mint with its nearly \$500,000 in gold and silver and transferred the Custom House and its funds of \$147,520 to the Confederate government. The convention also endorsed Jefferson Davis for president and adopted a state flag for Confederate Louisiana.

Even with war clouds on the horizon, Louisianians marked the social season with continuous balls, lavish banquets, theater and opera performances, and, of course, Mardi Gras. Comus' theme for 1861 depicted "Scenes from Life" with representations of Childhood, Youth, Manhood, Old Age, and Death. Although slightly less extravagant than previous years due to uncertainty about the future, the parades, balls, and masked revelers exuded a merry, hopeful air, full of high expectations.

## On the Battlefield

### Strategic Importance of Louisiana

Northern strategy called for dividing the eastern and western parts of the Confederacy along the Mississippi River, which formed much of Louisiana's eastern border. The Union wanted to capture valuable Louisiana ports on the Mississippi, such as Baton Rouge and New Orleans, and a string of strategic Confederate forts: Forts Jackson and St. Philip, primary defenses for the Crescent City; the newly and hastily constructed fortifications at Port Hudson; and Vicksburg, key to control of the Mississippi. Louisiana's Confederate forces thus had to defend against both downriver and upriver Union attacks. A Confederate fleet composed of Confederate ships, state ships, and a private river flotilla patrolled the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi River.

Louisiana was also strategically important as a conduit for such military supplies as munitions, foodstuffs, clothing, and livestock. Goods from Mexico and Texas flowed eastward and northward along Louisiana railroads and rivers into other Confederate states.

As a major manufacturing center, New Orleans contributed to the Confederate cause during the first year of warfare, supplying early issue armaments, clothing, knapsacks, tenting, and tinware. The Confederacy's ability to produce manufactured goods was severely curtailed by the fall of New Orleans and Nashville. Richmond and a few other small manufacturing centers were left as the only remaining sources of southern production until after 1863, when Atlanta, Georgia, and Selma, Alabama, were able to increase their manufacturing capabilities. In addition, workers in New Orleans shipyards constructed naval vessels for the Confederacy, including the ironclads *Mississippi* and *Louisiana* and the gunboats *Livingston* and *Carondelet*.

Prior to Union occupation in April 1862, several companies manufactured armaments and equipment in New Orleans. Among the arms makers were Cook & Brother at 1 Canal Street, Thomas, Griswold & Company at the corner of Canal and Royal, and A. H. Dufilho, a cutler at 21 Royal Street. These firms made rifles, swords, cutlasses, and bayonets. Magee & George produced leathers goods at its 6 Magazine Street shop.

## Major Battles Fought in Louisiana

### Fall of New Orleans

Union naval forces established a blockade of the Gulf Coast in the early months of the war and waited just off the mouth of the river. Forts Jackson and St. Philip on either side of the Mississippi River guarded the upriver approach from the gulf. Because Louisiana sent so many troops out of state to support the Confederate cause during the early months of the war, these forts were poorly defended. Actually, they had never served as an effective defense of the river.

Because both Forts Jackson and St. Philip were weak, Louisiana military leaders planned their strategy around an obstruction technique that would halt an enemy advance and subject it to bombardment from the forts. Confederate Major General Mansfield Lovell, who was in charge of defending New Orleans, ordered his men to construct a raft across the river, leaving an opening large enough to admit only one vessel at a time. He hired R. F. Nichols, a New Orleans merchant, to procure chains, anchors, and cordage from as far away as Pensacola and Savannah. When completed, the contraption "consisted of forty-foot-long cypress trees placed four or five feet apart and held by two-and-a-half-inch chains and by large timbers. The raft was fastened to trees on the left bank by chains and to the treeless right bank to capstans and huge anchors buried deep in the ground and buttressed by heavy timbers" (Winters, 1963).

This chain- and timber-raft obstruction gave Louisianians a false sense of security. Moreover, Lovell regarded General Benjamin Butler, commander of the Union Gulf Coast department, as harmless. Disastrous floods in February and March 1862 dispelled some of this confidence. Violent high waters inflicted irreparable damage upon the rafts. Then, over the course of six days in April 1862 Admiral David Farragut, commander of the largest fleet the United States had ever assembled, bombarded the forts, whose

Confederate commander was General Johnson K. Duncan. Impatient at his fleet's failure to force surrender immediately, Farragut decided to run the blockade. Early in the morning of 24 April 1862, under the cover of darkness, Farragut and seventeen federal vessels attempted the run. Though pummeled mightily, they were successful. Farragut faced little Confederate opposition as he sped toward New Orleans.

In the meantime, United States forces under General Butler took possession of the forts. Casualties from this campaign totaled 11 killed and 39 wounded on the Confederate side and 39 killed and 171 wounded on the Union.

New Orleans was the first Confederate city invaded and occupied by Union troops. During the afternoon of 25 April 1861, just one and a half days after running his fleet past Forts Jackson and St. Philip, Farragut dropped anchor slightly downriver from the Crescent City and pointed his guns toward it.

Confederate crises farther north had stripped New Orleans of most of its troops; the remaining forces were primarily Home and Native Guards. Officials, however, utilized the city as a warehouse and central point for Confederate supplies. To prevent federal use of these goods, including armaments, clothing, cotton, and other raw materials, Confederate troops under Lovell's direction transported as much as possible northward by rail, river, and road.

Among items left behind were the plantation bells that General Beauregard had gathered at the Custom House in New Orleans to supply metal for Confederate cannon manufacture. Louisianians had shipped these bells from all over the state. Confederate troops decided to abandon the bells because of their weight. Upon taking New Orleans, federal officials transported the bells to New York, where they were sold at public auction.

At the time, Confederate officials accused each other of preparing the way for the fall of New Orleans. Looking for a convenient scapegoat, President Jefferson Davis strongly condemned General Lovell for the loss, whereas Lovell just as adamantly (but not as effectively) blamed Davis. Scholars today generally defend Lovell: Davis and his officers had depleted the city of necessary manpower and other resources, and if Lovell had not removed his troops in the face of Farragut and Butler's advance, the city most likely would have been destroyed.

On 26 April 1862 Farragut and his marines raised the United States flag over the New Orleans Mint. Three days later he marched to city hall to take formal possession of the city. Writer George Washington Cable witnessed the scene:

**About 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon (as I remember), I being again in the store with but one door ajar, came a roar of shoutings and imprecations and crowding feet down Common street. "Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Shoot them! Kill them! Hang them!" I locked the door on the outside, and ran to the front of the mob, bawling with the rest, "Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" About every third man there had a weapon out. Two officers of the United States**

**navy were walking abreast, unguarded and alone, looking not to right or left, never frowning, never flinching, while the mob screamed in their ears, shook cocked pistols in their faces, cursed and crowed, and gnashed upon them. So through the gates of death those two men walked to the City Hall to demand the town's surrender. It was one of the bravest deeds I ever saw done.**

Bringing up the rear, General Butler and his 1400 troops arrived in New Orleans on 1 May 1862. Butler ordered that martial law govern the city, as it had since March of that year, but allowed Mayor Monroe and his council to continue running the city government.

In her diary entry on 9 May 1862, Julia Le Grand depicted the despair many New Orleanians felt at the prospect of occupation. She also described women's protest:

**A pitiful affair it [the surrender of New Orleans] has been. . . . First and last then, this city, the most important one in the Confederacy, has fallen, and Yankee troops are drilling and parading in our streets. Poor New Orleans! What has become of all your promised greatness!**

. . .

**. . . Never can I forget the day that the alarm bell rang. I never felt so hopeless and forsaken. The wretched generals, left here with our troops, ran away and left them. . . . Of course the greatest confusion prevailed, and every hour, indeed almost every moment, brought its dreadful rumor. After it was known that the gunboats had actually passed, the whole city, both camp and street, was a scene of wild confusion. *The women only* did not seem afraid. They were all in favor of resistance, *no matter how hopeless* that resistance might be.**

. . .

**. . . The ladies of the town signed a paper, praying that it should never be given up. We went down to put our names on the list, and met the marines marching up to the City Hall with their cannon in front of them. The blood boiled in my veins—I felt no fear—only anger. I forgot myself and called out several times: "Gentlemen, don't let the State Flag come down," and, "Oh, how can you men stand it?" . . .**

**. . . The cotton and sugar have been burned; that is one comfort, and the work of destruction still goes on on the plantations. I shall never forget the long, dreadful night when we sat with our friends and watched the flames from all sorts of valuables as the gunboats were coming up the river.**

### Battling for Baton Rouge

Control and occupation of Baton Rouge rotated between Confederate and Union armies. Admiral Farragut and his gunboats took the city for the Union on 30 May 1862. Baton Rouge resident Sarah Morgan poignantly narrated her flight from Baton Rouge on that day:

**I was going I knew not where; it was impossible to take my bird, for even if I could carry him, he would starve. So I took him out of his cage, kissed his little yellow head, and tossed him up. He gave one feeble little chirp as if uncertain where to go, and then for the first and last time I cried, laying my head against the gate post, and with my eyes too dim to see him. O how it hurt me to lose my little bird . . . ! . . .**

**As we stood in the door, four or five shells sailed over our heads at the same time, seeming to make a perfect corkscrew of the air—for it sounded as though it went in circles. . . . We [had] reached the back gate, that was on the street [Laurel], when another shell passed us. . . .**

**It was a heart-rending scene [outside of Baton Rouge]. Women searching for their babies along the road, where they had been lost, others sitting in the dust crying and wringing their hands, for by this time, we had not an idea but what Baton Rouge was either in ashes, or being plundered, and we had saved nothing.**

Another young Baton Rouge woman, Céline Frémaux, described her family's escape under the direction of her mother, a strict French woman. Because Céline's father, a Confederate engineer, was away, the family sought refuge at a neighboring plantation. In the ensuing days, Union gunboats randomly fired upon riverside plantation homes, including the one in which Céline was staying. The family had to flee again:

**An hour later, at eleven P.M., a gunboat was anchored opposite the front avenue and a regular bombardment of the place began. Everybody was called up and dressed. The most precious of our few possessions were all gathered, every vehicle on the place prepared. Mr Dubroca [who owned the plantation] desired all the family to go to safety at the Duralds' place. In great silence the departure was effected. The horses' and mules' feet were muffled in clothes and bagging. The chains of the wagons gave a deal of trouble to swathe and silence. At last we left. Léon rode a pony, so did Maurice. Ma and the five others of us had been assigned to an old carriage. . . . To occupy our time, or for fear that we might miss our next day's**

**schooling, Ma kept us reciting geography, verbs, fables, and mythology. I found it unpleasant but *natural* at the time. Schooling was the *one* thing to Ma, as far as we were concerned. Ma called Léon to ride at the side of the carriage and recite the verb *to escape*.**

In August 1862 Confederate troops attacked Union-held Baton Rouge, forcing General Butler to abandon that city. He feared an attack on New Orleans and wanted to concentrate all available forces there; in addition, Union officers failed to control rank-and-file looting excursions, unnecessarily angering local residents. Butler at first ordered Baton Rouge burned to the ground but rescinded his directive in consideration of the orphan and insane asylums that would be inhumanely destroyed. To increase his troop strength Butler enlisted convicts from the penitentiary. As they left Baton Rouge, Union soldiers pillaged many of the houses, including Sarah Morgan's:

**They entered my room, broke that fine mirror for sport, pulled down the rods from the bed, and with them, pulverized my toilet set, taking also all [the] china ornaments I had packed in the washstand. The débris filled my basin, and ornamented my bed. My desk was broken open. Over it was spread all my letters, and private papers, a diary I kept when twelve years old, and sundry tokens of dried roses, etc., which must have been *very* funny, they all being labeled with the donor's name, and the occasion! . . .**

**. . . The whole talk is about our dreadful treatment at the Yankees hands.**

**. . . I could hardly believe that Abraham Lincoln's officers had really come so low down as to steal in such a wholesale manner. The papier maché workbox [my sister] had given me, was gone. The baby sacque I was crocheting, with all knitting needles and wool, gone also.**

**. . .**

**Not a book remained in the parlor, except *Idylls of the King*.**

Federal troops under Brigadier General Cuvier Grover once again took Baton Rouge on 17 December 1862. Soldiers camping in the state capitol accidentally set fire to it on the night of 23 December. Flames lit the skies above Baton Rouge; by morning only the exterior walls remained. In his diary one of Grover's men, Henry C. Gardner, related the toll warfare had taken on Baton Rouge:

**The town or city of Baton Rouge is or *must have been* a very handsome place. It is on land much higher than any of the surrounding country, well wooded. Much of the town however has been destroyed. The State House, a very fine building, stands in a**

**very commanding position near the center of the town. It bears many marks of the battle fought here.**

### **The Teche campaign of 1863**

While General Ulysses S. Grant advanced on Vicksburg, Union General Nathaniel P. Banks battled Confederate General Richard Taylor for control of Louisiana's rich cotton and sugar regions along Bayou Teche. Banks had succeeded Butler as commander of the Department of the Gulf in December 1862. Taylor, son of former president Zachary Taylor, owned slaves and a large plantation in Louisiana. Taylor's superior was General Edmund Kirby Smith, commander-in-chief of all Confederate forces west of the Mississippi River.

Banks prevailed in the Teche campaign, forcing Taylor to retreat to Alexandria by mid-April. Taylor later withdrew to Natchitoches, and Banks entered Alexandria. At the same time Kirby Smith relocated his headquarters from Alexandria to Shreveport and remained there for the duration of the war. Rather than pursuing Taylor any further, Banks decided to move against Port Hudson.

The Teche campaign was very destructive. In advance of Banks's march, prosouthern planters burned their cotton, while their slaves escaped to Union lines. Banks's men foraged off the land and demolished the salt works at Avery Island, one of the Confederacy's important sources of salt. Writing to his family in New York from a Union camp near Opelousas in April 1863, Private Henry Rufus Gardner recounted his company's activities:

**We have lived on top shelf since we started, subsisting almost altogether on the people. Fresh meat, eggs, chickens &c &c are our daily rations. . . .**

**Paid a foraging visit to a plantation a few days since which contained 1900 acres of fine southern soil as the sun ever shown upon. The owner . . . being with his Reg't. we drew liberally on his stock of corn and sheep.**

Banks tried to minimize his troops' pillaging. According to one Union officer, William H. Root, who resented Banks's efforts during the Teche campaign:

**Gen'l Bank's chief anxiety on this march seems to be to prevent our soldiers from disturbing the property of the secesh [secessionist] citizens along the road. A guard is posted over every house of more than two chimnies till the cavalcade passes to keep the soldiers from taking anything, though the smaller houses of the poor are left unguarded. . . . The men say he cares more for the property of rebels than he does for the comfort of his own soldiers.**

## Port Hudson

Aided by Farragut's warships, Banks's army laid siege to Confederate General Franklin Gardner's forces at Port Hudson the last week of May 1863. Even though Union troops outnumbered the Confederates 20,000 to 7,000, natural and man-made defenses made the fort a formidable stronghold.

Two frontal assaults on 27 May and 14 June did not shake the Confederate garrison at Port Hudson. In the 27 May assault Union regiments composed of Louisiana blacks—the First Louisiana, made up primarily of free men of color, and the Second and Third Louisiana of former slaves—proved their bravery and willingness to fight by making six charges across an open field. Although all failed, General Banks reported to his superior that the black troops' "conduct was heroic, no troops could be more determined or more daring."

Union Second Lieutenant William H. Root depicted the battlefield on 14 June:

**As the day advanced the heat of the sun became very oppressive and it was most heartrending to hear the wounded begging to be moved into the shade, and we unable to do anything for them. . . . Darkness put an end to the scene of conflict and threw a veil over the field whereon lay hundreds of dead and dying.**

Almost starved into submission and subsisting on mules and rats, the Confederate garrison at Port Hudson surrendered when news arrived that Vicksburg had fallen. One week later the steamer *Imperial* arrived in New Orleans, sailing unmolested down the now entirely Union-held Mississippi River.

The siege and surrender of Port Hudson was an important part of the Civil War. The fort was the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River and site of the longest true siege in American military history, in which the fortification was completely surrounded and cut off from outside supply. Located 250 miles downriver of Vicksburg, Port Hudson was necessary to complete the Union's control of the river. Its surrender to federal forces on 9 July 1863 opened up all of the Mississippi and divided the Confederacy in two.

African-American regiments from Louisiana who fought at Port Hudson on behalf of the Union were the first black units in the Civil War to engage in large-scale combat with and against white soldiers. Their actions laid to rest the attitude prevalent among whites that blacks would not fight. Newspaper accounts of their bravery and military capabilities helped convince northerners to accept enlistment of black soldiers in the Union army.

## Milliken's Bend

Louisiana black troops faced a second test of their military skills at the Battle of Milliken's Bend on 7 June 1863. Two new regiments of former slaves and a couple of white companies defended this Union garrison on the Mississippi River above Vicksburg

against attack by a Confederate brigade. The Confederates hoped to disrupt a Union supply line to Vicksburg and open one of their own, but after much bloodshed the federal forces emerged victorious.

In his report Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana touted the black soldiers' courage: "The bravery of the blacks [in the battle at Milliken's Bend] completely revolutionized the sentiments of the army." Both Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend preceded the more publicized exploits of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw's unit of African Americans, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts, popularized in the movie *Glory*.

### Battle of Grand Coteau

Skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces continued in western Louisiana following the Teche campaign of spring 1863. One of the more important of these forays was the Battle of Grand Coteau, fought in November 1863. The Confederates soundly defeated the federals and convinced Banks of the need to embark on a major campaign to bring all of Louisiana under Union control.

### The Red River Campaign

The Red River campaign was the last major operation of the Civil War fought in Louisiana and was a defeat for the Union. In the spring of 1864 Union General Banks resolved to take what remained of Louisiana and invade Texas by way of the Red River Valley. One of Banks's other goals was to capture the thousands of bales of cotton stored along the Red River, which could help pay for the campaign and Union victory.

Banks gathered all his available troops and marched first on Alexandria. Commodore David Porter and his fleet of gunboats and transports accompanied Banks up the Red River. Alexandria's only defense, Fort De Russey, fell to the Union forces on 15 March 1864. They remained in and around Alexandria until the Red River rose high enough to allow Porter's larger naval craft to ascend the river's rapids. Banks's men then advanced on Natchitoches, with Shreveport as their final objective.

As Union forces advanced up the river, Confederate commander Kirby Smith ordered most of his troops in the trans-Mississippi region to western Louisiana. Smith strengthened General Taylor's army after he retreated from Alexandria to Natchitoches but did not dare venture against Banks's troops, assisted by Porter's powerful gunboats, while they remained on the Red River.

Rather than advance to Shreveport by the river route under protection of Porter's gunboats, Banks opted for the shorter overland route through Pleasant Hill and Mansfield. The Confederates erected a line of defense at Mansfield and waited for Banks. An initial skirmish took place on Wilson's Plantation, and the next day, 9 April 1864, General Taylor attacked the federals and drove them from the field. Union troops retreated to Pleasant Hill, where the next day the Confederates attacked again. This time the Union line held, but Banks's losses were so great that he decided to withdraw to his base of operations at Grand Ecore on the Red River. Confederate land forces attacked Porter's gunboats and transports as they, too, retreated to Grand Ecore.

Banks intended to move toward Shreveport as soon as the river rose to a level that allowed Porter's fleet to ascend it. Rather than rise, the river fell, and Banks decided to withdraw from the Red River Valley altogether. At Alexandria, where the water was shallow, army lieutenant colonel and engineer Joseph Bailey designed dams that raised the river high enough so that Porter's gunboats could get over the rapids and into deeper downriver water. Bailey also put together a boat bridge that enabled Banks's troops to cross the Atchafalaya.

### Shreveport: The Final Hold-Out

Holed up in his headquarters at Shreveport, Kirby Smith was the last Confederate commander to surrender to Union authorities. He signed a treaty on 5 June 1865 that officially allowed his weary men to return home, which most of them had already done.

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## Men in Gray and Blue: Louisiana Officials and Troops

### Confederate Officials from Louisiana

Several Louisianians served in the highest echelons of the Confederacy's government and military apparatus. Among them were Judah P. Benjamin, John Slidell, Duncan Kenner, and Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard.

Benjamin was a United States senator from Louisiana prior to the state's secession. Politically, Benjamin was a conditional Unionist who advocated giving President Lincoln a chance to prove his moderate intentions. Nevertheless, he went along with the passions of his constituents, withdrew from the senate, and served the Confederacy first as attorney general, then as secretary of war, and finally as secretary of state. After the Confederacy's defeat Benjamin practiced law in England.

The other United States senator from Louisiana, lawyer John Slidell, also resigned his office to represent the government of the Confederacy in its diplomatic affairs. Prior to the Mexican War the United States government had sent Slidell to Mexico City to try to negotiate a settlement. The Slidell Mission failed, but Slidell's diplomatic experience was extensive and respected, and Jefferson Davis appointed Slidell minister to the court of Napoleon III. Slidell, however, failed to secure Napoleon's support. Following the war, Slidell remained in England. The city of Slidell, Louisiana, is his namesake.

A prominent member of the Confederate house of representatives and one of the South's largest slaveholders, Duncan F. Kenner of Louisiana undertook a last-minute diplomatic initiative to secure British and French recognition of the Confederate States; a desperate Confederacy even offered to abolish slavery. Convinced that slavery hindered diplomatic efforts, Kenner himself had advocated its abolition since 1862. In December 1864 President Davis sent Kenner to England and France to negotiate recognition based on abolition, terms the Confederate Congress did not support. In the face of numerous

southern military failures and half-hearted support for abolition, England and France once again rejected the Confederacy's efforts, and Kenner's mission failed.

The most noted Louisianian to serve the South in the Civil War was P. G. T. Beauregard, the Confederacy's first brigadier general. As commander of Confederate forces at Charleston, South Carolina, Beauregard ordered the bombardment of Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861, thereby firing the first shot of the Civil War. He also led Confederate troops in the battles of Manassas, Shiloh, and Petersburg.

Beauregard, like many Civil War troops and officers, received his early combat experience in the Mexican War of 1846–1848. During that war, Beauregard served as an engineer on the staff of General Winfield Scott and was promoted for his conduct in the battles of Contreras and Chapultepec. As chief engineer for New Orleans in the 1850s, Beauregard supervised repairs to the United States Mint. On 23 January 1861 Beauregard accepted a position as superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point, but resigned five days later to offer his services to the Confederate States of America.

### Daily Life in Camp: Confederate Troops

Over 56,000 whites from Louisiana contributed to a total Confederate force of 850,000 to 900,000 soldiers and sailors. This represented more than one-sixth of the 350,000 whites residing in Louisiana at the outbreak of civil war. In addition, about 10,000 boys, older men, and foreigners served in home-guard units, protecting and policing their homes, neighborhoods, and towns.

### Washington Artillery Battalion

One of the most famous Louisiana units to fight with the Confederacy was the Washington Artillery. A distinguished unit that traced its origins back to 1838 and fought in the Mexican War, the Washington Artillery placed four companies on the field in May 1861. The battalion fought valiantly at the Battle of Manassas (July 1861) and earned the praise of commanding General P. G. T. Beauregard. Further service included the Battle of Second Manassas (August 1862), the Battle of Fredericksburg (December 1862), Gettysburg (July 1863), and the siege of Petersburg (July 1864–April 1865).

A fifth company of the Washington Artillery was transferred to Confederate service on 6 March 1862, just prior to Union occupation of New Orleans. Unlike the other four companies, the Fifth mainly engaged in western campaigns. It fought at Shiloh (April 1862) and accompanied the Army of Tennessee at the Battle of Chickamauga (September 1863) and in the Atlanta campaign (1864).

Early in the war the battalion acquired the nickname "Louisiana Tigers." In time the sobriquet applied to all the Louisiana units in Virginia. Though associated with Zouave uniforms, the battalion had only one such company—the Tiger Rifles.

### Home Guards

Following Lincoln's election and threats of war, Louisiana men rushed to form and join citizen patrols and home guards. Members of hunting and political clubs, veterans of

former wars, firemen, planters, older men, foreigners, and others organized to protect their property and loved ones. These groups had no desire to do more than police their own areas and often refused to enter Confederate service outside the state of Louisiana.

Pressed by the Confederate government to supply more and more troops and fearful of leaving Louisiana unprotected, Governor Thomas O. Moore decreed in September 1861 that all citizens between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were subject to militia duty. Thus, the state militia absorbed most of Louisiana's home-guard units. Foreigners and men over the age of forty-five composed the remainder of the home guards. These units assumed various names, including "Home Defenders" and "Vigilance Committee." By policing the slaves and guarding against Union raids, these citizen patrols defended their jurisdictions against internal subversion and external invasion.

### Hardships and Conditions of Camp Life

The clothing, equipment, and overall morale of southern soldiers deteriorated as the months and years of warfare dragged on, seemingly forever. Early in the war, in addition to arms, Confederate troops often carried with them photographs, hymnbooks, tinware, and hardtack. With more battle experience and less opportunity to replenish their supplies, they kept only the essentials—a canteen, a pan for cooking, and a blanket.

Soldiers gradually, and usually painfully, adapted to camp life. Ironically, by the time many of them learned to cook and set up tents properly, few foodstuffs, utensils, tents, bedrolls, and other supplies remained. As Private Isaac Dunbar Affleck put it in 1864: "A fellow dont know how to enjoy good living while at home, but let him stay in camp a short time and it makes his mouth water of what they have there, and that he too could be enjoying it if not for this blarsted [*sic*] war."

Joseph and William Carson, brothers and fellow Confederate cavalrymen from Louisiana, complained of "our lack of tents and adequate clothing. . . . In general, officers and men alike lay on the ground and took the weather as it came. . . . The wear on our clothes was great and none were to be bought even though we had the money." They even went so far as to steal clothes from Union soldiers: "As clothes were scarce, we drew on the enemy as far as possible for things to wear. These we dyed, generally brown or black as opportunity afforded."

Military rations were fairly generous in the early stages of the Civil War, at least compared to those issued in the last year or two. From near Alexandria during the 1864 Red River campaign Private Affleck noted: "We generally draw three days rations and eat them up in three meals the rest of the time until issuing day we either starve or steal something to eat. The beef we draw resembles india rubber in toughness but is quite as flexable [*sic*]." Many, including Affleck, lived off the land to supplement their diet:

**We get abundance of sugar from the sugar houses around here that belong to men who took the oath [Union loyalty oath], we get it for nothing, and use it freely. We send out every other day and get about fifty pounds which is enough for the whole company. We make blackberry pies, apple dumplings and peach pies, also candy, and**

**syrup which we eat until every one makes himself sick. We have had a few ripe peaches, and apples also a few figs; corn is not quite ripe yet but as soon as it is we will live high and will be dependent on the government for rations no longer.**

Confederate soldiers in Louisiana continually grumbled about the numerous insect and animal pests, especially mosquitoes, that disrupted their sleeping and waking hours:

**The musquitoes are very bad here, worse than I ever saw them in my life, we have had no rest from thim [*sic*] since we have been here. . . .  
. . . I . . . thought I would try and take a nap, but the flies and mosquitoes were so bad I had to give it up as a vain effort. (Affleck, 1864)**

Even worse than mosquitoes were the long hours of waiting in between engagements and during sieges, as Affleck testified: "It is so lonesome here in camp that a fellow will get home sick directly if he does not get a letter occasionally to cheer him up."

To fill the time, soldiers played cards, drank whiskey, sang and danced, and wrote home. In their letters many asked for additional supplies to make their lives a little easier. In a letter to his parents dated 3 August 1864, Affleck included a "list of things I should like to have you send me":

**30 lbs of coffee  
1 hat (sombriero) [*sic*]  
1 pr boots or shoes  
1 pr shoes for Alex [his black body servant]  
1 pr drawers  
2 check shirts  
2 or 3 wallets for mess  
a good pack mule with all the riging [*sic*]  
two good horses  
1 pr of buckskin gloves  
1 pr of buckskin pants  
Some tin plates knixes [*sic*] and forks for mess and tin cups three of each will do—**

**I dont remember what I wrote for, but you can read my letters over and see what there is. But if I continue to write you for the purpose of geting [*sic*] things only you will not want to hear from me often but this will be the last time if I get the before named things.**

## Daily Life in Camp: Union Troops

### Hardships and Conditions of Camp Life

Union troops, like Confederate ones, had to adjust to the life of a soldier during wartime, as Henry Rufus Gardner commented:

**Nothing truer was ever said of soldiering [*sic*] than that it takes a man a Year to get into it & learn the little ways to save himself, and live comfortably. . . . They will have had experience in cooking their rations, and that what causes more sickness among "green" troops than anything else.**

According to the journals that Union men in Louisiana kept, the army supplied them mainly with hard bread and coffee. Soldiers thus had to turn to other sources to supplement their diet. After building a bridge across the Vermilion River during the Teche campaign, William H. Root, wrote,

**the men went right in for forage in spite of Gen'l Banks; and judging from appearances had plenty to eat in the shape of fresh meat & sweet potatoes, chickens etc, etc. The day seemed very long but the rest & feed was just what we all needed. Several of the boys went out and picked some splendid blackberries which they say were as thick as they could grow. I ate about 2 quarts or less of them.**

They also slaughtered cattle, Root reported: "Had orders to prepare cooked rations for two days and a detail was sent out to kill all the beef we needed. Cattle seem to be plenty and everything seems to be as flourishing as it would be any time."

Louisiana mosquitoes did not discriminate; they attacked Union as well as Confederate troops. "I laid down and slept till noon," complained Root, "for the musketoos [*sic*] would not let me sleep much last night." Private Lawrence Van Alstyne lamented, "Mosquitos are the pest of our lives. They hide in our tents. . . . Their name is legion."

Apparently camp life was no more exciting for Union than for Confederate troops, especially during the siege of Port Hudson. Root grumbled, "Time hangs heavy. Nothing to read, nothing to do but lay around and hear the continual crack of rifles and the occasional louder report of cannon." Gardner wrote, "Camp life here is rather dull, too much so to suit us. We eat, sleep, blow and yawn." A few days later, he reported, "We are still lying comparatively inactive, only firing a shot now and then, whenever anything new attracts our attention."

Writing letters home and receiving them helped relieve the monotony of camp life. Gardner described the anxious wait for mail:

**After a long delay we were gratified while camping one night near "Molasseville" to hear the welcome cry "fall in for mail." The arrival of a mail set all in a hurry for its distribution. A circle is first formed around the Officer sitting down and the rest crowd around as best they may. As each name is called, a happy smile brakes over the face of the fortunate recipient, at last all is given out, and those who are among the unlucky go off wondering "what under the sun is the matter," and epithets not very commendatory, are heaped upon the P.O. authorities, while his friends at home are the real ones to blame, who think a man dont need a letter here oftener than once a month.**

### Immigrant Troops

Much of the large immigrant population in Louisiana rallied to the Confederate call to arms. Many of the companies raised in Louisiana in 1861 were composed largely of foreign-born troops, and their numbers were especially strong in New Orleans. Immigrants joined Confederate units for a variety of reasons: a sense of patriotism, concern about job competition from slaves if they were freed, the need for jobs and income from military service, and fear of harassment from pro-Confederate whites.

Units made up of men of French, German, Irish, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Scandinavian, Scot, Belgian, Slavonian, British, and Polish descent were incorporated into Louisiana companies, regiments, and brigades. Among these immigrant organizations were the French Chasseurs-à-Pied, the Irish Brigade, and the Louisiana Tigers. The Thirteenth Louisiana Regiment included French, German, and Italian groups, and the Louisiana Zouaves were composed of French and Italian veterans of the Crimean, Italian, and African wars.

Other units by nationality included:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. French<br/>French Legion (5 companies by June 1861)<br/>Louisiana Zouaves<br/>Polish Brigade<br/>Spanish Cazadores<br/>Tenth and Thirteenth Louisiana regiments</li> <li>2. Irish (with Germans most numerous)<br/>Irish Brigade (company of the Sixth Regiment)<br/>Madison Tips (from northeast Louisiana)<br/>Landrum Guards (Shreveport)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sons of Erin (Donaldsonville)</li> <li>3. Germans<br/>Protection Guards (New Orleans)<br/>Blucher Guards (New Orleans)<br/>National Guard (Baton Rouge volunteers)<br/>Florence Guards (New Orleans merchants, brokers, and clerks)<br/>Shreveport Rebels<br/>Twentieth Louisiana, Tenth Louisiana, Polish Brigade, Avegno Zouaves of the Thirteenth Regiment</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>4. Italians<br/>Garibaldi Guards<br/>Thirteenth Regiment (Zouaves)<br/>Louisiana Zouaves</p> <p>5. Spaniards<br/>Spanish Cazadores<br/>Spanish Legion (with Cubans)</p> <p>6. Greek Company</p> | <p>7. Scandinavian Guards</p> <p>8. Scotch Rifle Guards</p> <p>9. Belgian Guards</p> <p>10. Slavonian Rifles</p> <p>11. Polish Brigade</p> <p>12. British Guards</p> |
|--|--|

### Louisiana Tigers

Immigrant troops belonged to Louisiana's best-known Civil War unit, the First Special Battalion, nicknamed the "Louisiana Tigers" or "Lee's Tigers." Originally a unit commanded by Major Chatham Roberdeau Wheat, the Tigers' reputation led in time to the name being applied to all Louisiana units in Virginia. The battalion was the first Louisiana unit to be engaged in the Civil War, on 28 June 1861 at Seneca Dam on the Potomac River.

### The Foreign Brigade

In response to the threat of federal invasion, foreign-born citizens of New Orleans formed the Foreign Brigade, also known as the European Brigade, in February 1862. This organization acted as a home guard, with its sole purpose to defend and police New Orleans. When the menace of a Union approach became reality, Mayor John T. Monroe ordered the Foreign Brigade to restore order in the chaotic city. He used the brigade to control mobs, looters, and arsonists. Union General Butler kept the Foreign Brigade intact. It continued to act as a home-guard unit, maintaining peace and order during the federal occupation of New Orleans.

### Immigrants for the Union

Union commanders in Louisiana also recruited immigrants and formed foreign units. Willing to fight for whichever side would employ them, Germans and Irish, in particular, joined federal units.

### African Americans in Gray and Blue

Louisiana's free men of African descent formed units to fight on both the Confederate and Union sides. The Union also enlisted ex-slaves into military service.

Louisiana was the first southern state to provide black troops to the Union, and its regiments were the only ones in the Union to have black officers. More African-American soldiers from Louisiana served the federal cause than from any other state.

### Confederate Native Guards

Statewide by early 1862 more than 3,000 free African Americans had formed military organizations—called Native Guards—and offered their services to the Confederacy. These units included one cavalry and one infantry company in Natchitoches, an infantry company in Plaquemines Parish, a unit of thirty free black men in Baton Rouge, and a regiment in New Orleans. Their primary duties were similar to those of home guards, to protect their areas of residence from internal and external threat.

### Motivating Factors

At the beginning of the Civil War many free people of African descent in Louisiana favored the Confederacy, and some continued to support it through the war years. They provided their own uniforms, horses, arms, and ammunition. Some were large land- and slaveowners, who, like white planters, opposed the end of slavery and loss of their possessions. Many free blacks recognized and wanted to maintain distinctions between themselves and slaves or the newly freed. By joining Native Guard units, Louisiana's free blacks expressed their physical and ideological support for the Confederate States and for their hometowns.

### The First Native Guards, Louisiana Militia

Formed in May 1861, the First Native Guards was a Confederate militia regiment made up of 440 free blacks, most of them residents of New Orleans. The regiment had black officers and drilled and paraded but never engaged in combat.

Jordan Noble, veteran drummer of the Battle of New Orleans and other wars, was the organizing force behind the First Native Guards. In April 1861 he placed an announcement in the *New Orleans Daily Delta* calling the city's free blacks together to offer their services to Louisiana's Confederate government:

#### **TO FREE COLORED PERSONS.**

**All Free Colored Persons wishing to offer their services to the Governor, to serve as a HOME GUARD, are requested to attend a meeting, without further notice, over the Carrollton Railroad Depot, on Perdido street, at 5 o'clock THIS EVENING, April 27, 1861.**

**JORDON**

A few weeks later Mayor Monroe and Governor Moore accepted the offer.

### Integrated Confederate Units

Louisiana, unlike other southern states, primarily maintained separate white and black military organizations. A few Louisiana free blacks, however, served in white Confederate units and received Confederate pensions. Among them were Charles Lutz, Jean-Baptiste Pierre-Auguste, and Leufroy Pierre-Auguste of St. Landry Parish, who fought with Confederate army troops at Shiloh, Fredericksburg, and Vicksburg.

### Serving the Stars and Stripes

About 24,000 of the 200,000 black troops who served in the Union army and navy were from Louisiana, more than from any other state. This number is especially impressive considering that much of the state was under Confederate control during the course of the war.

### First Louisiana Regiment

Although initially reluctant to organize and arm free black units, General Butler gave permission on 22 August 1862 to form the Louisiana State Guard, later reformed as the First Louisiana Regiment and also known as the First Louisiana Native Guards.

The First Louisiana was a select force of more than 1,400 free black volunteers recruited statewide, many of them former members of the Confederate Native Guards. Like members of the Foreign Brigade and other home guard units, men in the First Native Guards of New Orleans stayed with their homes and property when the city went from Confederate to Union control. The majority of men in the First Louisiana were skilled workers: 20 percent were bricklayers, 15 percent carpenters, 12 percent cigar makers, 6 percent shoemakers, and 2 percent plasterers. The remaining 45 percent were laborers.

The First Louisiana Regiment conducted skirmishes in the Teche region, rebuilt Union defenses at Baton Rouge, and led several charges at the siege of Port Hudson.

### Second and Third Louisiana Regiments

Both free blacks and ex-slaves belonged to the Second and Third Louisiana Regiments. Whereas all line officers of the First and Second regiments were African Americans, both whites and free blacks commanded the Third. Most soldiers in the Second and Third regiments were farmers or laborers. These regiments accompanied other federal troops in the Teche region and at Baton Rouge, Port Hudson, and Ship Island.

Major F. Ernest Dumas, a wealthy free black planter and retailer, organized a company composed of his own slaves to form part of the Second Louisiana Regiment. Both he and Captain Andre Cailloux of the First Regiment led their troops in the charges on Port Hudson, 27 May 1863. Although the charges failed and Cailloux was killed on the field, General Butler praised Dumas's military skills: "He has more capability as a major than I had as a Major General."

Among officers of the Louisiana black regiments were:

**Captain Noel J. Bacchus (carpenter)**

**Captain Michael Duphart (shoemaker)**

**Captain Louis Rey (clerk)**  
**Captain Alcide Lewis (mason)**  
**Captain Virgil Bonseigneur (plasterer)**  
**Captain Ludgere Boguille**  
**Captain Andre Cailloux (cigarmaker, horseman, boxer)**  
**First Lieutenant Arnold Bertonneau (wineseller)**

### Slaves and Ex-Slaves

As Union forces swept through a particular region, they attracted large numbers of runaway and abandoned slaves, some of whom joined the federal army. Labeled "contraband" early in the war, former slave women and men labored for the Union as domestics, nurses, hospital orderlies, and cooks. Union commanders also organized freedmen into military units, generally known as the Corps d'Afrique. Former slaves also made up most of the Second and Third Louisiana Regiments.

The Union often recruited runaway slaves hiding in the swamps and woods of Louisiana. They and other former slave soldiers used their skills to build roads, fortifications, dams, and canals, repair levees, herd cattle, shoe horses, and act as scouts and guards, in addition to fighting battles.

Slaves also accompanied Confederate troops, primarily as body servants and domestics. Louisiana slaves also served as manual laborers for the Confederacy.

### Racial Tensions and Hostilities

Many white Louisianians deplored and feared the Union's arming of free men of color and freedmen. Black soldiers, in turn, resented their role as manual laborers, employed under conditions similar to slavery. Late in 1862 the British merchant Richard Bentley noted some of the tension between the races:

**While I was in New Orleans two events occurred which would certainly have provoked an outbreak, if the population had been armed. The first was the marching of a negro regiment about 800 strong, down the whole length of Canal-street at noon on a fine Saturday, with flags flying, bayonets fixed, drums beating, the band playing 'Yankee Doodle,' and Colonel Stafford, a white man, at their head. One negro, as the regiment passed the store of his former master, who was then in the Confederate army, shook his rifle at the name over the door, and shouted, "Dat's de man I wants to meet on de field ob battle!"**

### Native Americans and the Civil War

Most Native Americans living in Louisiana did not participate in either the Union or Confederate war effort. They took little interest in the Civil War and chose not to risk their lives to defend slavery or their rights, because at the time they had none.

## On the Homefront

### War: Theme of Everyday Life

Before and during Union occupation of south Louisiana, war affected and dominated everyday life. By the end of the Civil War children's dress took on a distinctly military look, songs with war themes gained popularity, and residents adapted their tastes in food, clothing, and other material goods to correspond with scarce supplies. As early as April 1861 one traveler to Louisiana noticed the influence of anticipated and actual warfare on the populace: "The children play only with toy cannons and soldiers; the oldest inhabitant goes by every day with his rifle to practice; the public squares are full of companies drilling, and are now the fashionable resorts" (quoted in Straubing, 1985).

### Buildings Converted to Military Use

Confederate and Union officials converted several sites to military use. In New Orleans Confederates set up Camp Walker at the Metairie Race Course, and Union officials used the New Orleans Mint and Custom House as officers' headquarters and military barracks. Federals also quartered Confederate prisoners in the Custom House.

Many public and private institutions were turned into hospitals, among them the Deaf and Dumb Asylum at Baton Rouge. Travelers to New Orleans, like Richard Bentley, found hotel rooms hard to come by, "the St. Charles being closed, and others used either as hospitals or as headquarters of some Federal departments."

### Caring for the Sick and Homeless

During the Civil War and for two decades after, Margaret Gaffney Haughery cared for children orphaned by warfare and the epidemic diseases that constantly attacked Louisiana residents. To the hungry citizens of occupied New Orleans, Haughery also distributed wagonloads of bread and flour, fresh from her bakery on New Levee Street. An Irish immigrant, Haughery came to New Orleans in the 1830s with her husband and daughter, who both died soon after arriving in the city. After their deaths Haughery, an orphan since age nine, devoted her life to caring for orphans and other people in need.

In hospitals, hotels, private homes, and even tents, professionals and local residents cared for the sick, wounded, and dying. Conditions in these facilities were awful, particularly in army camps. Phoebe Farmer, a volunteer nurse in Union hospitals, wrote in December 1863:

**A few days ago I visited a hospital in one of our convalescent camps, where the sick are hurried out of mortal existence at a double quick. .**

**..**

**. . . To my positive knowledge they buried more than two-thirds of all the patients that it [the hospital] contained two months ago, and they die much more suddenly than I have ever known them to do in the other hospitals.**

**. . . I tremble for the sick in that hospital and the surgeon in charge will not permit any of the patients to go out to private houses.**

During the Civil War more soldiers died of disease than from wounds received in battle. Entries in Private Lawrence Van Alstyne's diary noted that almost every day someone died, not from wounds but from sickness and disease. In addition, many soldiers with even minor wounds died due to inadequate medical care.

The war left many women and children without husbands and fathers. Widows and other women spent many hours nursing wounded and sick soldiers and comforting the dying during their final moments. Sarah Morgan lamented that she could not do more:

**If I was independent, if I could work my own will without causing others to suffer for my deeds, I would not be poring over this stupid page, I would not be idly reading or sewing. I would put aside woman's trash, take up Woman's duty, and I would stand by some forsaken man and bid him God speed as he closes his dying eyes. *That is Woman's mission!***

### The Struggle for Basic Necessities

New Orleans was one of the main targets of a federal blockade put in place along the Gulf Coast in May 1861. The blockade disrupted and reduced the city's trade but did not entirely close it off. A few ships ran the blockade, reaching New Orleans through Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River. Union officials lifted the blockade when they took New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and the lower river valley in 1862.

The blockade and other war disruptions caused severe shortages in Louisiana, particularly in the occupied and more urban southern part of the state. Scarce items included such ready-made goods as dresses, shoes, dry goods, and soap. Coffee prices rose so high that south Louisianians had to search for such substitutes as cocoa and parched sweet potato and corn.

Because of paper shortages people had to scrawl first horizontally and then vertically when writing letters and publishers had to print newspaper on the back of wallpaper. While engaged in the Teche campaign of 1863, Second Lieutenant William H. Root noted in his diary that he had “sent one Alexandria paper to [his sister] Jennie of May 2nd. These papers are printed on the plain side of wall paper which seems to be more plenty than other paper.”

Even though the South was rich in cotton, it lacked the textile factories of the North. Out of necessity Louisianians returned to domestic manufacture of cloth to furnish clothing for civilian and military use. As the war dragged on, soldiers ran out of equipment. They repaired goods over and over until finally worn out, or they made do with substitute materials.

Cut off from their usual suppliers, urban merchants suffered shortages of almost every commodity. English merchant Richard Bentley described Louisiana retailers twiddling their thumbs in empty shops, waiting for the next rare boat to dock: “Merchants, commission-agents, brokers, and tradesmen lounged about their empty stores and offices until about two P.M., taking occasional drinks with quiet toasts, and then went home to curse the common foe in peace.”

### Free Markets in New Orleans and Baton Rouge

In response to shortages brought on by the blockade and the public's growing anxiety, in August 1861 the mayor of New Orleans, John T. Monroe, opened the first free market in the Confederacy. General Butler reestablished the free market when New Orleans fell under Union occupation.

Impetus for the free market came from the women of New Orleans, who acted as the primary provisioners for their families. By August 1861 the city's needy had exhausted the aid provided by private benevolent societies (especially the Aid to Volunteers' Families committee). A group of three hundred hungry women, frustrated by shortages and government inaction, marched from the Aid to Volunteers' Families office on Gravier Street to the mayor's office at Lafayette Square. They demanded immediate relief, and Mayor Monroe responded by setting up the free food market. By 16 August the city opened a relief center near the levee at the foot of Canal Street. It provided food to people unable to afford it and helped distribute goods that were in short supply. Contributions from grocers, bakers, butchers, planters, and farmers and a continuous fund drive kept the free market in business. In an attempt to gain loyalty or at least peace by addressing the population's material needs, General Butler subsidized the free market with government funds. Revenues from concerts and dioramas (also known as tableaux) gave further support to a free market in Baton Rouge.

### "Beast" Butler: The Most Hated Man in Louisiana Folklore

#### The Man Behind the Homs

General Benjamin F. Butler directed Union actions and policy during the first eight months of the occupation of New Orleans and lower Louisiana. He was a Massachusetts Democrat who later converted to the Republican Party, and President Lincoln asked Butler to be his running mate in the 1864 election. A man of ambition and intense egotism, Butler alienated northern business interests, even though he himself was a millionaire. In both Massachusetts and New Orleans he built his powerbase on the

working class, the poor, and the needy. During the course of the Civil War, Butler commanded Union troops in Maryland, the Gulf Coast, Louisiana, Virginia, and Delaware.

Butler has always been a controversial figure in Louisiana. He earned the undying enmity of some people and the praise of others. P. G. T. Beauregard was the first to affix the negative term "Beast" to Butler's name. He reflected the sentiments of many Louisianians, yesterday and today. Not bombarded or burned to the ground like many other southern cities, New Orleans had relatively little to complain about besides the "Beast" and his occupation rule.

Many citizens of lower Louisiana openly showed their contempt for Butler and his occupation government. They resented his orders against treating the United States flag with disrespect, showing contempt for Union officers and soldiers, assembling in groups on public streets, and singing treasonable songs. Butler sent some to prison for violating these injunctions, including Mayor Monroe, and even executed a few. White Louisianians in general also objected when Butler decided to arm black troops and organize them into Native Guard units.

### The Hanging of Mumford

The execution of William Mumford for treason constituted one of the most infamous incidents of Union occupation and brought the wrath of Confederate sympathizers down upon Butler. Mumford was a professional riverboat gambler who lowered the Union flag Farragut raised over the former United States Mint and then bragged about his act. A court martial ruled this action treasonous, and Butler resolved to make an example of Mumford; in actuality, he created a martyr for the southern cause. Though harsh, Mumford's punishment was completely legal: one provision of Butler's martial law proclamation stated that the United States flag "must be treated with the utmost deference and respect by all persons, under pain of severe punishment."

A visitor to the city in 1873, Edward King, described the Mumford affair and the building at which it took place:

**The Ionic building at the corner of Esplanade and New Levée streets, once used as a United States branch mint, is noted as the place of execution of Mumford, who tore down the flag which the Federal forces had just raised on the roof when in 1862 the city was first occupied by the Northern forces. Mumford was hung, by General Butler's order, from a flag-staff projecting from one of the windows under the front portico of the main building.**

### The Woman Order

Although Butler managed to quiet the city's male population with the example of Mumford's hanging, New Orleans women continued to express their disapproval—and utter contempt—for Butler. Pro-Confederate women of all social stations displayed their disdain for occupying forces through gesture, word, and deed.

Butler issued his inflammatory "Woman Order," General Order No. 28, on 15 May 1862. Butler modeled his order on similar ones passed in Maryland and Europe. The general was most likely prodded into acting by Mrs. Butler, who deplored the "insolence" shown by New Orleans women "beyond endurance."

Short and to the point, the New Orleans "Woman Order" stated:

**As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insult from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans, in return for the most scrupulous non-interference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall by word, gesture, or movement insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation [as a prostitute].**

The "woman order" curbed rebellious activities of local women but made Butler a hated man. Mayor Monroe, whom Butler had allowed to stay in office, denounced and refused to enforce it. Faced with threats of removal, Monroe soon backed down and even signed a formal apology. The next day, however, he withdrew the apology. Monroe's recalcitrance earned him a lengthy jail sentence at Fort Jackson.

### Loyalty Oaths and Confiscation Acts

Butler required all citizens who wished to remain in New Orleans and lower Louisiana to swear allegiance to the Union, just as General Lovell before him made citizens swear allegiance to the Confederacy. Butler then ordered those who refused to take the Union loyalty oath to register as enemies of the Union. All registered enemies had to leave Union-held territory, carrying with them only their personal clothing and no more than fifty dollars.

Butler based his decrees on the Confiscation Acts that the United States Congress passed in July 1862. Butler moved first to confiscate the property of former Confederate civil and military officers. He gave other Confederates sixty days to lay down their arms and swear allegiance to the Union. Once this sixty-day period ended in November 1862 Butler began to seize property belonging to "registered" enemies. He did so in an orderly manner, though, and tried to prevent plundering by his troops.

### Foreign Consulate Controversy

Butler also alienated many of the foreign consuls who resided in New Orleans. He considered them disloyal and sympathetic to the Confederate cause, not a totally unfounded belief. For example, when federal troops forcibly entered the Dutch consulate, they found several hundred thousand dollars worth of Confederate gold. Butler suspected that other foreign consuls were smuggling goods and acting as go-betweens for the Confederate and foreign governments, so he refused to allow diplomatic immunity in the

seizure of Confederate property. Butler also freed foreign consuls' slaves and enrolled these freedmen in the Native Guards. Butler acted upon former Confederate Governor Moore's precedent and enlisted foreigners in the state militia.

### Myth of the Stolen Spoons

The tale that Butler stole spoons and other goods from New Orleanians for his own benefit is largely myth. Well-to-do New Orleanians, those contemporary to the times and succeeding generations, made popular the legend of "Spoons" Butler. These families refused to swear loyalty oaths to the Union and consequently had much of their property confiscated, probably some of it in the form of silver spoons.

Following the war, the federal government investigated Butler and completely exonerated him of any misconduct. Even during the war Lincoln endorsed all but one of Butler's acts. Post-Reconstruction governments breathed new life into accusations against Butler but failed to provide conclusive evidence. Political motivations drove both sides in this controversy and obscured whatever remains of the "truth."

### Emergency Measures to Feed and Employ the Population

To broaden local support for the Unionist movement in southern Louisiana, Butler pursued several tactics, most of which benefited the poor and those left destitute by the war. He distributed beef and sugar seized by his troops to the New Orleans poor, reinstated the free market, and organized massive projects to reconstruct the levee and clean the city's filthy streets.

### A Bath for New Orleans

One of Butler's public works projects was to give New Orleans a much-needed bath. Pro-southern sympathizers anticipated the summer of 1862 with great glee, sure that the deadly, almost-annual yellow fever epidemic would kill off the Yankee forces, their most-hoped-for victim being General Butler. Butler, however, moved to contain the dreaded disease by cleaning the city from top to bottom. He put unemployed New Orleanians to work scouring the city, especially its grimy neighborhood markets. Butler also instituted and enforced trash pickups twice a week, prohibited residents from throwing anything into streets or yards, ordered owners to whitewash their homes regularly, and established a quarantine station below the city. Butler's measures seemed to prevent the disease. Officials reported only two cases of yellow fever in New Orleans that summer of 1862 and no yellow fever epidemic until 1867.

### Education Reforms

Butler modeled his education reforms on the Boston system with which he was familiar. He consolidated the city's four school districts into one to centralize education and make it more efficient and egalitarian and less susceptible to corruption. Butler created and appointed one superintendent and one bureau of education, and he also replaced pro-southern teachers and texts with pro-Union ones.

Butler, however, did not establish public schools for African Americans. Blacks, slave or free, had never had access to public education in Louisiana, and this situation continued under Butler.

### Restoration of Order: Tyrannical but Effective

While under the iron grip of Butler's martial law lower Louisiana witnessed the most efficient and health-conscious administration it had ever had. The "bath for New Orleans," along with strict enforcement of sanitary and quarantine measures, rid the region of deadly yellow fever and smallpox epidemics. The Crescent City almost gained a reputation for salubrity. Thanks also to Butler's local and federal police forces, urban gangs no longer roamed the streets. By late summer 1862 even the pro-Confederate *Picayune* grudgingly admitted that New Orleans had never been "so free from burglars and cutthroats." Of course, corruption continued under Union as well as Confederate rule, but such practices occurred in almost every war-torn or occupied territory.

To Butler's credit, he made his views and actions clear to the populace. They knew where he stood and what to expect from him. Butler's policy stands in marked contrast to that of his successor as commander of the Department of the Gulf. General Nathaniel P. Banks's wavering, moderate policies foreshadowed the problems of Lincoln's, and especially Johnson's, reconstruction plans.

### Role of Free Blacks

Despite pressures and precedents, Butler was reluctant to arm free blacks in occupied Louisiana. He, like many other Union commanders, did not trust the capabilities of black troops and feared alienating the local white population. Nevertheless, a combination of factors finally persuaded him to form the Louisiana Native Guards and enlist free black units into the Union army:

1. persistence on the part of free black members of the former Confederate Native Guards. Almost as soon as Butler arrived in New Orleans representatives of the Native Guards began to petition him for continuation of their organization and actual combat participation, something they had not experienced under Confederate rule.
2. precedents for the use of free black troops in Louisiana set by General Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans and by General Lovell when New Orleans was in Confederate hands.
3. a desperate need for armed forces in New Orleans. By late summer 1862 reinforcements had not arrived from the North, Confederate forces were massing at Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and Baton Rouge, and prosouthern sentiment in the Crescent City was on the rise.

Butler was shrewd. When he finally gave in to demands to form free black Union companies, he did so under the shroud of continuing a former Confederate policy. He

invited all free blacks who served under the Confederacy to join Union ranks, thereby sidestepping the accusation that he introduced armed African-American units.

### Status of Slave "Contraband"

One of Butler's most controversial actions concerned the occupation government's approach to slavery and the status of what Butler in Maryland had termed slave "contraband." As federal forces swept into former Confederate territory hundreds of enslaved persons deserted the lands and homes of their masters and sought refuge with Union troops. Obviously, the Union benefited from depriving pro-Confederate planters, farmers, and manufacturers of their labor and human capital, but what were officials to do with this contraband? Were these persons to be considered slave or free? Where would the army find the resources to care for this "contraband"? On the other hand, to what extent could officers and soldiers exploit contraband labor for the benefit of the Union? What about arming the fleeing slaves and enlisting them in the army?

Butler looked to Washington for answers and found none. The major problem was that the Lincoln administration did not want to take a stand on the issue of human contraband. Antislavery forces advocated freeing the slaves and arming them to fight for their fellow slaves' freedom. Abolitionists adamantly objected to work projects resembling slave labor, such as clearing land and building fortifications. Within Louisiana General John W. Phelps refused to use contraband as laborers at Camp Parapet and pushed for arming them. After much debate, however, Lincoln postponed freeing the slaves and enlisting them in actual combat units until 1863.

In the meantime, Butler accepted all escaped slaves into Union camps and employed them in manual tasks. Faced with declining troop numbers, he even consented to arming and enrolling them in military service. Several hundreds of these runaway slaves, whom Butler came to regard as manumitted, served in the Native Guards. They were at least nominally free even though never officially sanctioned as such. Not until after Butler had been relieved of command of the Department of the Gulf did the United States War Department approve enlistment of free and slave persons of African descent.

\* \* \*

### Conclusion

Controversy surrounding the character and actions of General Butler reflects much of the ambivalence Louisianians felt toward the conflict that tore apart their state and nation. Just as they divided on the issue of secession, they held differing views as to what shape their state should assume as they reconstructed it in the years following the Civil War. For some the future offered promise, for others despair, but for all it proved to be filled with contention, strife, and bloodshed.

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