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DISLOYALTY IN THE UPPER DISTRICTS OF SOUTH CAROLINA DURING THE CIVIL WAR

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From the mass of material that has been written concerning the American Civil War, one fact has become particularly clear: the Confederacy did not go to war as one solid body and the considerable discord which existed throughout the conflict seriously impaired the war effort. An integral part of this dissension was the prevalence of much disloyalty to the cause shown through both desertion and Unionist activity. The existence of this phenomenon is not unknown to Civil War-era historians and almost every Confederate state has been the subject of a study detailing the rise and operation of this opposition to the Confederate state and national government.[1] But this list does not include a study of the state of South Carolina. Perhaps this oversight emanated from the fact that since South Carolina was the seat of secession, and that since the ordinance was unanimously approved by the secession convention, it was taken for granted that the state, *ipso facto*, was wholeheartedly aligned with the Confederacy and that its citizens were avid supporters of the cause.

This is not to say that historians of South Carolina have never acknowledged that disaffection in the form of a desertion problem existed in upper South Carolina. Charles E. Cauthen surveyed this problem and concluded that it stemmed from worsening economic conditions. It cannot be denied that the assertion is correct, but does it provide a complete explanation for the rise of dissension within the state? It is the thesis of this paper that in the upper districts of South Carolina the

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1 See, for example, Bessie Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army (New York:* Columbia University Press, 1932); Hugh G. Bailey, "Disloyalty in Early Confederate Alabama," *Journal of Southern History,* XXIII, 522-528; J. G. DeRoulhac Hamilton, "The Heroes of America", *Publications of the Southern History Association,* XI (Washington: The Association, 1907); Henry T. Shanks, "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia", *North Carolina Historical Review,* XXI, 118-135; J. Rueben Sheeler, "The Development of Unionism in East Tennessee", *Journal of Negro History* XXIX, 166-203; Ted R. Worley, "The Arkansas Peace Society of 1861: A Study in Mountain Unionism", *Journal of Southern History,* XXIV, 445-456.

factor which contributed most to disloyalty was the prevalence of Unionism.[2]

The mountainous area of the state, comprising the present day counties of Anderson, Oconee, Pickens, Greenville and Spartanburg (referred to as districts in the ante-bellum period, with Pickens and Oconee being joined together as one) was chosen as the focus of this study because it was here that the great majority of the state's yeoman farmers lived. It was an area of few planters or slaves and its inhabitants had little in common with the plantation aristocracy which controlled the state. If South Carolina followed the disloyalty pattern of her neighbors this area would become the center of dissension.

It should be noted that although the upper districts of the state contained the greatest amount of disloyaly it was by no means the only area in which dissension existed. Desertions occurred in most areas of the state. Negro slaves were as disloyal as they dared be and Unionist sentiments existed even among some upper district planters. These groups have received little mention in this study, however, because they were few in number and were, at best, a mere hindrance to the state government. It was, rather, the white yeoman farmers of the upper districts who were most often unresponsive to the Confederacy's call or were downright hostile to the cause. It was this group who had no sympathy with the war cause and, although merely disaffected initially, became openly disloyal as the war affected them to a greater extent. As such, the economic hardships of the war did not provide a cause but, rather, a catalyst which precipitated the transformation of these people. It cannot be argued that the resultant desertion from the front and the flagrant opposition to both the state and national governments ". . . seriously strained the fabric of the Confederate war effort." [3]

[2] Charles E. Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War*, 1860-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 176. The terms disloyal and Unionist used in this study refer to those persons who not only refused to support the Confederacy but who actually worked against the government. Disaffection refers to those who were in opposition but were passive. It will be shown that few upper district deserters were passive.

[3] Quoted in Stephen E. Ambrose, "Yeoman Discontent in the Confederacy", *Civil War History*, VII, 259. For examples of S. C. disloyalty, see William Burson, *A Race for Liberty* (Wellsville, Ohio: W. G. Foster, Printer, 1867), Chapter VII; Morgan E. Dowling, *Southern Prisons* (Detroit: William Graham, 1870), 283; William B. Hesseltine, "The Underground Railroad from Confederate Prisons to East Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society Publications*, No. 2 (1930), 65; John W. Deforrest, *A Union Officer in Reconstruction*, ed. by James H. Croushire and David M. Potter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 165.

As the Unionist sentiment which prevailed in the mountain areas of other Confederate States prior to 1860 was instrumental in developing opposition to the war, so too was it a factor in ante-bellum northwestern South Carolina. That area had a long history of opposition to any measures which hindered the Palmetto state's relationship to the federal union. During the nullification controversy of 1832-1833, in which the state had nullified the federal tariff law and rejected the federal system, the farmers of Greenville and Spartanburg districts remained staunchly loyal to the Union and were ready to gather enough men to march to Columbia and offer armed resistance to the nullifiers. A confrontation was averted largely through the efforts of Benjamin F. Perry, a prominent Greenville lawyer and newspaperman who urged that all legal means should first be attempted before force was used. The eventual settlement of the controversy ended the possibility of a confrontation.[4]

The citizens of the upcountry continued to remain in sympathy with the federal government until the first shots of the war were fired at Fort Sumter. During the discussion of whether or not the state's delegates should bolt the 1860 Democratic convention in Charleston if a platform not in harmony with Southern demands were adopted, upcountry newspapers, particularly the *Keowee Courier,* Spartanburg *Express* and the Greenville *Southern Patriot,* vehemently opposed such a tactic. The *Courier* noted that the entire area was opposed to such a move and to the whole secession issue. Prior to the calling of the state secession convention that same paper urged its readers not to be so hasty, and to see what the rest of the South would do after the election of Lincoln. It was the general consensus of the upper districts that ". . . the majority were far from believing that they reap only misfortune and injury in the Union and that prosperity and blessing was to be had only in South Carolina setting up for herself." [5] And while the Unionist candidates for the secession convention were defeated in these areas, their loss was due to the fire-eating statements by ardent secessionists concerning loss of yeoman

[4] E. R. Seabrook, "The Poor Whites of the South", *Galaxy,* IV, 689; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 315-316. An indication of area attitude was that the "Dark Corner" section in upper Greenville District gave the nullification candidates to the December, 1832, convention only one vote out of 170 cast (see Lillian A. Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), p. 487.)

[5] Quoted in Lillian A. Kibler, "Unionist Sentiment in South Carolina in 1860", *Journal of Southern History* IV, 355; *Ibid.,* 346; *Pickens, S. C., Keowee Courier,* March 31, November 10, 1860, 2.

supremacy to the Negro. Nevertheless, even after the delegates had been chosen, a public meeting was held in Spartanburg to urge the convention to postpone its meeting for at least a month and await further developments.[6]

Much of the credit for the upcountry's eventually siding with the Confederacy must be given to Benjamin F. Perry. Although Unionist in sentiment, he elected to go along with his state and this stand by the area's most renowned figure encouraged many others to do likewise. When South Carolina issued a call for troops the upper districts, particularly Greenville's Dark Corner, were notably hesitant in their response. It was even said that approximately 600 men from the Dark Corner gathered at Greenville with the intention of marching to the capital and compelling the state to re-enter the Union. Perry was asked to quell this dissension and encourage the men to support the Confederacy. In a speech of May 20, 1861, to 200-300 Unionist sympathizers in upper Greenville District he told the men that the state had acted and they, like he, had no other choice but to obey her commands. His tactic succeeded and, as he noted, "more than two-thirds of (2) volunteer companies now in service to the state, from the upper portion of Greenville, were old Union men." [7] State officials noted Perry's influence with the citizens of this area and used this factor, along with the Negro superiority tactic, in their recruitment of soldiers. Through this strategy Pickens contributed 14 companies, Spartanburg 24 companies, and Greenville over 2,000 volunteers to Confederate service.

But many yeoman farmers had not completely forgotten their original sympathies and soon the spectre of an encroaching foe, the ignorance of the real issues at stake and the influence of the planter-oriented government would cease to instill patriotism. By September, 1861, Perry's attempts at recruitment in the Dark Corner area met with little success and upcountry volunteers declined markedly. A fugitive Yankee soldier named John Ennis also learned that Unionism was extant in the area. An officer of the 79th Highland Regiment, New York Militia, he was captured at First Manassas and imprisoned in Charleston and in Columbia, where he escaped in February, 1862. He proceeded through Unionville and Spartanburg and was directed by Negroes to the cabin of a white Unionist in upper Spartanburg District. The man told him that sympathy for the Union cause was prevalent in the area and that

[6] Kibler, "Unionist Sentiment", 361; *New York Tribune,* December 11, 1860, 6.

[7] Quoted in *Keowee Courier,* June 1, 1861, p. 1; Kibler "Unionist Sentiment", 351; John W. DeForrest, "Chivalrous and Semi-Chivalrous Southrons," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine,* XXVII, 341.

the citizens were passive mainly because of government coercion. He noted that his sons had been forced into the army and that several of the local citizens had been hanged or tarred and feathered for their Unionist sympathies. The man fed and hid Ennis and mapped a route across the mountains to other sympathizers in Tennessee.[8]

Thus, while it may be said that during the first year of the war little overt disloyalty existed in upper South Carolina, disaffection existed to a great degree and would need only a small spark to fire the spirit of open revolt. Such sparks would be provided by the Confederate government during 1862-63. The implementation of conscription acts with unfair exemption provisions, coupled with the harsh and uncertain life of a soldier in the Confederate service turned many against the government. Also, the scourges of inflation, speculation, impressment of supplies, tax-in-kind laws and the increasingly worsening economic plight of the families left behind affected not only soldiers but civilians as well.

The imposition of all these hardships upon the upcountry farmer produced a condition which the late historian, Frank L. Owsley, termed "defeatism". Any initial enthusiasm for the war had dimmed, and anger against the Yankee foe was too transient a factor to provide a basis for a protracted war. The glory of the war faded especially fast for the upper district farmers because they never endorsed the conflict. Conscription and the economic plight of the people served only as catalysts to transform disaffection into open disloyalty. By 1863 most decided they would rather die at home than be dragged forth to do battle for such a cause. The prevailing opinion among the farmers of the area was not only against the war but against the Confederacy in general. Lieutenant Alonzo Cooper, a Union escapee from Columbia, described the mood which had developed when he told of a family which gave him shelter near Walhalla:

> The woman was quite bitter towards the Confederacy on account of her son having been conscripted and her being left alone, with no one to work her farm or care for her children. She was too poor to hire the work done, and was obliged to do all that was done towards supporting herself and the children as her son's pay scarcely amounted to enough to keep him in tobacco,

[8] Seabrook, *op. cit.*, 688-689; William J. Rivers, *Rivers Account of the Raising of Troops in South Carolina* (Columbia: The Bryan Printing Company, 1899), 31; Kibler, "Unionist Sentiment", 352; John W. Ennis, *Adventure in Rebeldom: Ten Months Experience of Prison Life* (New York: Business Mirror Printers, 1863), 11, 15, 25, 32; Georgia L. Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), 136.

and left nothing towards the support of his mother and a family of small children.[9]

It was in these people that dormant Unionism again came to life during the latter half of the war.

A graphic example of the effect of disloyalty-promoting factors upon the upcountry farmer-soldiers would be the trials and tribulations of Evans' Brigade. Brigadier General Nathan George "Shanks" Evans was given command of a brigade following his victory at the Battle of Balls Bluff in October, 1861. The unit consisted of: Holcombe's Legion, an infantry unit from Spartanburg District; the Seventeenth South Carolina Volunteer Regiment composed of men from throughout the upper districts; the Eighteenth S.C.V. Regiment from Spartanburg and Union Districts; the Twenty-Second S.C.V. Regiment from Spartanburg, Pickens and Greenville Districts; and the Twenty-Third S.C.V. Regiment from the Greenville District. This brigade, composed almost entirely of upper district yeoman farmers, originally numbered approximately 2,000 men. These units were pressed into Confederate service in late 1861 and it was not long before the men were tired of the war. The brigade was sent to so many different places that it became known as the "tramp brigade". In the battle of Second Manassas the Seventeenth Regiment lost 306 of its 444 men, a casualty rate of 69 per cent. Morale was further weakened because of Evans' subordinates' dislike of their commanding officer and Evans' own frequent absences and intoxication. The strain began to show early and Evans reported to Lee after the battle of Antietam in September, 1862, that only 120 men of his brigade were present for duty.[10]

The men of Evans' Brigade lost all interest in the war by the spring of 1863 because of worsening conditions at home and a like situation within the unit. The brigade was defeated at Kinston, North Carolina, in November 1862, and in the ensuing argument over who should shoulder the blame Evans court-martialed the commander of the Seventeenth Regiment. The last straw came when, after being sent to Charleston to re-

[9] Quoted in Alonzo Cooper, *In and Out of Rebel Prisons* (Oswego, New York: E. J. Oliphant, Job Printer, 1888), p. 167; Frank L. Owsley, "Defeatism in the Confederacy", *North Carolina Historical Review* III, 446-448; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records in the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Serial IV, II, 772. (Hereafter cited as *O.R.*)

[10] Thomas N. Spaulding, "Nathan George Evans" in Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, *Dictionary of American Biography*, III (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), 207, Rivers, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23; *O.R.*, Serial I, XXVII, Part II, 587; W. H. Edwards, *A Condensed History of the Seventeenth Regiment* (Columbia, S. C.: The R. L. Bryan Company, 1908), 18; *O.R.*, Serial I, XIX, Part I, p. 143.

cuperate from the long and hard campaign outside the state's borders, the brigade was ordered on May 11, 1863, by Department Commander P.G.T. Beauregard to Jackson, Mississippi to reinforce Joseph E. Johnston's Forces. When news of the transfer was conveyed to the ranks, insubordination was rife and many left the troop train on its journey to Jackson. In fact, when Evans reached his destination he had only half the number which had embarked on the train, and he was forced to appeal for the troops' return in upper district newspapers. Two years away from home combined with other hardships had broken the morale of the farmer-soldier and "the order to go forward to the west was the signal for a general desertion".[11]

The changed attitude of the upper district farmers had a profound effect upon the fighting capability of the South Carolina troops. This is evidenced by a brigade inspection report of October, 1863. All regiments of Evans' Brigade displayed a severe lack of discipline, with the Twenty-Second (from Pickens, Greenville and Spartanburg) far behind the others. According to one roll call, the Twenty-Third (from Greenville) had only 4 of its 297 men present for duty. Beauregard noted that the brigade was in such bad shape that it should either be separated or completely reorganized. In effect, Evans' Brigade was no longer a fighting unit. The reason for this can be directly attributed to the increasing disaffection by the men who composed the unit.[12]

The fate of Evans' Brigade was not an isolated incident. The Sixteenth South Carolina Volunteer Regiment, composed of soldiers from Greenville District, was also ordered to Jackson as part of States Rights Gist's Brigade, but many of its men never completed the trip. They preferred, rather, to return to their homes. The unit was so depleted that it had to be replaced by the Fourteenth Mississippi Regiment. In February, 1864, it was reported that a large portion of the Fourth S.C.V. Regiment and three companies of the Third Regiment, composed of troops from Greenville, Pickens and Anderson Districts, had also deserted. Thus, by the middle of 1863 a great majority of the upper district farmers had decided that they wanted no part of the war and that they would resist its encroachment upon them.[13]

[11] Quoted in *O.R.*, Serial IV, II, 769; Edwards, *op. cit.*, 28-32; Douglas S. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command,* II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 478.

[12] *O.R.*, Serial I, XXVIII, Part II, 585-590.

[13] John S. Taylor, *Sixteenth South Carolina Regiment, CSA* (Greenville, S. C.: Greenville County Confederate Centennial Commission, 1964), pp. 10-12; Clement A. Evans, ed., *Confederate Military History,* V (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 208-209, 398; *O.R.*, Serial I, XXV, Part I, 560-561.

The fact that actual disloyalty, and not merely disaffection, was indeed present among the farmer-soldiers of northwestern South Carolina was vividly borne out in an August, 1863, conscription report from Major John S. Ashmore, chief Enrolling Officer for the Pickens, Spartanburg and Greenville Districts, to Colonel John S. Preston, Confederate Superintendent of Conscripts. As early as June, 1863, the Confederate government acknowledged that problems of disloyalty existed in the northwestern corner of the state as well as in other states, but this report revealed the true seriousness of the situation. Ashmore noted that deserters entering the area were daily increasing in numbers. The majority of the Twenty-Second Regiment was in the mountains above Greenville, and even deserters from Clingman's Brigade in North Carolina were coming over into the state. Local newspapers contained numerous deserter advertisements for both officers and enlisted men. "It was not at all uncommon for squads of ten to fifteen to come in from the army, having made their way across the country on foot and generally bringing their arms."[14] It was reported that many of these deserters had planned to return to their units, but when they saw the deplorable conditions at home they decided to stay. They now numbered over 1,000 and controlled an area 60 by 40 miles and 150 miles of the border with North Carolina. The deserters received active aid from their families and few people in the area were unwilling to hide deserters or counsel others to desert. No one would volunteer any information to soldiers seeking to capture the runaways. The spirit of the people was so anti-government that the deserters became quite bold. Groups of 40 to 50 would set out guards and work their farms in common, using traveling threshing machines. They would openly distill liquor, cut logs and mend fences. For their own protection, the deserters organized into armed bands and had definite meeting places. The area was prepared to resist the Confederate authorities and it was reported that at Gowensville, northeast of Greenville, a heavy log building loopholed for defense had been constructed by the deserters. This fort was evidently a serious menace, for Ashmore requested that a six-pounder be provided to destroy the blockhouse. It was noted that a band of deserters had fortified an island in the Broad River in the Spartanburg District. Ashmore concluded that "nothing but prompt and determined action can save us from ruin in the mountains of Greenville, Pickens, and Spartanburg."[15]

[14] Quoted in *O.R.*, Serial IV, p. 770; *Ibid.*, 773; Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (New York: The Century Company, 1928), p. 25; Spartanburg, S. C., *Carolina Spartan*, August 13, 20, 1863, 2.

[15] Quoted in *O.R.*, Serial IV, II, p. 773; *Ibid.*, 769-773; Lonn *op. cit.*, 69-75.

The conscription report was a veritable bombshell and jolted Confederate and state government leaders into action. John A. Campbell, Assistant Secretary of War, stated in September, 1863, that the condition of things in the mountain districts of South Carolina ". . . menaces the existence of the Confederacy as fatally as either of the armies of the United States".[16] This same month President Davis recommended that a general officer be stationed in the mountain area of North and South Carolina to control deserters. Because of the trouble in South Carolina and other states, the Confederate Congress, in February, 1864, authorized Davis to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in order to combat the threat of disloyalty. In October, 1864, the governors of Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi met to discuss ways of ending the menace. They recommended harsher laws, but by then it was too late for any measure to alleviate the problem.[17]

Somewhat firmer action was taken by state officials. Governor Milledge L. Bonham was horrified by the Ashmore report and immediately wrote to Governor Vance of North Carolina concerning the situation. He noted the increased resistance offered by the deserters and felt that the problem in South Carolina was only slightly less than that in her sister state. Responding to a plea of Major C. D. Melton, State Commandant of Conscripts, for a company of troops to apprehend the deserters and to the pleas of a Greenville loyal citizens committee for protection from the disloyal elements, Bonham also sent Boykin's Rangers into the Greenville area. He also asked Beauregard for a regiment of infantry to aid the state troops. These forces achieved only spotty success and it was not until a concentrated effort in May and June, 1864, that a force managed to partially suppress the violence and apprehend some deserters.

The greatest single act by South Carolina to control disloyalty in the mountain districts was the enactment of a stringent deserter law in December, 1863. The law provided that the local sheriff would now assist the enrolling officers in the apprehension of deserters. Significantly, it also stated that sheriffs who would not cooperate with the authorities were liable to a $100 dollar fine for each offense. The law further provided for a punishment of one year in prison and a $500 dollar fine for any person caught harboring, aiding, or even encouraging deserters. Al-

[16] Quoted in *O.R.*, Serial II, 786.

[17] John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, II, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott and Company, 1866), 46; Clement Eaton, *A History of the Southern Confederacy* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1954), 58; Lonn, *op. cit.*, 112.

though this legislation was aimed at deserters its language indicated that it was also aimed at the numerous disloyal persons in the up-country.[18]

These measures did not succeed, however, in ending the disloyalty problem in the mountain districts. In March, 1864, the Charleston *Courier* reported that deserter bands posing as Morgan's Cavalry were stealing livestock near the Pickens District towns of Pendleton and Walhalla. Three months later that same paper, quoting a Greenville *Southern Enterprise* article, reported that deserters were very prevalent in the upper portion of Greenville District. They were stealing from everyone, but were especially bothersome because they were *burning and looting the property of rebel supporters.*[19]

From the above evidence it no longer can be said that there was only a minor deserter problem in South Carolina. Furthermore, it can definitely be linked to the Unionist position of the area's yeoman farmers who initially supported the war but eventually returned to their original positions. It is also evident that there were more than just a few recalcitrants and that they were definitely not treated with scorn by their peers.

Although the situation in the upper districts was bad in the latter part of 1863, it became even worse in 1864 and 1865. Not only did desertions continue to grow but overt disloyalty increased greatly. In January, 1864, Major Ashmore report that a Unionist meeting was to be held on January 23 in Anderson District. Conscription patrols continued to have a difficult time apprehending the mountain draftees who fled into the Blue Ridge. Those who were inducted deserted almost immediately; others resisted the Confederates bodily. John William De Forrest, a Union officer with the Freedman's Bureau in Greenville after the war, was told of several Unionists who were shot when they fought with conscription officers and heard that most of the people in the Dark Corner were in open rebellion against the authorities.[20]

The prevalent Unionist attitude of the area was further evidenced in the latter part of 1864 when the upper district farmers had an oppor-

[18] Letters, Bonham to Vance, August 22, 1863, and Vance to Bonham, August 26, 1863, Milledge L. Bonham Papers (South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina), Box 6; *O.R.*, Serial IV, II, 770; Milledge Louis Bonham, "Life and Times of M. L. Bonham" (Unpublished Biography in Bonham Papers [N. D.]), 680-681; *O.R.*, Serial I, LIII, 342; *Ibid.*, Serial I, XXXV, Part II, 478; *Acts of the General Assembly of South Carolina*, December, 1863, No. 4666, pp. 177-178; *Carolina Spartan*, October 29, 1863, 1.

[19] Charleston, S. C. *Daily Courier*, March 23, June 22, 1864, 1.

[20] *O.R.*, Serial I, XXXV, Part I, p. 536; DeForrest, *A Union Officer in Reconstruction*, VI, 37; *Idem.*, "Chivalrous Southrons", 341, 344.

tunity to aid escaping Union soldiers. The mountain people harbored many former Yankee prisoners and acted as guides to spirit the escapees through rebel lines and into North Carolina. It was well known that white "Tories" existed in these areas and De Forrest saw many of the notes of appreciation given by grateful soldiers to those who gave assistance.

The reason South Carolina prisoners did not escape prior to this time was that prior to the fall of 1864, there were no large prisoner-of-war camps in the state. But after Sherman's army reached Atlanta, the government became worried about the safety of the officer's prison at Macon and the enlisted men's prison at Andersonville, and in the summer of 1864, the prisoners were moved to Savannah and eventually to Charleston. An outbreak of yellow fever in Charleston dictated that the prisoners be moved elsewhere. Camps were established in Florence and Columbia. The stockade in Florence, for enlisted prisoners, was elaborately built and located near a swamp and only a few managed to escape. Those who did generally fled toward North Carolina, hoping to find Unionists who could guide them to the mountains and safety. The prison in Columbia was another story. Located approximately one and one-half miles from the city in what is present-day Lexington County, the camp was an uncompleted stockade in the middle of an open field, surrounded by a line of guards. As the camp had been hurriedly constructed, there were no stockade walls. The main restraining force was a "dead-line" which, if crossed, would mean death to the offender. Unfortunately, Camp Sorghum, so named by the inmates because sorghum molasses was their principal ration, lacked a sufficient guard force and was arranged so that the prisoners had to cross the dead-line to gather firewood and perform work chores. These conditions made the camp an escapee's dream and provided more opportunities for escape than any other Confederate prison.[21]

An additional and undoubtedly the most important reason for the large number of escapees from Columbia was the fact that help was nearby. Most fugitives possessed no food, clothing or money and needed assistance from the local population if they were to make good their escape. They received this aid from Negro slaves in the midlands area and from white Unionists in the upper districts. Unlike the Copperheads of the North, the slaves and Unionists of the South were not organized

[21] DeForrest, "Chivalrous Southrons", 341-342; Bonham Biography, 703; A. O. Abbott, *Prison Life in the South* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1865), 24; Hesseltine, *op. cit.*, 60; Michael Egan, *The Flying Gray-Haired Yank: or the Adventures of a Volunteer* ([N.P.]: Hubbard Brothers, 1888), 220.

enough to plot escapes but once the prisoners were loose they were usually aided by these people.

When a prisoner escaped from Camp Sorghum he had a choice of either heading for Augusta in an attempt to make contact with units of Sherman's army or going to Knoxville, which by 1864 was in Union hands. The latter route was the longer of the two, but it was preferred because the escapees were assured of Unionist assistance once they reached the mountain area. There was no such help on the Augusta Road.[22]

That the escapees did, indeed, receive help from mountain district whites can be ascertained by consulting the narratives which the fugitives wrote concerning their exploits. One such account was that of Lieutenant Hannibal A. Johnson of the Third Maine Infantry Regiment who was captured in the Wilderness in May, 1864. He was taken to Macon and then to Columbia, where he escaped on November 21. Assisted by Negro slaves he made his way through Ninety-Six and by December 13 was near Pumpkintown in Pickens District. He became lost, but fortunately came upon the cabin of a Union woman named Prince who assisted him in every way possible when she learned that he was an escaping prisoner. She told him that her husband was a Union man but that he had been forced to enter the army and was killed in battle. After Johnson had rested, Mrs. Prince led him to a camp of Union men and deserters at the base of the Blue Ridge. These men, who had notified the area farmers to be on the lookout for escapees, then guided Johnson to other partisans in North Carolina and eventually he was taken to Tennessee. Before he crossed the border he stayed with two more Pickens District Unionist families. Interestingly enough, Johnson returned to the area after the war with the Union occupation troops and again met the Prince woman.[23]

[22] Hesseltine, *op. cit.*, 58-59, 63, 56; Willard W. Glazer, *The Capture, The Prison Pen and the Escape* (Hartford, Conn.: H. E. Goodwin, 1868), 202. Although Glazer made this statement he did not follow his own advice. He attempted to reach Augusta and was captured.

[23] Johnson, *op. cit., passim.*, 37-39. It is understandable that the reader might question the validity of these accounts as they were memoirs written after the war and in many cases were characterized by obvious hatred toward the Southern system. But in defense of their use, it should be noted most were based on diaries kept during their experiences. Also, all of these narratives have been examined by E. Merton Coulter in his *Travels in the Confederate States: A Bibliography* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), and were found to be highly factual. It can be argued that if these people were critical of the South it would stand to reason that they would not tell of Southern white Unionism were it not a fact. They even may have underestimated its extent.

The journal of Alonzo Cooper provides further evidence of upper district Unionism. A lieutenant in the Twelfth New York Cavalry captured at Plymouth, North Carolina in April, 1864, was imprisoned at Columbia and escaped in October. He traveled by way of Greenwood, through Anderson District and Walhalla in Pickens District to the mountains and was eventually captured near Franklin, North Carolina. Cooper's narrative is significant because he was befriended by two Unionists in Anderson District who told him that the entire area home guard unit sympathized with the Yankee cause and would never fight if called upon. Between Walhalla and the North Carolina border he was also befriended by an anti-Confederate farmer's wife who complained that the government took her sons and that she had very little produce.[24]

A. O. Abbott recorded an even stronger Unionist element in the Walhalla area. In a tale related to him, an unnamed major of the New York Volunteers told of his escape from Camp Sorghum in November, 1864. He followed the Saluda River, flanked Greenville and Pickens Court House and made his way to "Wallhollow". He was supplied with provisions by a Unionist white woman who had turned against the Confederacy because the government did not give her any relief committee funds since her husband was a conscript, not a volunteer. It was evidently well known that Unionists inhabited the area because the major stated that he had been given the name of a Union man to locate in Walhalla but could not find him. He concluded that there was ". . . a very strong Union element in Wallhollow".[25]

Perhaps the greatest example of Unionist sentiment was found by W. H. Shelton, an officer in the First New York Artillery. He was captured in the Wilderness and arrived at Camp Sorghum in September, 1864. He escaped in December and made his way to Cashiers, North Carolina before he was captured. He was returned to the Greenville jail and there he found a friend in the jailer, who turned out to be a Unionist who retained that position to keep from being drafted. He actually let Shelton out of jail and gave him rations, directions to North Carolina and the names of fellow Unionists in the mountains. Shelton then followed the headwaters of the north fork of the Saluda River, spent the night with a Union woman, and eventually arrived at Caesar's Head. At that location he stayed with a man named Pink Bishop whose name and political sympathies he had learned of from another escapee.

[24] Cooper, *op. cit., passim.*, 154-167.

[25] Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 235, *passim.*, 234. His story is corroborated by the tale of Lieutenant F. M. Murphy who escaped with the Major (*Ibid.*, 241-256).

He also spent a night in that area with the Case family whose two sons specialized in shooting conscription officers. Eventually he made his way to Brevard and over the mountains to Knoxville.[26]

The Confederate authorities soon discovered that Camp Sorghum was far from escape-proof, and in December, 1864, the prisoners were transferred to a stockade within the walled and well guarded grounds of the state Insane Asylum. But before these extra security measures were implemented, 373 of the 1,200 officers imprisoned at Columbia escaped.[27]

As demonstrated by the escapees' narratives, the mountain district farmers had lost sympathy for the Confederary. Here was disloyalty at its highest: aiding the enemy was out and out treason. Yet these people willingly performed this service. The term "disaffected" or "deserters" would certainly not describe this group of people by 1864.

The question naturally comes to mind, if the inhabitants of this area were, indeed, highly disloyal, were they organized like the Unionist groups in other states? Specifically, did the Heroes of America or one of the other peace societies exist in the mountain areas of South Carolina? Historians Frank L. Owsley and Georgia Lee Tatum state that the Heroes of America probably existed in the upper districts of that state, and the biographer of Governor Bonham notes that it was significant that disloyalty was strongest in those areas bordering the sections of North Carolina where the Heroes of America were most powerful. Tatum even goes so far as to say that ". . . an organization was found to exist among the disloyal in some of the countries which bordered parts of

[26] W. H. Shelton, "A Hard Road to Travel Out of Dixie", *Century Magazine*, XL, *passim.*, 942-944. The general escape routes followed the Saluda River or the Columbia to Greenville road to the latter town and thence to Walhalla or by way of Greenwood and Anderson to that town. The Walhalla route was chosen because of the vast uninhabited mountain area which began almost at the town boundary. Although Unionists could assist the escapee above Spartanburg, Greenville and Pickens, these areas were centers of troop concentrations and several miles of inhabited area had to be crossed before the mountains were reached. Once in North Carolina the escapees either followed the French Broad River or the Balsam range to the Smokies, then over the mountains to Cades Cove and Knoxville.

[27] Abbott, *op. cit.*, 150-152; *O.R.*, Serial II, VII, 1196. It should be noted that not all escapees obtained freedom. Many were caught in North Carolina and most never made their escape from the state (see the Charleston *Daily Courier*, June 22, September 30, 1964, 1). One authority, William B. Hesseltine in *Civil War Prisons: A Study in War Psychology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1930), 167, puts the apprehension figure at 75 per cent.

North Carolina in which the Heroes of America was very strong."[28] Unfortunately, little evidence is given to support such statements. Upon closer examination, however, more concrete conclusions can be reached.

Although South Carolina did not have the large organization of North Carolina, numbering 75,000 according to one observer, or many professional Union guides, such as Daniel Ellis' operation in the North Carolina-Tennessee-southwest Virginia area, the South Carolina Unionists possessed definite organization and exhibited many of the criteria attributed to the Heroes of America. They did indeed encourage desertion, as evidenced by the story of Evans' Brigade, and they did infiltrate military units with the purpose of demoralization, as in the cases of Evans' unit and the Anderson home guards. Like the Heroes in North Carolina, they did possess a semi-formal organization with signs, signals of distress and coordinated operations. Further, it was acknowledged by Governor Bonham that the Unionists in the upper districts were in communication with their neighbors across the border. And similar to other peace societies, South Carolinians were also active in assisting escaped federal prisoners and providing numerous guides to convey the escapees to other guerilla bands in North Carolina and Georgia. Thus, the South Carolina Unionists definitely possessed an organization that had all the characteristics of the peace movements of the other states except, possibly, that of size. Had the Confederate government sent agents into the mountain districts of the state as it did in southwest Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina, the agents' reports would undoubtedly have told of the existence of a similar peace organization.[29]

From this detailed account of disloyalty in the upper districts of South Carolina it has become obvious that there was more to the yeoman farmers' break with the Confederacy than merely the dissatisfaction with prevailing economic conditions. The reason lay, rather, in the existing Unionist sentiment of a group that was never in harmony with those interests which advocated secession. It was this factor which decided whether or not the yeoman farmers would support the Confederacy and it, when combined with the other factors, determined the degree of dis-

[28] Quoted in Tatum, *op. cit.*, 135; *Ibid.*, 157; Owsley, *op. cit.*, 452; Bonham biography, 628. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, 10, states that the Society came into existence in South Carolina during the war but this must be a typographical error because he devotes his entire article to North Carolina.

[29] Burson, *op. cit.*, 72; Hesseltine, *op. cit.*, 65; A. Sellew Roberts, "The Peace Movement in North Carolina", *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XI, 196; *O.R.*, Serial IV, II, 770; Letter, Bonham to Vance, August 22, 1863, Bonham Papers, Box 6; Bonham Biography 705; Johnson, *op. cit.*, 37-39.

loyalty by these people. Since this devotion to the federal government was ingrained in these people it did not die with the cessation of hostilities. It was this same group of nonslaveholding small farmers from the mountain districts who would provide much of the white support for the South Carolina Republican Party during Reconstruction.[80]

[80] See Allen W. Trelease, "Who Were the Scalawags?" *Journal of Southern History,* XXIX, 459, for further information.