

"The Quiet Battles of the Home Front War":  
Civil War Bread Riots and the Development of a Confederate  
Welfare System

by  
E. Susan Barber

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Barber,  
E. S.  
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Name of Candidate: Edna Susan Barber  
Master of Arts, 1986

Thesis and Abstract Approved :

David A. Grimsted  
David A. Grimsted  
Associate Professor  
Department of History

Date Approved: 12-10-1986



## ABSTRACT

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E. Susan Barber, Master of Arts, 1986

Thesis directed by: Dr. David A. Grimsted  
Associate Professor  
Department of History

During the American Civil War, more than a dozen food riots erupted in a number of Southern cities. Planned and executed largely by women, these riots were precipitated by extreme food shortages and high market prices, both the result of impressment activity and widespread speculation in foodstuffs. Although several scholars have examined the largest riot which occurred in Richmond, Virginia, in 1863, none have studied them collectively to determine the impact all of these riots exerted on the Confederate war effort or on the roles of Southern women in wartime. Nor has any attempt been made to place these riots in the context of American and European patterns of rioting. In response to riots or as attempts to prevent riots from occurring, a number of state and local governments moved to establish welfare programs to aid the women left destitute by the war. In cities, this took the form of free markets which distributed commodities donated by local farmers. In areas where the population was more dispersed, county or state relief agencies performed a similar

function. Women who received supplies had to meet specific requirements to qualify for aid, and, at least in Richmond, the female rioters were excluded from the welfare program because their behavior violated traditional behavioral norms. As the war neared its conclusion, however, this type of riotous activity by Southern women ceased, and the women returned to their more traditional roles in nineteenth-century Southern society.

When examined as a group, these riots tend to conform to traditional European food riot patterns such as those described by E.P. Thompson and Louise Tilly, thus giving the women's activities a broader and deeper historical context than they otherwise would have had.

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## INTRODUCTION

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On Thursday, August 1, 1861, a crowd of three hundred angry women marched through Gravier Street in New Orleans, Louisiana, nearly blocking it completely between Camp Street and St. Charles.<sup>1</sup> They were protesting the City Council's failure to approve a \$2,000 appropriation which would have been used to provide them with a \$5.00 semi-monthly stipend. By 9 a.m., the women reached the office of New Orleans Mayor John T. Monroe, where they demanded to know what the city would do to provide for their relief. Some said they were destitute, others, homeless. All were feeling the economic drain the war was beginning to place on the wives of Confederate volunteers.

Monroe spoke briefly to the women, and alluded to his own large family of eight children as evidence of his sympathy for the their plight, but the women were not so easily dismissed. The New Orleans Picayune tells what happened next:

Here a buxom looking woman cried out, 'And God Bless yer honor, I've nine' While another very matronly dame modestly said, 'Long life to yer honor, but it is ten little humanities I've presented to the land of Amerika myself'



Clearly these women were not going to be pacified by a few kind words from someone whose financial situation was obviously better than their own. So the mayor got down to business. Passing out a number of fifty cent pieces to the needier women in the crowd, Monroe promised to use his influence to secure a more substantial remedy. The women accepted the mayor's offer and dispersed "in good humor." No militia was called and no arrests were made.

On the next day, an emergency session of the City Council pushed through the plans for establishing a free market, a measure which they had tabled only two days before.<sup>3</sup> In addition, they approved the sum of \$5,000 for poor relief.<sup>4</sup> On Tuesday, August 13, 1861, the New Orleans Free Market opened for business, and the poor women of New Orleans got the relief they so urgently needed.<sup>5</sup>

\* \* I \* \*

Although no food was actually taken in Louisiana, this demonstration in New Orleans was the earliest and one of the least violent of more than a dozen female bread riots that shook the South during the Civil War. Between 1861 and 1864, American women rioted in unprecedented numbers. In addition to the New Orleans

protest, women initiated major commodities riots in Richmond, Virginia, and Mobile, Alabama, as well as a number of smaller and less well documented riots in other Southern cities. In all of these instances they were seeking immediate relief from the economic hardships the war had created through the Confederacy's impressment of food and supplies and the speculation it engendered.

In most, a predictable pattern emerged. Hostile action by desperate women or the fear of such an event taking place, led to the development of rudimentary state or local welfare systems. In densely populated cities such as New Orleans, Richmond, and Savannah, free markets were created; while in more geographically dispersed areas like Richmond County, North Carolina, and Spottsylvania County, Virginia, county relief agencies, often part of a state-run network of relief, took form.

These Southern bread riots raise a number of interesting questions about the traditional roles of Southern women and the way the Confederacy responded to the wartime needs of its citizens. What kinds of women composed the mobs in Richmond and Mobile? And what was the purpose of their action? What did the Confederacy do to relieve their distress? And how was their non-traditional behavior viewed by Confederate society?

Women had rioted like this before. They played a pivotal role in the bread riots of Revolutionary France, and, in early nineteenth-century England, they protested



the Brown Bread Act by vandalizing a mill and threatening the miller.<sup>6</sup> How do these Southern food riots fit into this pattern of European food rioting which has been described by such historians as E.P. Thompson, George Rudé, Louise Tilly, and Natalie Zemon Davis?<sup>7</sup>

Food riots and the role in them played by women has been a subject of frequent inquiry by European historiographers. English historian Douglas Hay has defined a food riot as "an organized and often highly disciplined [form of] popular protest against the growing national and international market in foodstuffs, a market which alarmed the poor by moving grain from their parishes when it could compel a higher price elsewhere, and which depended on a growing corps of middlemen whom the rioters knew were breaking Tudor and Stuart legislation by the wholesale trading in food."<sup>8</sup> Louise Tilly has divided the food riots in seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century France into three distinct types: the market riot, the entrave, and the taxation populaire, and has argued that the "[f]ood riots in France since the seventeenth century can be most meaningfully explained not in a simple formula of food shortage/hunger/riot, but within a political context of changing governmental policy and in terms of secular economic change in marketing arrangements of grain."<sup>9</sup> This argument by Tilly dovetails neatly with the work of E.P. Thompson whose examination of the bread riots of

eighteenth-century England led him to the conclusion that, although the "riots were triggered by soaring prices, by malpractices among dealers, or by hunger...these grievances operated within a popular consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, etcetera. This in turn was grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute a moral economy of the poor. An outrage to these assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action."<sup>10</sup>

Both Douglas Hay and John G. Rule have added yet another dimension to the rioters' motivations, arguing that food riots had their roots in "ancient civil doctrine" which stated that "a starving man had the right to steal enough food to keep himself for a week."<sup>11</sup> For Rule "[t]he sanction of custom can be resilient enough to permit the survival of forms of action which are in direct conflict with existing law, and perhaps also at variance with the teachings of powerful cultural and religious agencies, which in other directions may exert strong control on behavior. The conflict of custom with legal prohibition is a recurring theme of the social history of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is clearly seen in such activities as smuggling and

poaching, but it is present also in the enclosure debate, and inherent in the food riot."<sup>12</sup>

The role of women in these European food riots has been examined by E.P. Thompson and by French historian George Rudé, both of whom argue that women were often the instigators of the bread riots of Revolutionary France and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, an assertion which Thompson attributes to the fact that they were the "one[s] more directly involved in marketing, most affected by price increases, [and] most experienced at discovering shortages in weight and quality."<sup>13</sup> These observations about rioting women have been further elaborated in the work of Natalie Zemon Davis, who has examined the uses of sexual symbolism both as a reinforcer of the status quo and a critique of it to conclude that "the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place. On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and, second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest."<sup>14</sup>

With the exception of publications in the 1970s by David Grimsted and Herbert Gutman, the history of rioting in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America has not enjoyed such a long or illustrious history.<sup>15</sup> Few



histories of the United States deal with rioting to any great extent at all, and those that do, such as Sam Wright's Crowds and Riots, or Richard Wolff's Riots in the Streets, usually focus on the civil rights' disturbances of the more recent 1960s, or deal with the topic from a sociological perspective.<sup>16</sup>

The Southern food riots of the 1860s are given passing mention in several histories of the wartime South. Francis Butler Simkins and James Welch Patton's study, Women of the Confederacy, devotes a few pages to them in a chapter entitled "The Problem of Self-Support;" and Bell Irvin Wiley refers briefly to them, both in The Plain People of the Confederacy, published in 1945, and in Confederate Women, published thirty years later.<sup>17</sup>

Mary Elizabeth Massey's Bonnet Brigades studies the experiences of women on both sides of the war, and looks at the Southern food riots from the perspective of the pro-feminist 1960s, concluding that "[d]uring the war women appeared to be breaking out in all directions at once, and nothing said to or about them could force them back into the fold....Instead of talking about their rights, they were usurping them under the cloak of patriotism. They were talking politics, mapping out military strategy, advising officials on affairs of state, and using violent measures to obtain their demands, and they were doing so well that anyone should have been able to see the sex barriers crumbling."<sup>18</sup>

None of these sources, however, examines the riots in any great detail.

The best primary source of information on the individual riots and the welfare systems they generated is the Confederate press, supplemented at times by personal diaries or brief histories of the cities or states in question. Accounts of the largest bread riot which occurred in the Confederate capital on Thursday, April 1, 1863, are numerous, and can be found in the diaries of such people as John Beachamp Jones and Judith W. McGuire.<sup>19</sup> Descriptions of the disturbance and the ensuing litigation were carried in varying degrees in Richmond's four major newspapers: the Whig, the Sentinel, the Enquirer, and the Examiner. The Examiner's editor, John Moncure Daniel, was an arch-critic of the Confederate government, a factor which cannot be overlooked when using this source. Nevertheless, the Examiner's account is the most extensive, and, in the absence of more complete records of the court proceedings, provides the bedrock of information upon which any analysis of the riot must be built.<sup>20</sup> Many of the primary and secondary accounts of the riot are modeled after the Examiner's version.

In addition to these primary sources, the Richmond bread riot has also been examined by several historians and scholars. The earliest of these is probably David Maydole Matteson, whose unpublished manuscript entitled,

"Riots in the United States, 1641-1894," contains a description of the event taken largely from the accounts in the Examiner.<sup>21</sup> Accounts of the riot also appear in several histories of Richmond, among them Alfred Hoyt Bill's The Beleaguered City, Virginius Dabney's Richmond: The Story of a City, and W. Asbury Christian's Richmond Her Past and Present.<sup>22</sup>

Many of the primary and secondary sources mentioned here contain contradictory descriptions of the riot and the actions of the participants. Historian Michael B. Chesson has attempted to sift through these inconsistencies and has succeeded in providing what seems to be the most accurate assessment of the riot to date. His article, "Harlots or Heroines? A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riot," uses the 1860 and 1870 censuses in tandem with a number of other sources to provide a new look at the rioters and to answer questions about their motivations.<sup>23</sup> Although he errs in a few of his conclusions concerning the sentence given to the riot's leader, and his assessment of the harshness of the sentences given to males as compared to females, Chesson's article is an important starting point for any student of the Richmond bread riot.<sup>24</sup>

Sources for the other riots are not so numerous. In addition to the references which appear in Southern newspapers, only the riot in Mobile is covered in any sort of detail.<sup>25</sup> A few of the travelogues and local



histories mention some of the smaller disturbances, but sometimes their footnotes lead frustratingly to dead ends. More work needs to be done to flesh out the accounts of these other protests to see how clearly they conform to the Richmond occurrence.

Another historian whose work is central to an understanding of this topic is Emory Thomas. Thomas has written extensively on the Civil War South and on Richmond in particular. Concerning the Richmond uprising, he makes an important link between the riot and the municipal welfare system which emerged as a result.<sup>26</sup> This pattern was replicated in a number of Southern cities where civil strife and its specter prompted city officials to take immediate action.

Other scholars whose work helps to inform the way the Confederacy attempted to deal with the problems the riots symbolized are Charles W. Ramsdell, Paul D. Escott, Frank L. Owsley, and Mary Elizabeth Massey. Ramsdell's series of lectures entitled Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy, Owsley's essay, "Defeatism in the Confederacy," and Escott's study entitled, "The Cry of the Sufferers" all focus attention on the idea that "home front collapse" contributed significantly to the South's defeat, and was predicated on the Confederacy's inability to address itself to the issues of social welfare the riots raised.<sup>27</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey's study of the free market of New Orleans, Louisiana, when coupled with

the record books of two county relief agencies, helps to show how state and municipal governments moved in to provide the relief the Confederacy failed to proffer.<sup>28</sup>

None of the works mentioned here, however, examine all of these riots or the welfare systems they spawned in their totality. Nor do any of them, with the exception of Michael Chesson's, attempt to place the riots within the context of the European riot historiography.

This study attempts to correct these oversights. Chapter One will examine the riots and their causes. Using Richmond as its model, Chapter Two will look at the actors in the disturbances. Chapter Three will detail the responses of the Confederacy and the state and local governments to the problems signaled by the riots themselves. The Conclusion will attempt to place all of these disturbances within the historiographical context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European food riots.



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## CHAPTER ONE

\* \* \* \* \*

The Civil War presented a number of hardships for American women. To the emotional difficulties which accompanied separations from husbands and fathers, brothers and sons, was added the economic burden of keeping families intact and households in operation without the support of their male counterparts. For Southern women, invading armies compounded the dilemma. Even upper- and middle-class women experienced acute food shortages at the hands of plundering Union forces. For poor and working-class women, the situation was even more acute. Already living at the subsistence level, their husbands' absences were often occasions of extreme deprivation. Relief for their situations was sometimes nonexistent, or at best, erratic. At times, for all of these women, their only recourse was to take to the streets in protest and fight "the quiet battles of the home front war."<sup>1</sup>

Some of these home front battles were not so quiet. Between August of 1861 and April of 1864, Southern women conducted a total of seventeen commodities riots in a number of Southern cities. The riot in New Orleans was only the beginning. On April 4, 1862, soldiers' wives

near Cleveland, Tennessee, attempted to "press some bacon" from a local merchant.<sup>2</sup> Seven months later, in Cartersville, Georgia, a "party of Ladies" entered a store and "appropriated a small stock of goods."<sup>3</sup> At the same time in nearby Dalton, women stormed the state depot and demanded "salt or blood." The agent in charge sent them to the commissary office where their needs were supplied.<sup>4</sup>

The following spring, riots broke out once more. In Salisbury, North Carolina, on March 18, 1863, a group of forty to fifty soldiers' wives marched to Michael Brown's storehouse and requested flour at the government price of \$19.50 a barrel. When Brown refused, the women began to break down the door with hatchets. The incident was resolved when Brown offered to give the women ten barrels of flour for free. The women accepted the offer, and then went on to several other stores where they repeated the process.<sup>5</sup>

On April 2, 1863, the largest food riot of the Civil War took place in the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. Here throngs of angry women battered down shop doors with axes and helped themselves to coffee and bacon and flour. Two weeks later, on April 15, 1863, the Savannah Republican reported two more North Carolina disturbances. In Greensboro, North Carolina, a group of "very abandoned"-looking women demanded supplies, while, in Durham, women whom the Republican described as "hard

cases" threatened to break open the warehouses at the Durham depot and seize flour. Both of these incidents were quickly repulsed.<sup>6</sup> So were the three "feeble outbreaks" mounted almost simultaneously in Augusta, Milledgeville, and Columbus, Georgia, at about the same time.<sup>7</sup>

Five months after the Richmond disturbance, another large riot occurred. On Friday, September 4, 1863, a crowd of women armed with hatchets and knives assembled on Spring Hill Road just outside of Mobile, Alabama. Like the women of Richmond, these Alabama women were also angry about extreme market prices. Carrying placards reading "Bread or Blood" on one side, and "Bread and Peace" on the other, the women marched down Dauphin Street and looted stores of food and clothing.

The 17th Alabama, a local regiment commanded by a General Maury, was called in to quash the rebellion; but the men refused, saying that if they did act, it would be to help the rioters. At this point, Mobile's Mayor Slough called in the Mobile Cadets, a fancy-dress parade unit that had never seen action in the field. According to the Mobile Advertiser and Register, "[q]uite a little scrimmage ensued," in which the women repulsed the Cadets and continued on with their ransacking. It was then that the mayor and the provost marshall addressed the crowd, promising their support in relieving the women's distress. The women agreed to disperse, but vowed to



return and burn the city if the promised help was withdrawn. The riot broke out again that night, but the results of this phase of the disturbance remain unknown. Like most of the other riots examined here, no arrests were made.<sup>8</sup>

In the spring of the following year, rioting broke out once more. On March 23, 1864, eight to ten "river hill women" entered the town of Abingdon, Virginia with pistols and knives and "pressed" spun yarn and domestics from two of the local merchants.<sup>9</sup> On April 19th, fifty to a hundred women in Savannah, Georgia, mobbed a provision store on Whitaker Street. While the owner was distributing bacon to the crowd, a smaller group of women forced their way inside and took what they wanted. Two other stores were attacked in the same manner.<sup>10</sup> Three of the female ringleaders were arrested and placed in the guard house, but were released a few days later.<sup>11</sup>

About the same time that the women in Savannah were being released, twelve to fifteen women in Valdosta, Georgia, went to the Gulf Railroad warehouse and appropriated bacon. The leader of this riot carried a pistol.<sup>12</sup>

The South was not the only place where rioting took place, however. A month before the New Orleans riot occurred, a "procession of half-starved women" marched through the streets of New York City, chanting "Bread, bread, bread," and protesting the mismanagement of the

city's relief funds by the municipal relief agency, the Union Defense Committee (UDC). First, they stopped at the UDC's distribution center on Fourth Avenue, which was closed. Then, they marched to the mayor's office in City Hall. Finally, they ended up at the UDC's Pine Street office where they scuffled with each other in an effort to be the first ones into the building and then argued with General Whitmore, the officer in charge. The demonstration was concluded when the committee distributed tickets allowing the women to receive provisions the next day.<sup>13</sup> This problem with the Union Defense Committee resurfaced the following year when another group of angry women again protested the UDC's mismanagement.<sup>14</sup>

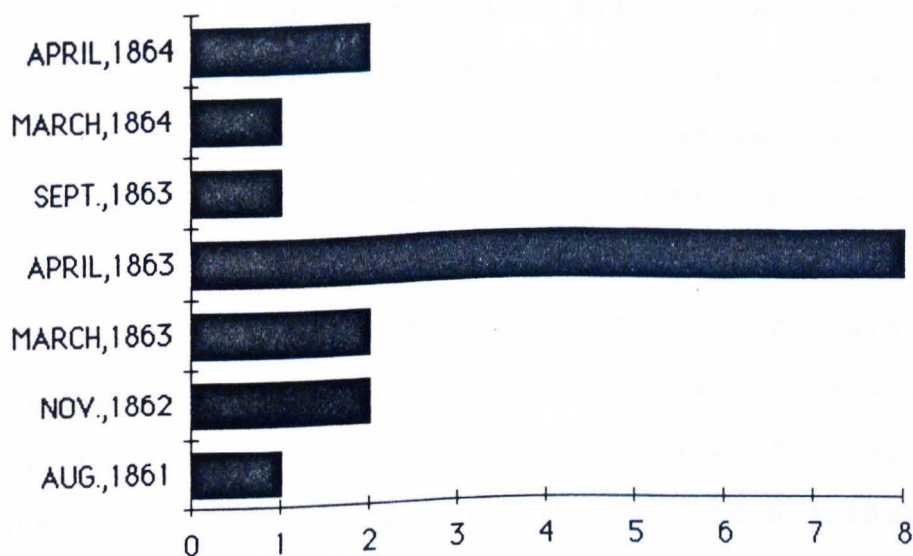


Figure 1.1: Incidence of Rioting by Date

As Figure 1.1 indicates, the riots peaked in the spring of 1863 and again in the spring of 1864, a pattern which suggests several explanations. Both of these peaks occurred in the springtime, and may be related both to a shortage of supplies after the winter, and the realization that the men would not be coming home in time to help with the spring planting. This seemed to be especially true in the spring of 1863, when the shortage of winter provisions coincided with the failure of the Confederate offensive, an event which added a general feeling of demoralization and malaise to the South's problems of supply and demand.

The high incidence of rioting in March of 1863 may also say something about the way the element of contagion operated to escalate the riots' frequency. City officials were sensitive to this problem, and went to heroic efforts to keep the news of nearby riots from appearing in the local papers. For example news of the riot in Mobile was suppressed for an entire month; and Secretary of War James A. Seddon imposed a silence on the Richmond disturbance, both from fear that it would encourage nearby outbreaks and that it would be used by the North to demoralize the Southern cause.<sup>15</sup> As riots erupted throughout the South, city officials scrambled to establish free markets and relief agencies in an effort to keep similar disturbances from taking place in their towns. The free markets in New Orleans, Savannah,



Mobile, and Richmond were created shortly after the riots occurred, and the one Charleston was kept in operation in an effort to prevent one from happening.<sup>16</sup> When the supplies in the New Orleans market ran low in the spring of 1862, Mayor Monroe issued an urgent call for provisions, and a proclamation requesting all people to remain inside and "maintain a proper calmness" until the situation was rectified.<sup>17</sup>

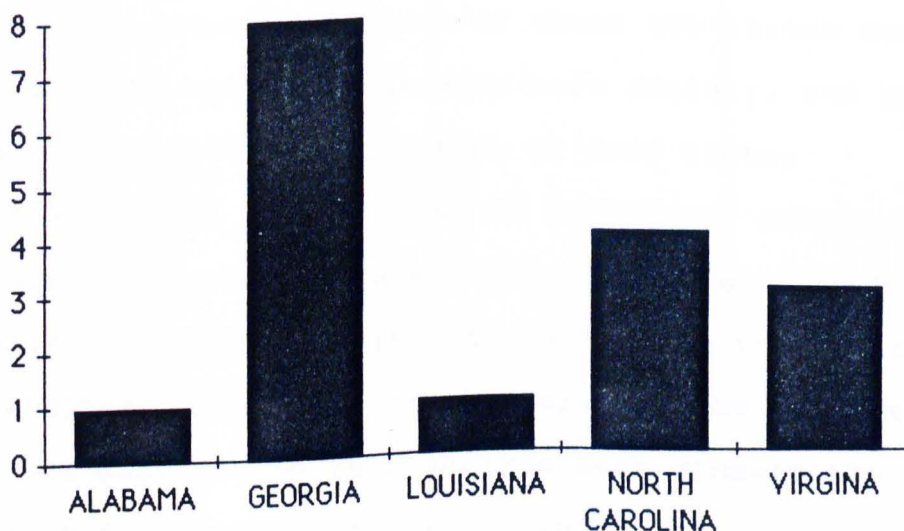


Figure 1.2: Incidence of Rioting by State

As Figure 1.2 demonstrates, the majority of the riots took place in Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia, a factor which might be explained by their relationship to the Confederacy. Both Georgia and North Carolina were governed by what some historians have referred to as "obstructionist" governors, men who objected to the

course the Confederacy had taken and expressed their dissatisfaction on numerous occasions. A recent corrective to this view has been offered by Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, et al, who argue that, despite their objections to the way the war was being conducted, the amount of manpower and provisions supplied by these two states remains unsurpassed by any other state in the Confederacy.<sup>18</sup> If this is true, it may help to explain the higher incidence of riots there. With a greater proportion of both food and men being committed to the Confederate cause, the women of these two states must have felt the wartime shortages more acutely, and hence their more active participation in food riots.

The case of Virginia can be explained, in part, by its role as the Confederate capital, a situation which may have contributed to its distinction as the location of the biggest food riot of the war, and the place to which one must now turn to analyze more closely the actions and motives of the insurgents.

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As the capital of the Confederacy, pre-riot Richmond wrestled with a number of the same problems that many Southern cities faced. Its population of 38,000 had swollen to a high of 100,000 people, many of them



employees of the Confederate government, but others refugees from areas blighted by wartime invasion. This great influx of people made housing scarce and expensive. In the two years before the riot occurred, city rents quadrupled and many citizens roamed the streets for lack of decent housing.<sup>19</sup>

Many female refugees were the wives of Confederate soldiers, women whose farms had failed and who came to the city looking for work. Some found it in the Confederate Quartermaster's Clothing Bureau which employed two to three thousand female operatives as seamstresses, while others manufactured powder cartridges at the Confederate Ordnance Laboratory on Brown's Island.<sup>20</sup> Still others found work at the Tredegar Iron Works in the tannery and shoemaking shop, while even more worked for the Confederate Treasury.<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly, some must have entered into prostitution, while others simply starved.

Table 1.1: Comparison of Food Prices for Small Family  
Richmond, Virginia, 1860 and 1863.

Item	1860	1863	% Increase
Bacon, 10 lbs.	1.25	10.00	700
Flour, 30 lbs.	1.50	3.75	150
Sugar, 5 lbs.	.40	.75	88
Coffee, 4 lbs.	.50	20.00	3900
Green tea, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.	.50	8.00	1500
Lard, 4 lbs.	.50	4.00	700
Butter, 3 lbs.	.75	5.25	600
Meal, 1 peck	.25	1.00	300
Candles, 2 lbs.	.30	2.50	733

Source: Richmond Dispatch, 29 January 1863

Starving was fairly easy to do in the Richmond of 1863. Wartime inflation had driven the price of provisions beyond the reach of many working class citizens. A January 29th article in the Richmond Dispatch compared prewar and wartime prices for the average small family and showed that prices for important food items had risen dramatically between 1860 and 1863. (See Table 1.1) High prices like these were often the result of a number of causes, most importantly the shortages created by the impressment of goods for the Confederate army and the concomitant practice of speculation which encouraged many large farmers and other producers to withhold their goods from the markets in an effort to drive prices up. Practices such as these rankled true Confederate patriots, especially those from the working class who were most affected by the higher market prices and who were, at the same time, giving the most in terms of manpower to the Confederate cause. For many of these people, the quotation that this was "a rich man's war but a poor man's fight" had a special meaning. At times, their rancor against the extortioners and speculators, against the affluent planter class in Southern society spilled over into violence as it did in Richmond on April 2, 1863.

The action of the Richmond mob was divided and sporadic and is somewhat difficult to trace, due to the contradictory nature of the evidence available. It seems

most likely, however, that an initial delegation of women entered the iron gates of Capitol Square and assembled in front of the governor's mansion shortly before 9:00 a.m. They demanded to speak to the governor, John Letcher, about the high prices that were being charged by some of the city's merchants. When told that the governor was already at work in the Capitol, the women surged forward to join a much larger throng of several hundred angry women armed with knives and hatchets who were already at work in the business district, taking shoes and bacon, calico and flour from a selected group of merchants. Calling for "bread or blood," the women chopped down the doors and emptied the stores of their stock.<sup>22</sup>

Most of the activity was concentrated along Cary and Main Streets and covered a ten block area to the south of Capitol Square. (See map, overleaf). On Cary Street between Twelfth Street and Thirteenth, a crowd of fifteen or more women broke into Pollard and Walker's, scuffled briefly with one of the owners, and succeeded in making off with more than 1500 pounds of bacon. Another group ransacked the nearby grocery store of Tyler and Sons to the sum of \$6,467.55, and a third group carried more than thirteen thousand dollars worth of food and clothing away from John T. Hicks' store by the wagonload.<sup>23</sup>

On Main Street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth, male accomplices lifted female rioters into James Knott's shoemaker shop where they took boots and shoes as well as



Figure 1.3: Map of Richmond, Virginia, 1861



raw-cut leather and partially finished footwear. Knott tried to appease the women by handing out packets of needles to the ones waiting outside on the street, but to no avail. His neighbor, Isaac Marcuse, tried a similar ploy with men's socks, and was equally unsuccessful.

At the corner of Locust and Main, Minerva Meredith, a tall, rawboned woman of forty, waved a pistol in the air in front of a crowd of female rioters and urged them onward. A few minutes earlier she had helped an Irish woman and a woman with one eye steal a wagon loaded with 310 pounds of beef from Henry Meyers, a hospital steward. The meat was intended for the small pox patients at the City Hospital, and Meyers later submitted a bill for \$294.50, the only reimbursement to the riot victims the city made.<sup>24</sup>

A few blocks away on Franklin Street, a group of rioters led by Thomas Samanni, Jr. and Mary Jackson broke down the door of Mina Schweitzer's store and robbed the forty-six-year-old widow of homespun, calico, hats, handkerchiefs, stockings and gloves. Elsewhere in the riot area, Mary Wesley and Mary Woodward were arrested atop a furniture wagon loaded with bacon and flour. When Officer Morris tried to arrest her, Woodward struck him, brandished a revolver, and attempted to escape. John Jones was apprehended on the corner near the Columbian Hotel, standing guard over a pile of merchandise which included twelve hats filled with coffee, a supply of

candles worth \$10.00 and several pieces of bacon, items which he later claimed to be "protecting" for two of the female participants.

The rioters' actions quickly attracted the attention of the city fathers who attempted to disperse the crowd and send them home. The first on the scene was Richmond's sixty-eight-year-old mayor, Joseph T. Mayo, who read the women the Riot Act and ordered them to disband. Mayo was joined shortly by Governor John Letcher who also spoke to the crowd and was most likely the one who ordered out the Public Guard under the command of Lieutenant Edward Scott Gay. The Guard came up Main street on the double-quick, formed a line facing the women, and proceeded to load their rifles with "buck and ball."

By this time Jefferson Davis arrived. Climbing into a nearby dray, the Confederate president spoke to the mob, taking money from his pockets and throwing it into the crowd. Then, removing his watch from his pocket, he gave the women five minutes to disperse before the Guard opened fire. The rioters heeded the president's warning. They left and went home, taking their booty with them.

A few feared the riot would resume the next day. Secretary of War James B. Seddon took measures to suppress news of the disturbance by ordering the telegraph and the Richmond press to remain silent.<sup>25</sup> All but the Examiner complied. Governor Letcher received a

communiqué from Captain P. G. Coughlan who suggested that two mountain howitzers could be brought in from Lynchburg to repulse a second assault; and, although the governor thought the better of that suggestion, he did take the precaution of having a few cannon mounted near Capitol Square as a show of force.<sup>26</sup> The mayor took more decisive action. He requested additional forces under Major-General Elzey be placed at Letcher's command.<sup>27</sup> All of these precautions were for naught, however. The rioters mounted no second assault and, for the duration of the war, the streets of Richmond remained free from the spectacle of unruly and riotous women.

Almost from the beginning, however, it was apparent to some of the eyewitnesses that the riot had not been unruly or spontaneous, but rather a well-orchestrated event. A few blamed it on Northern intrigue. In a letter to his father, Fred Fleet, a soldier in the 26th Virginia Regiment, observed that the whole "disgraceful affair...no doubt was concocted by Yankees and aided by their assistants in Richmond, the Dutch and the Irish."<sup>28</sup> Judith McGuire and Catherine Ann Edmondston agreed, and the Examiner fueled these suspicions.<sup>29</sup> Undoubtedly some spies were at work in the Confederate capital at the time. Edward A. Pollard, who tended to view Richmond as a Sodom and Gomorrah of the South, put the figure at somewhere around two hundred.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless it is difficult to believe that espionage and foreign intrigue



were at the root of the mob's actions. The Richmond bread riot and others like it were not primarily focused at undermining the Confederate cause, but were directed instead at drawing attention to a serious welfare problem that needed attention.

Others thought the riot had simply been for stealing. Jefferson Davis had noted this in his remarks to the crowd, observing that "they had passed by...several provision stores and bakeries while they had completely emptied one jewelry store, and had also 'looted' some millinery and clothing shops...". For Davis, "it was not bread they wanted...they were bent on nothing but plunder and wholesale robbery."<sup>31</sup> Richmond's mayor agreed. Mayo's own assessment of the riot, made at the beginning of the mayor's court on Friday April 3, was that "the riot yesterday was not for bread.--Boots are not bread, brooms are not bread, man's hats are not bread, and I never heard of anybody's eating them."<sup>32</sup>

Sentiments like these found their way into the pages of the Richmond Whig and were echoed in other personal recollections of the event. A letter to the editor of the Whig noted that the riot, which had gone under the name of "a woman's bread riot was, in reality, a man's plundering riot."<sup>33</sup> Sallie Brock Putnam agreed. For her, visions of women bent low under great loads of shoes and clothing suggested that the riot was for "thieving."<sup>34</sup> An anonymous account which appeared in John Trowbridge's travelogue of the South concurred.<sup>35</sup>



Although the Richmond women were accused of looting a milliner and a jewelry store, as Michael Chesson has noted, no jewelry was among the merchandise confiscated in the arrests.<sup>36</sup> Instead the courtroom on Monday, April 6, was clogged with "barrels of flour, piles of bacon,...sugar, coffee, candles, silk cloth, brogues, balmorals, cavalry boots, white satin slippers, children's embroidered dresses, washtubs, men's shirts, pocket handkerchiefs, bowie knives, stacks of felt hats, clothes pins, unfinished tailors' and shoemakers' work....Everything that ever was to be found in a flourishing country store...."<sup>37</sup> The preponderance of clothing in this account should not be construed as evidence that Jefferson Davis was right-- that the crowd had only been intent on pillage. In the non-industrialized South, shoes and other items of clothing became very difficult to obtain once the war began; and, although countless Southern women took to their spinning wheels and looms once more, they could never keep pace with the burgeoning demand. Papers like the Atlanta Southern Confederacy routinely carried articles like the one which appeared on November 11, 1863, instructing the women on how to make moccasins from discarded cowhides, and women like Emma Holmes included instructions on how to make shoes from broadcloth and velvet in their diaries.<sup>38</sup> For the women of the wartime South, clothing and shoes were necessities as much as flour and bacon and salt were.

Not everyone agreed with Jefferson Davis' assessment. Some saw food shortages and the specter of starvation as a real and present threat. In a letter to her mother on the day the Richmond riot occurred, Sarah Radford Munford wrote:

When I think of the poor I feel distressed and think the producers of this country ought to have public meetings to devise some means to reduce the prices of meat and bread so as to prevent starvation, they do not want for groceries or luxuries but for food enough to preserve life. 39

John Beachamp Jones concurred. From his window in the War Department, Jones could see "men and women and children in the streets in dingy and dilapidated clothes." Some were "gaunt and pale with hunger."<sup>40</sup> Even Sallie Brock Putnam, who was critical of the Richmond mob, did not deny that "want of bread was at this time fatally true...."<sup>41</sup> By 1864, food shortages in Richmond became so severe that the 26th Mississippi Regiment of Dove's Brigade, under the command of General Henry Heth donated half of its two-day rations to the poor women and children of Richmond.<sup>42</sup>

Clearly, these shortages in food and clothing were at the root of the Richmond disturbance. The reasons for these shortages, however, were complex. Some, no doubt were real, the result of efforts to supply the Confederate Army through the activities of Confederate impressment agents who combed the countrysides in search of supplies which they purchased on behalf of the

Confederate government and then shipped to army supply depots. Before March of 1863, their activities remained unregulated. This, at times, led to the complete decimation of specific foodstuffs from certain areas of the nation. This must have been the case in October of 1861 when J.L. Gray wrote to his uncle, a member of a prominent Richmond family, that he could not find a single barrel of flour for sale within the entire county because the Confederacy had impressed the entire supply of wheat.<sup>43</sup>

By March of 1863, the Confederacy moved to normalize impressment activity by passing "An Act to Regulate Impressments," which essentially legitimized impressment practices and provided a schedule of fixed prices.<sup>44</sup> Enforcement of this act was difficult if not impossible, however, and impressment activity continued to threaten the efforts of the average working class Southerner to provide the "necessaries of life." As the hub of Confederate activity, Richmond suffered as much, if not more, than any other area. In October of 1863, the Richmond Dispatch observed that impressment by the government agents was "doing more to starve the people of Richmond and the Army of the Potomac than all the Yankee invasions can ever accomplish;" and John S. Wise remarked that "visitors to the Confederate Capital were most welcome when they brought their own rations."<sup>45</sup>

Some shortages were also manufactured. As



provisions became scarce and impressment agents competed with citizens for the commodities that were available, some farmers and manufacturers deliberately kept their goods off the market to increase their profits. Extortion and speculation were big business, and, according to J.B. Jones, a number of the city's well-to-do and prominent citizens were involved.<sup>46</sup> In March of 1863, for example, a committee of the Virginia House of Delegates heard testimony concerning two firms charged with extortion. Between the years of 1860 and 1862, the Belvidere Paper Company had used extortionate practices to parlay a \$41,000 investment into \$235,000, with 75% of the profits being made in 1862 alone. During the same period, the Crenshaw Woolen Factory had declared a \$530,000 dividend on a cash capital of \$200,000.<sup>47</sup> Two weeks after the riot occurred, War clerk Jones made the following entry:

We are destroyed more by the extortioners than by the enemy. Eternal infamy on the heads of the speculators in articles of prime necessity. After the war, let them be known by the fortunes they have amassed from the sufferings of the patriots and heroes!--the widows and orphans!

48

Small wonder that an editorial in the Richmond Whig referred to the speculators and impressment agents as "heartless extortioners and official rogues!"<sup>49</sup>

The result of all this impressment and speculation



was to force the already inflated market prices even higher, making the situation almost intolerable for the families of Confederate soldiers. Between 1861 and 1865, Richmond suffered from fourth degree inflation meaning that prices were increasing during that time at the rate of 100-999% per annum, a figure which is substantiated by the figures in Table 1.1 on page 20. And in the two months before the riot took place, prices rose a staggering 281 percentage points and 242 percentage points respectively.<sup>50</sup>

For weeks before the riot occurred, the women in the markets were angered by the exorbitant prices some of the merchants were charging and were promising to take some sort of revenge, but their threats had not been taken seriously.<sup>51</sup> On the eve of the protest, several hundred of them met at the Belvidere Baptist Church in Oregon Hill to plan their assault. Their goal was to force the merchants to roll back their prices to the levels paid by the Confederate government. If the merchants refused, the women intended to take the goods by force. They planned to be armed and to leave their children at home.<sup>52</sup>

Historian Michael Chesson has pointed to several other factors which may have also influenced the women's timing. Military maneuvers around the city at the time interfered with agricultural production and made the food shortages even more severe. A twelve-inch snowfall

muddied the roads in early March, making it difficult to get supplies to market. On March 13, an explosion in the ordnance laboratory on Brown's Island killed sixty-nine people, sixty-two of whom were working-class women. Finally, a few days before the riot broke out, the city's waterworks failed, and the working-class section of the city was forced to make do with an old well in Capitol Square. According to Chesson, these factors may have contributed to a breakdown in the social stability of the community, enabling the riot to occur.<sup>53</sup>

These problems combined with others to increase Richmond's social instability in 1863. Shortly after the war began, the Confederate government simply moved in and set up shop, confiscating city buildings and renovating them at city or state expense. With the government's leaders came a large force of bureaucrats who staffed the Confederacy's various agencies and who rubbed shoulders, on a few occasions, with an even larger working class, many essentially wartime transients who worked in the iron mills and clothing factories. Added to this were the hundreds of refugees from points further south, people who had left their homes with only what they could carry and who often had no means of support. In addition, fourteen thousand Federal prisoners were currently being housed in the Richmond city jails. These new arrivals taxed municipal resources to the breaking point and led to a rise in the crime rate.

Rival gangs of boys engaged in nightly stone battles on Gamble Hill, occasionally injuring passersby; while Cary Street prostitutes boldly plied their trade from the dress circle boxes of the Richmond theatre.<sup>54</sup> Accounts of daring daylight robberies dotted the pages of the Richmond press, and faro banks like the one John Ferguson and David B. Cox operated on Franklin Street between Fourteenth and Mayo flourished.<sup>55</sup>

One of the results of this unrest was a heightened sense of class antagonism. The rich blamed the poor for the increased lawlessness, while the working class and the poor blamed the rich for the high prices in the market. Paupers who begged on the Richmond streets were suspect, and were viewed as being liars or as being too selective about the funds they were willing to accept. The April 15, 1863 issue of the Richmond Examiner carried the account of a young Irish beggar who told "so many different stories" about her paralyzed husband and her sick and dying child that she ultimately lost the money she was attempting to secure, while the Capitol Square "mendicant" who rejected the proffered stamps and local currency in favor of gold or silver specie suffered a similar fate.<sup>56</sup>

The rich on the other hand were charged with growing wealthy at the workers' expense. An October 10, 1863, meeting of the Richmond mechanics and working men noted that "without labor and production the man with his money



could not exist...he consumes all and produces nothing,...a dependence which would tend to degrade rather than elevate the human race."<sup>57</sup>

In addition, the Richmond elite were accused of hiring substitutes to fight in their place, while they themselves stayed home to gouge the families of Confederate soldiers. J.B. Jones observed:

Speculation is running wild in this city; and the highest civil and military officers are said to be engaged, directly or indirectly, in the disgraceful business of smuggling. Mr. Memminger cannot be ignorant of this; and yet these men are allowed to retain their places.

58

This class antagonism usually simmered just below the surface, but occasionally erupted in bitter confrontation, as it did in Richmond in 1863, when a mob of desperate women acted out their extreme frustrations over extortion and speculation on the streets of the Confederate capital

\* \* II \* \*

Like their Louisiana and Virginia sisters, the women involved in the other commodities riots were provoked to action by the same problems of shortages created by impressment and speculation. With the exception of Richmond's problems concerning its role as the Confederate capital, these other Southern riots

conform closely to the Richmond model. Shortages sparked the riots in Cartersville and Mobile; while the salt riot in Dalton was precipitated by the realization that there was not enough salt available to cure the state's winter supply of beef and bacon.<sup>59</sup>

Once again impressment agents and speculators were to blame. Impressment agents not only commandeered supplies from under the noses of needy citizens, but also monopolized the available rail lines, often with the result of preventing goods earmarked for local markets from reaching their destination. This was the case in Charleston, South Carolina, in March of 1863, when the Charleston Mercury carried an impassioned plea urging the government to allocate one day a week for the shipment of goods to noncombatants.<sup>60</sup> Rail transportation was a problem in other cities as well, with railroads in Mississippi, for example, refusing to carry food to the local markets because of the better prices they could charge for shipping impressed Army supplies.<sup>61</sup>

Governors of several southern states, most notably Georgia's Joseph E. Brown, complained constantly to Richmond about impressment irregularities like these, but, with the exception of an 1863 regulatory act, little was done to address the problem.<sup>62</sup> Impressment officers became anathema in Confederate society. The Jackson Crisis referred to them as an "army of [b]arnacles," creatures "like the locusts of Egypt" that

preyed on a helpless people, while to North Carolina's Catherine Devereaux Edmondston, they were simply "Army Worms."<sup>63</sup>

Speculation practices, which were often the result of impressment activity, were behind the riots in Augusta, Milledgeville, and Columbus, Georgia; and a suspected extortioner, Michael Brown, was the target of the dispute in Salisbury.<sup>64</sup> North Carolina's governor, Zebulon B. Vance, was besieged with letters concerning incidents of extortion and speculation within the state.<sup>65</sup> One was from Mary C. Moore, a participant in the Salisbury riot and the wife of a Confederate soldier. Moore worked for one of the government clothing shops earning fifty cents for a pair of lined pants and seventy-five cents for a coat. Even when added to her husband's army pay of \$11.00 per month, she could hardly keep her family fed when extortioners in the market had driven the price of flour up to \$50.00 a barrel and molasses to \$7.80 a gallon.<sup>66</sup>

North Carolina was not alone. Extortioners were making their marks on the economies of other states as well. Letters concerning speculation abound in the Confederate press. For example, one essayist to the Savannah Republican wrote:

After an absence of ten months in the army, I obtained a furlough, and what joy did I anticipate in once more pressing my wife and little ones to my bosom. But imagine my feelings when told by my wife that she



could not get bread enough for my children. She said she had been to five gentlemen and could get no corn, while some in her immediate neighborhood had been known to ship corn to Augusta that they might get extortionate prices. Most of the time of my absence I have been on the march through Mississippi, Alabama, and Upper Georgia, many times with nothing but wet clay for my bed. I have seen my comrades fall on my right and on my left, I have heard the whistling of bullets and seen them strike within a few inches of me; but all of these hardships and dangers only nerved my arm to strike one more blow for my country and her honor. But, sir, when I am told that my little ones are suffering for want through the avarice of those for whom I stand as a wall between the enemy and their property, I feel this the greatest hardship of all. Why, Mr. Editor, the Beast Butler with all his refinements of cruelty could not serve them worse.

67

Letters like these regularly filled the pages of the Republican, as well as other papers such as the Mobile Advertiser and Register, the Charleston Mercury and the Raleigh Standard.<sup>68</sup> The authorship of some of these letters is suspect, given the literacy level of the ordinary Confederate soldier; some may have been composed by a sympathetic Southern press. Nevertheless, the sentiments are sincere and seem to have been those of many Southern citizens.

In addition, the newspapers carried articles on how extortioners worked and "speculated" on what their fate might be at the end of the war or later.<sup>69</sup> The Savannah Republican, in its April 10, 1863 issue, suggested the following scenario that extortioners might expect to await them after death:

It [the Republican] pursues his corpse into Hades, in an instant sees its limbs transformed into a gigantic skeleton hand, instinct with the fierce insatiable mania for grasping. The body itself is metamorphosed into an enormous heart; shaped like a purse and into that heart that hand begins to stuff solid flakes of fire - for there is naught else for the hand to grasp - and the heart is never full and the hand is never weary. But the heart is always about to burst, but never bursts, with the insufferable torment of fullness, yet the fierce hand will never desist from thrusting fresh fire into it. And so the extortioner is righteously requited in everlasting hell.

70

And the Southern Illustrated News published a political cartoon entitled, "Recipe to Get Rid of Extortioners" in its September, 1863, issue. (See Figure 1.4 on p. 40.)

As in the case of Richmond, the result of all this speculation and extortion was to inflate the market prices beyond the means of the average working class citizen. In North Carolina in 1863, two weeks before the riots, bacon was selling for \$6.60 a pound and flour, for \$30.00 a barrel. Boots were \$50.00 a pair, and "longcloth" was \$2.25 a yard. Butter was \$2.00 a pound, and salt was considered "cheap" at \$25.00 a bushel.<sup>71</sup>

In Georgia, things were much the same. In Atlanta, in July of 1862, coffee was selling for \$3.50 a pound, while flour was \$45.00 a barrel.<sup>72</sup> Two years later in Savannah, flour was \$125.00 a sack and salt had risen to an all-time high of \$100.00 a bushel.<sup>73</sup> A standing joke in the Confederacy at this time was that a lady "needed a market basket less for the groceries than for the money





Figure 1.4: RECIPE TO GET RID OF EXTORTIONERS--Chain them to a stake, as above; pile their ill gotten gains around them, and any passer-by will fire the mass. This will have the happy effect, both of ridding the community of their presence, and at the same time reducing the circulating medium.



one must carry." The groceries she could carry home in one hand.<sup>74</sup> No doubt some of these inflated prices represented the devaluation of Confederate currency, but a portion of it was also the work of these "heartless extortioners and official rogues."

Like the extortioners of Richmond, these "heartless rogues" were perceived to be members of upper-class Southern society, men whose wealth and position purchased their freedom from military service and who now filled their pockets with money wrung from the hands of soldiers' wives and children. This bit of doggerel which appeared in the pages of the Charleston Courier illustrated once more the class hostility this kind of activity generated:

#### THE EXTORTIONER

You half-fledg'd Pharisee!  
More hypocrite than he--  
Down to your marrow bones  
Pressing the Church's stones  
With up turn'd eye,  
Invoking Deity  
To scathe our enemies;  
Dealers in thefts and lies--  
Are you any better?  
Quite as bad to the letter!  
With all your pretensions,  
You're of very small dimensions  
Lounging on benches  
Only fit to fill trenches,  
Crowding a hall  
To hear mountebanks bawl!  
Weeping o'er false woes,  
With a 'friend' in his last throes!  
With sanctimonious face  
You thrust boys in your place  
To fill up the ranks,  
While you cut up pranks  
At home,

You Gnome!  
You dress the corn,  
Washed down with a horn!  
Cheating those who fight,  
Filching their last mite,  
To swell your gains.  
While they open their veins!  
That is your gratitude  
Shown in their blood  
Shed in your cause!  
Filling your maws,  
Whilst he with one leg  
Must starve or beg!  
How glorious this war!  
And how proud is a scar!  
When fiddlers and tinkers  
And peddlers and drinkers  
Conjoined with the Trades,  
The 'Bloods' and the 'Blades',  
From a curse draw a blessing!  
War's to them not distressing!  
So long as it floats  
Confederate notes  
Into their purses,  
Why wars are not curses!  
O soul-selling traitors  
May the devil in craters  
Roast you alive!  
Wretches who thrive  
On the woes of the land.  
How they crowd on each hand!  
Truth hates you  
Styx waits you!  
A pestilent crew,  
What cares you  
For the starving wife,  
Whose husband's life  
Went out on bloody plains  
Or 'neath the Yankee's chains  
So decked in kids  
Which God forbids  
In times of woe,  
You nightly go  
To play petit maitre,  
At concert-room or theatre,  
'Patriots' are you?  
May Pluto scare you!  
Drain your veins,  
Hang you in chains!  
A grinning sight  
In realms of might!  
O, crew perfidious  
The very fiends shriek hideous!

But perhaps this letter from a Bladen County, North Carolina, citizen underscores more dramatically the feelings of the working class:

The time has come that we common people has to hav bread or blood & we are bound boath men & women to hav it or die in the attempt Some of us has bin travling for the last month with money in our pockets to buy corn & tyrd men that had plenty & has been unable to buy a bushel holding on for a better price We are willing to gave...two Dollars a bushel but no more for the idea is that the Slave owner has the plantations & the hands to rais the brad stufs & the common people is drove of[f] in the war to fight for the big mans negro & he at home making nearly all the corn that is made & then because he has the play in his own fingers he puts the price on his corn so as to take all the soldiers wages for a few bushels.

76

Clearly the South's poor were tired of fighting the rich man's fight. As greed increasingly compounded the natural difficulty of providing food in wartime, more and more Southern cities became the targets of female insurrection. As was the case in Richmond and Mobile, the women in the rest of these southern cities were tired of dancing to the extortioners' tunes; so they called one of their own. On the streets of Mobile, Richmond, Salisbury and Dalton, they demanded food at a just price. When no one heard their demands, they took it by force.



\* \* \* \* \*

## CHAPTER TWO

\* \* \* \* \*

Rioting women in the Civil War South were usually described in unflattering terms by the public and in the Southern press. The Enquirer described the Richmond mob as a throng of "myrmidon viragoes," while the Examiner viewed its leaders as "Amazons."<sup>1</sup> An eyewitness referred to the women as "flocks of old buzzards, picked geese, and cranes," and the Whig suggested that they were prostitutes.<sup>2</sup> An illustration in the May 23, 1863 issue of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (See p.45.) depicted the rioters as dirty, ill-kempt, barefooted women dressed in rags, suggesting that the women were from "the rough element" in Richmond society.<sup>3</sup>

Women who rioted in other Southern cities did not fare much better. The term "Amazonians" was used here, too, forming the caption for the Savannah Republican's report of the riots in Augusta, Milledgeville and Columbus, while the women of Durham and Greensboro were described as "the most degraded and worthless characters that could be congregated...."<sup>4</sup>

Other accounts treated the women more favorably. The Richmond Examiner described the Dalton and Atlanta women as "ladies," while the women of Salisbury, New





Figure 2.1: Illustration of the Richmond Riot of 1863



Orleans and Cleveland were simply labeled "soldiers' wives," women whose utter frustration over their inability to stretch their husbands' salaries to meet their families' needs drove them to uncharacteristic female behavior.<sup>5</sup>

The dichotomy between these two roles, the "myrmidon virago" and the "soldier's wife," is significant and suggests the belief that these rioting women had stepped outside of the bounds of propriety and were acting in a way contrary to their roles in traditional nineteenth-century American society. This, in fact, was true. Women in nineteenth-century America, especially those of the upper- and middle-class, lived highly circumscribed lives in which they were expected to be pious, pure, domestic, and obedient to men.<sup>6</sup> Well-bred women were not permitted even to speak in public and were certainly not expected to engage in the kind of civil disobedience that the women of Richmond and Mobile did. Working-class women, who were largely the participants in these riots, operated under a somewhat more relaxed code, since their socio-economic position often required them to work outside the home, something no genteel Southern woman would. Nevertheless, these women from the working class often aspired to, or were expected by their superiors, to emulate the behavior of their upper- or middle-class counterparts. Thus their participation in the riots shocked Southern sensibilities.



Descriptions of the rioters raise rather than answer questions concerning the nature of the mob that rioted in Mobile and stormed the streets of Richmond. Who were these women? Were they the viragoes and Amazons the newspapers suggested or merely the desperate wives of Confederate soldiers? Who were their male comrades and why were they not fighting in the Confederate army? Did the speculators or the rioters represent any particular ethnic groups? What role did the police play in suppressing these riots? How were the rioters treated by the courts? And did their brief forays into the realms of power have any lasting effects on their roles in Southern society?

Nothing much is known about the women who participated in the other Southern riots. Although women were apparently arrested in Savannah and Abingdon, they were either released shortly after their arrest or only appeared as an anonymous notation in the Richmond press. The women of Valdosta and Durham and Greensboro and Augusta remain anonymous as well. In other areas like Dalton and Mobile and Salisbury, no women were taken into custody. At present, only the Richmond women remain to provide a glimpse into the lives and motivations of the rioting women of the Civil War South.

As has been the case with other rioters, the Richmond participants left few records of their own which would enable the researcher to learn more about them. None have left written accounts of their roles in the disturbance. In addition, Michael Chesson's attempts to trace them through the 1860 and 1870 Census Reports have been confounded by the use of aliases, and by the fact that these rioters, like many other members of the working class, changed their addresses often and are, thus, difficult to identify.<sup>7</sup> This leaves the Richmond press, and more specifically the Richmond Examiner, as the most authoritative source on the topic, although its assessment must be considered biased by its decidedly upper-class slant. Nevertheless, an examination of these rioters is helpful in attempting to determine the composition of the Richmond mob.

In a few brief hours the Richmond riot ended, but its repercussions persisted for some time to come as the rioters were caught and brought to trial. Although some of the rioters were apprehended on the scene by members of the City Battalion, many more were arrested by private citizens, spectators like Charles H. Wynne and shopkeepers like Robert S. Pollard and James A. Knott, who were instrumental in suppressing the outbreak. Others were arrested several days after the riot

occurred, when their attempts to divide up their "loot" attracted the attention of "law-abiding" citizens.

A total of sixty-eight people were taken into custody and brought before the mayor's court. From there, depending on whether they were charged with a felony or a misdemeanor, they were either sent on to the Richmond hustings court, presided over by Judge William H. Lyons, or to the Circuit Court of Richmond City, under the direction of Judge John A. Meredith.<sup>8</sup> A total of fifty-four cases concerning the riot appeared on Judge Lyons' docket for the May 1863 term.<sup>9</sup> The testimony of these trials appeared in the Richmond Examiner and in the hustings court minutes. Unfortunately, the records of the circuit court were destroyed in the fire of 1865.

These sixty-eight people were merely a fraction of the number who actually participated. Some accounts have placed the Richmond rioters at somewhere around a thousand.<sup>10</sup> This figure seems too high, however, given the amount of space in which the riot took place, the relative ease with which it was suppressed, and the number of people finally apprehended. A more realistic estimate would be a crowd of two to three hundred rioters with an equal number of interested spectators.<sup>11</sup> This estimate is based on the fact that the three hundred women who worked at Wiesiger's Clothing Factory in Richmond were invited to attend the pre-riot meeting at the Belvidere church, as well as a delegation from the



nearby town of Hanover. A number of those women must have been present at the riot the following day.<sup>12</sup>

Incomplete evidence compounds the task of trying to make some sense of the crowd's identity, but seemingly the mob represented a broad cross section of Richmond society. It was not wholly or primarily composed of vagrants, prostitutes, and ne'er-do-wells, but was, instead, made up largely of the Richmond working class who were feeling the pinch of the extortioner's prices, but who were also aided in their efforts by a few of the city's wealthier inhabitants. Although women constituted the bulk of the crowd, men and boys were there as well, and helped the women by breaking in the doors of the shops and carrying the goods home on their backs. From the evidence that is available, a profile of the Richmond rioters has been composed, and appears in Table 2.1 on page 51.

A number of the arrested rioters disappeared from the records shortly after their apprehension. Henry Cook jumped bail the day after he was arrested.<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Mays' only claim to notoriety was that she dropped a ring bearing her initials in Tyler and Sons on the day the riot occurred.<sup>14</sup> Others like Alexander Murray, Sarah Radford, Ann Briggs, Morgan Burns, Margaret Denning, Susan Kelly, and C. Lannegan left only their names in the Richmond papers.

Of the sixty-eight people arrested in the

Table 2.1: Profile of Riot Related Arrests, Richmond, Virginia, April 1863\*

Sex		Residence		Charge		Lawyer	Sentence			
		Oregon Hill	Rocketts Old Field	felony	misdemeanor		acquitted/ discharged	fine & jail less than year	fine & jail more than year	nolle prosequi
Breakdown by Number of Rioters										
Female	43	4	3	5	10	10	5	11	1	1
Male	23	1	1	4	2	5	4	2	3	2
Unknown	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	68	5	4	9	12	15	9	13	4	3
Breakdown by Percentage of Rioters										
Female	63	9	7	12	23	23	12	26	2	2
Male	34	4	4	17	9	22	17	9	13	9
Unknown	3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	100									

\* Based on information known about the sixty-eight rioters arrested in Richmond, Virginia.

Source: Richmond Examiner; Richmond Whig; Richmond Enquirer; Richmond Sentinel; Hustings Court Minutes; Virginia Marriage Bonds: Richmond City; Marriage Bonds For Henrico County Virginia, 1782-1853; Second Annual Directory for the City of Richmond, 1860; Executive Pardon Papers.

disturbance, forty-three were women and twenty three were men, while the sex of the remaining two remains unclear. Although the women were described in the press as a "throng of courtesans," who were "bedizened out in finery," fourteen-year-old Melissa Jane Palmeter appears to have been the only prostitute in the group.<sup>15</sup> Instead the female arrestees seem to have come solidly from Richmond's working class, the wives of painters and cabinetmakers, and seamstresses in the government's employ.

At least thirty of them were married, and more than a few had left children behind on the day of the riot. Some left husbands at home as well. At least six of the women arrested in the Richmond disturbance had husbands employed in the city. A number of the women were armed, usually with their husbands' knives or pistols, or with hatchets which were used to chop down the doors of the stores.

Only a few of the women who were arrested in the Richmond disturbance can be definitely linked to Confederate soldiers. Mary Jackson had a son in the Army of Northern Virginia whom she was trying to get released; Mary Duke's husband was in the Navy; and Margaret Pomfrey had two sons in the Confederate service. This tenuous relationship between the rioters and the soldiers might tend to mitigate the theory that the rioting women were driven to their actions by the paucity of a soldiers' pay



in relation to the high cost of food in the markets. What the newspaper accounts presented as fact in other cities - that the women who rioted in New Orleans, Mobile, Cleveland, and Salisbury were all "soldiers' wives"- seems not to be true in Richmond, where the term was seldom used.<sup>16</sup> With the exception of North Carolina's Mary C. Moore, the names of female rioters in other cities are not known, thus making it impossible to trace their relationship to any Confederate servicemen. No records have been found to date which would directly link the female rioters to women who later received aid from relief agencies as the wives of Confederate soldiers, but the suspicion still persists that these women represented a significant portion of those who took to the streets. Records such as these would never be possible in the case of Richmond, however. In the action following the riot there, the Richmond city council moved to forbid any of the rioting women from receiving aid from the free markets that were established.<sup>17</sup>

The male rioters were described in the Richmond Whig as an "ignoble army of skulkers...The substitute who sold himself to dozens of regiments... Mississippi wharf rats,...deserters,...the off-scourings of Penitentiaries,...[and] the select villains of many nations."<sup>18</sup> Very little of this description can be substantiated by the evidence of the men arrested in the disturbance. Virgil Jones had recently been dismissed

from his job in the City Battalion for attempting to steal Confederate notes, but no evidence suggests that he was brought to trial and convicted of the crime. Although John Lowry's brothel was evidently known to many Richmonders, he doesn't seem to have been considered a member of the city's criminal element. With the exception of Thomas Samanni, Jr., who had a record of previous forgery convictions, these are the only other male rioters which would fit with this part of the Whig's description. Likewise, Germans Frank Wohleb and Benjamin Slemper , Irishmen Robert McKinney and John Lowry, and the Italian Samanni are the only men listed who were of foreign extraction. Instead, many of the male rioters in Richmond may have been young boys, a fact supported by the youth of some of the male arrestees, or else men who were exempted from duty because of their professions. Government workers Francis Brown and Andrew Hawkins would have fallen into this latter group, as would Thomas Palmer; and Benjamin Slemper, Virgil Jones, and Robert McKinney were all present or former members of the City Battalion.

The majority of the rioters probably came from the working class. Ann Enroughty worked at Wiesiger's; and Andrew J. Hawkins and Francis Brown were shoemakers on government contracts, as was Martha Marshall's husband. Martha Cardona's husband was a cabinetmaker, and Barbara Idoll made tents. Mrs. Ould operated a bar on Fourth

Street near Locust Alley, and John D. Lowry ran a bawdy house. Others whose occupations remain unknown listed their residences in the working-class sector of the city. Four of the rioters lived in Oregon Hill, a traditionally working-class neighborhood, while seven lived in Rockett's Old Field, a boat landing near the Confederate Navy Yards and about a two-mile walk from the Richmond city line.

Several of the rioters were decidedly more affluent. Sixteen-year-old Thomas Samanni Jr. was the son of a wealthy family that owned a confectionery shop in the city. He was arrested along with William J. Lusk and James Hampton for breaking into Mina Schweitzer's store. Other wealthy rioters were Sarah Coghill and Mary Butler, women whose families owned real estate in the city, and who were arrested together on Fourteenth Street carrying bacon and brooms. Mrs. Margaret A. Pomfrey, of New Kent, owned slaves and land and property. She was charged with stealing bacon from Pollard and Walker's.

The rioters ran the gamut on age, from the twelve-year-old orphan, Lawrence Martin, to the "enciente" Barbara Idoll, to the aged Mary Johnson. A number were in their teens or early twenties. Elizabeth Ammons, Francis Brown, Mary Jacobs, Benjamin Slemper, and Martha Mudd were all described as "young," while the ages for Lucy Jane Palmeter, James Hampton, and Mary Woodward were listed as fourteen, fifteen, and eighteen, respectively. Virgil Jones was "of a tender age," and



Peter Blake was twenty.<sup>19</sup> Seven of the rioters were in their thirties or forties. Sarah Champion was thirty-five, while "forty" was the age that was given for Mary Duke, Andrew Hawkins, Mary Jackson, John Jones, Frances Kelley, and Minerva Meredith. John D. Lowry was fifty. Mrs. Taliafero was old and childless, while Mary Johnson was described as "a toothless old woman with a determined phis."<sup>20</sup>

As Michael Chesson discovered, several of the rioters used aliases. Elizabeth Ammons was known to some of the witnesses by the name of "Kate," and Mary Duke also answered to the name of "Lucy." Sarah Coghill went by the name of "Martha Taliafero," and Martha Ferguson, at times, used the surname "Jamieson." Virgil Jones used two aliases, "George" and "Orvell", and Lucy Jane Palmetter was arrested later for another offense as "Melissa J. Palmetere." Others were really not aliases at all, but were simply misspellings by the court reporters, For example, Mildred Emory became "Imry" in one account, and Frank Wohleb's German name was spelled "Wallip."

The leader of the riot was identified as Mary Jackson, a female huckster who sold meat in the Second Market for at least seven years before the riot occurred, and whom the Examiner described as "a good specimen of a forty-year-old Amazon with the eye of the Devil."<sup>21</sup> Jackson lived with her husband, Elisha, a house painter,

on Pine Street between Plank Road and Elmwood, in Sydney. For at least ten days before the riot occurred, Jackson complained to various people in the market about the high price of provisions, warning that if the speculators didn't do something to lower them the women were preparing to take matters into their own hands. She was instrumental in planning the meeting at the Belvidere church, and took the podium there to address the crowd. On the morning of the riot, Jackson was armed with a six-barrelled pistol and a bowie knife, and wore a shawl and a hat with a distinctive white feather standing erect from the crown, a description which has found its way into many accounts of the disturbance. The press tried to discredit Jackson by suggesting that she was guilty of a little speculation on her own, but the charges do not seem to be substantiated by any evidence.<sup>22</sup>

Of the sixty-eight arrestees, the charges against forty-three are known. Several who were charged might not seem to be rioters at all, but were, nevertheless labelled as such by the Richmond press and the courts and were brought to trial by the courts with the rest of the riot participants. At least a few were grocers who were charged with receiving stolen goods.. Francis and William Farrand had a grocery store on Fourteenth Street near Mayo's bridge, and Mary Jacobs' husband, Isaac, operated a dry goods store on Eighteenth. They were all mostly less affluent than such merchants as Tyler and

Sons or Pollard and Walker's, and were arrested for receiving merchandise taken in the riot: Jacobs from rioters Mildred Emory, Jennett Williams, and Martha Smith, and the Farrands, from John Hopkins and two other boys. Their participation in the riots suggests the way the war had begun to grind on the small shopkeepers in the South.

Three other people arrested in relation to the riot were charged with using incendiary language. This was the case with Dr. Thomas Palmer, a portly, middle-aged physician from one of the Richmond hospitals, who was arrested on the Capitol steps for commenting that "there was a power behind the throne that was more powerful than the throne--the people."<sup>23</sup> He was later released. Robert McKinney was apprehended on Franklin Street in the middle of a crowd of women, shouting, "God damn it, why don't you go into the cage and tear it down...take what you want, and I'll back you."<sup>24</sup> He was charged with inciting a riot, even though he claimed to be drunk on the day the riot took place. Another outspoken participant was Mrs. Isabella Ould, an Englishwoman whose seditious comments that she "approved of the riot," and "wished the Yankees would come here and sweep the city" ultimately resulted in her arrest. She was later released on five hundred dollars bail.<sup>25</sup>

Three others were arrested by mistake. Lawrence Martin and Mrs. Lane were only intended to be witnesses



in other cases, although in its excitement to cover the story the Examiner listed them among the rioters. It is uncertain whether these two were actually arrested or not; and a third arrestee, Alexander Jennings, was actually trying to suppress the disturbance by handing out needles to the women congregated in front of Knott's store. In the confusion surrounding the fracas, he was taken into custody, but was later acquitted.

The majority of those arrested, thirty-seven, were charged with participating in a riot, stealing, or possession of stolen goods. Virgil Jones whom the Examiner described as "dangerously armed," was accused of stealing six hundred pounds of bacon from Pollard and Walker's. This charge ultimately netted him three years in the penitentiary. Martha Marshall was indicted for rioting, and for stealing a shoulder of bacon from one of the Richmond merchants. Frank Wohleb and Mary McCarthy were apprehended on the corner of Thirteenth Street and Cary, each carrying a middling of bacon. Others took shoes, coffee, socks, hats, flour, and butter, items which they took back to their Oregon Hill neighborhoods and divided among their families and friends. Tracing the ownership of these items proved to be a nightmare for the courts and led to a great deal of confusion during the trials, since it was often difficult to prove exactly which middling of bacon or pair of shoes came from which of the Richmond merchants involved in the fracas.

Fifteen of those charged hired lawyers to represent them. The firm of Crane and Wooten appeared on behalf of Andrew Hawkins, Francis Kelley and Margaret Pomfrey, while Gustavus Myers was the attorney for Mary Jacobs, Martha Smith, Jennett Williams, and Mildred Emory, the four women who were charged together with trying to replenish Jacobs' store from the riot merchandise. Radcliffe and Daner represented Francis Brown, and John Caskie was the lawyer for Mary Woodward and probably Mary Wesley. The ability to hire counsel indicates a greater degree of affluence on the part of some of the arrestees, and may also have helped to mitigate the verdicts. Of the twenty-two cases in which the verdicts are known, four of those rioters found guilty were represented by counsel, while ten of the guilty verdicts were not. Of the five "not guilties", two of the litigants had lawyers and three represented themselves. Of the three nolle prosequis, two were entered by attorneys.

Prosecuting the rioters was, at times, confusing and difficult for the lawyers and justices involved. First, there was the need to define a "riot." The following definition, which apparently became the one used by the Richmond officials, was supplied by A.J. Crane, attorney for the defense in the case of Commonwealth v. Pomfrey:

A riot is a tumultuous disturbance of the public peace by three or more persons assembling together of their own authority, with an intent mutually to assist one another against any who

shall oppose them in the execution of some private object, and afterwards executing the same in a violent and turbulent manner, to the terror of the people, whether the act intended is lawful or not.

26

The attorney for the Commonwealth, Mr. Tazewell, broadened Crane's definition, adding that "any person joining the rioters subsequently to their assembling, was as guilty as they."<sup>27</sup> This expanded definition enabled the courts to treat those charged with such crimes as receiving stolen goods or using inflammatory language along with the rest of the riot arrestees.

Second was the problem of the charges in the case. Were the goods taken in the riot the result of larceny or robbery? Mayor Mayo opined that the riotous thefts were "not larcen[ies] because the goods were not taken secretly or clandestinely" and were "not robber[ies] because the persons from whom they were taken were not put in bodily fear," an observation which might have been disputed by some of the Richmond merchants. Instead they were simply to be considered "misdemeanors."<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, the majority of the rioters were brought before the courts on a misdemeanor charge, while nine were charged with felonies; but for a while, confusion reigned as to which charge was preferable. Evidently a larger number of felonies were reduced to the lesser charge, based on Mayo's opinion and on the apparent difficulty of achieving a conviction on the greater



charge.<sup>29</sup> The case of John D. Lowry illustrates this second point.

Lowry had been charged with receiving stolen goods. Two middlings of bacon were found concealed beneath a pile of women's underclothing in Lowry's bedroom, and probably were taken there by Melissa Palmeter who was a prostitute in Lowry's house. The lower court had rendered a guilty verdict and had sentenced Lowry to a fine of \$100.00, but Judge Meredith set the case aside on appeal, arguing that unless Lowry had known that the goods were stolen in the riot, he could not be considered a rioter or charged with receiving stolen goods. In the new trial that was granted, the Commonwealth failed to prove that Palmeter had given Lowry the bacon. His lawyer entered a plea of nolle prosequi and the case was dismissed.<sup>30</sup>

The Code of Virginia devoted an entire chapter to the prosecution of rioters, and made specifications as to the types of sentences that were to be meted out. Rioters who pulled down or destroyed any dwellings or houses could be "confined to the penitentiary not less than one nor more than five years," while "every rioter and person unlawfully or tumultuously assembled" could be given the same year in jail as well as a hundred dollar fine. Persons carrying concealed weapons were to be fined an additional fifty dollars.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the rioters found guilty of a misdemeanor

received a fine and short jail sentence. Martha Burnett and Sally Mitchell were both fined \$5.00, while Martha Ferguson was fined \$10.00. Laura Gordon and Mary Wesley were charged \$25.00, and Margaret Pomfrey and Francis Brown were charged \$50.00. William Lusk, Minerva Meredith, and Mary Duke paid \$100.00, each. Confinement in the city jail was often brief. Martha Ferguson spent twenty-four hours there, while five additional rioters spent thirty days each. Francis Brown served four months time, even though he claimed he was wearing his stolen boots back to the store "to pay for them."<sup>32</sup>

As prescribed by the Virginia Code of Laws, felony convictions carried stiffer sentences. Mary Jackson's role as the riot's leader earned her the largest sentence in the riot, a term of five years in the state penitentiary. In addition to Jackson, three other rioters are known to have received lengthy prison terms for their parts in the disturbance. Virgil Jones served three years, while Samanni served two; and Benjamin Slemper served three years and eight months.

There is some confusion about Jackson's sentencing, due to the fact that her name has inadvertently been confused in the records with another Richmond rioter, Mrs. Mary Johnson, and historians have been hard-pressed to decide who actually received the sentence. Mike Chesson attributes it to Mary Johnson, but in this he seems to be mistaken.<sup>33</sup> An editorial in the October 13,

1863 edition of the Richmond Enquirer, entitled "Maximum and the Mob," refers to Jackson by name, and to the fact that she "is now meditating on the vanity of violence in the State Penitentiary."<sup>34</sup> Mary Johnson most likely received a prison term, too, since she was charged with a felony for stealing three thousand dollars' worth of bacon from Pollard and Walker's, but it seems more probable that Jackson got the longest sentence.

Chesson has also examined the sentences the rioters received and has come to the conclusion that "a double standard of justice" seems to have prevailed in the cases of "young, attractive, well-dressed" female rioters who were often treated more leniently than a group of older women who were "in many cases widows or the wives or mothers of Confederate soldiers."<sup>35</sup> In addition Chesson has noted that "[s]tiffer sentences were also handed down to male rioters."<sup>36</sup> Age does seem to have been a contributing factor, but not always in the way that Chesson suggests. Sometimes advanced age entitled women to special treatment. Mrs. Taliaferro was granted bail because she was elderly, while none of the younger rioters were pardoned for being too young.

Chesson uses the example of Mary Wesley and Mary Woodward, the two women who were arrested together on a furniture wagon loaded with meat, to point up the difference age and appearance made in their treatment by the court. He argues that Woodward's youth and beauty



led to her case's dismissal, but asserts that the punishment for her "hard featured" companion, Mary Wesley remains "unknown."<sup>37</sup> Wesley's fate is known, however, and points to another way in which the court showed its leniency. Although she was convicted of a misdemeanor and fined \$25.00 and thirty days in jail, Wesley was released after serving only four hours of her sentence "because she had a baby at breast and two children sick with pneumonia."<sup>38</sup> Sarah Champion and Mary Jacobs were both granted bail for similar reasons; and Barbara Idoll was dismissed because of her pregnancy.<sup>39</sup> According to the Examiner, in the days immediately following the melee, "[a] number of other women were permitted to go home to their families."<sup>40</sup> Apparently the courts were charitably inclined if these "Amazons" proved to be mothers, too.

The appearance of the rioters was important, however, and did, at times, seem to influence the outcome of the case, probably because the more affluent jurors tended to identify more closely with the better-dressed litigants. Elizabeth Ammons appeared before the court "handsomely dressed in furs, fine bonnet, and all that," and was described as "indeed, decidedly the best looking of all the rioters."<sup>41</sup> Her case was dismissed. Anna Bell, however, tried a somewhat different approach. Although she was dressed in a "chicken bonnet" and "colors" at the time of the riot, she appeared before the

court "dressed in a handsome suit of mourning with a long flowing veil," probably in an attempt to convince the jury that she was a poor widow in need of relief.<sup>42</sup> This time the ploy didn't work. Bell was found guilty in circuit court and was fined \$75.00 and thirty days in jail. Much of the court testimony appearing in the papers makes note of what the women wore, and supports Chesson's assertion that the rioters' appearance was, at times, crucial, a factor which hasn't been overlooked by the criminals of today.

The appearance of too much affluence could be a liability, however, as the case of Margaret Pomfrey illustrates. Pomfrey was the wealthy woman from New Kent who was charged with stealing bacon from Pollard and Walker's. She tried to deny her guilt, claiming that she was accidentally shoved into the store by the mob when she came to town for a brief visit to the post office and to get provisions the YMCA was said to be supplying, but the courts would have none of her excuses. The Commonwealth's lawyer, Mr. Tazewell, pushed for the maximum sentence in Pomfrey's case, arguing that "for people who have the advantages of moral education their guilt makes their participation in the riot more disgraceful and culpable than for others."<sup>43</sup> Pomfrey's lawyer argued valiantly in her defense, and succeeded in having the sentence reduced. For her participation in the riot, Pomfrey received a \$50.00 fine and thirty days in

jail, in addition to her being exposed to public ridicule as an example of how the ladies of upper-class Richmond were not supposed to behave.

Chesson also argues that the men received harsher penalties than the women. It is true that, of the four rioters receiving lengthy prison terms, three--Samanni, Slemper, and Virgil Jones--were men. Overall, however, a larger percentage of the female rioters were brought to trial and sentenced. Of the forty-three women arrested in the Richmond riot, 35% (15) were charged with either a felony or a misdemeanor, and 28% (12) of the total were ultimately sentenced, while only 26% (6) of the twenty-three arrested males were charged, and only 22% (5) were sentenced. (See Table 2.2.)

Table 2.2: Breakdown of Charges and Sentencing According to Sex*						
Sex	Rioters arrested		Charged with felony or misdemeanor		Found guilty and received fine/sentence	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	43	63	15	35	12	28
Male	23	34	6	26	5	22

\* Based on information known about the sixty-eight rioters arrested in Richmond, Virginia.

Sources: Richmond Examiner, Richmond Whig, Richmond Enquirer, Richmond Sentinel, Hustings Court Minutes.

Being arrested and convicted of a crime must have been an extremely disturbing experience for many of the women involved. Most had never before broken the law and



their lives left them unprepared to face public scrutiny. Convicted rioter Laura Gordon drank an ounce and a half of laudanum after receiving her guilty verdict and had to have her stomach pumped. The judge reduced her stay in jail from thirty days to only four hours, and Gordon was subsequently released into the custody of her family. Widow Frances Kelley escaped but was arrested again in Lynchburg, Virginia, the following year, and was brought back for retrial. Despite her lawyer, George Wooten's plea for clemency based upon Exodus 22:22, a passage which warns against placing afflictions upon "any widow, or fatherless child," Kelley was convicted a second time and was made to serve her original sentence of a month in the city jail.

Three of those convicted asked the governor for mercy. Virgil Jones, Mary Duke, and William J. Lusk all applied to Letcher for pardons. Jones' lawyer mounted a dramatic appeal, presenting a petition signed by thirty-one of Jones' co-workers as evidence of his good character and an impassioned plea from Jones' pregnant wife to save her and her unborn child from "disgrace"; but Letcher remained unmoved. He denied Jones' appeal on July 1, 1863.<sup>44</sup> William J. Lusk suffered a similar fate. Lusk was convicted of a misdemeanor and sentenced to a year in the city jail for lifting female rioters into Knott's store. Claiming to be in ill health, and a patient at Winder Hospital, Lusk appealed to the governor

for clemency. His appeal was also denied on August 11, 1863.<sup>45</sup>

Mary Duke was more fortunate. "A finely dressed woman of forty with a quantity of rouge on her face," Duke was apprehended in front of Schweitzer's store, waving her husband's navy revolver at a man attempting to stop the women from looting it.<sup>46</sup> She was convicted of a misdemeanor, and was fined a hundred dollars and six months in the city jail. Her request for parole was submitted by her doctors who argued that a continued stay would be injurious to her health. Duke suffered from consumption, and had already had two fresh attacks since her incarceration. This, combined with an emotional letter from her fifteen-year-old son, Andrew J. Perdue, who had been selling newspapers to help pay his mother's fine and to care for his three younger sisters, earned Duke her release. She was pardoned the same day that Jones' appeal was denied, July 1, 1863.<sup>47</sup>

\* \* II \* \*

The rioters were the principal actors in the Richmond disturbance but the merchants and the police both played important supporting roles. Who were these targets of the Richmond women's fury; and how successful was the Public Guard in suppressing the disturbance?

In a twenty-five-year retrospective on the riot which appeared in the Richmond Dispatch, Polk Miller, an eyewitness, observed that "some of the merchants attacked were ones who received their merchandise through blockade running adventures."<sup>48</sup> This claim, though an intriguing one, is difficult to address. Although the blockade runners were still doing a brisk business in 1863, no evidence has been uncovered at this time which would link the merchants attacked in Richmond in 1863 with their activities. Likewise, the merchandise taken in the disturbance was seldom the kind that the blockade runners carried. No spices, perfumes, or exotic silks were present in the Examiner's description of the stolen property. Instead, it was the kinds of stuff that would be found in a local grocery or provision shop.

Michael Chesson has commented that some of the lootings had "an anti-semitic focus."<sup>49</sup> This assertion by Chesson bears further examination. The belief that the extortioners were Jewish merchants is borne out in much of the literature which appeared in the Southern press. For example, the opening line of the poem "The Extortioner" (See p.41.), which appeared in the Savannah Republican, refers to the speculator as a "Pharisee." Anti-semitic jokes can be found in Southern newspapers and diaries, too. A riddle in sixteen-year-old Nannie Haskins' Tennessee dairy asked, "Why are the 'Greenbacks' like the Jews? Because they have a father Abraham and



knoweth not their redeemer."<sup>50</sup> This anti-semitic bias was evident in the Southern press as well, and was probably just as prevalent, if not more so, in the industrialized North, where Jewish merchants and bankers were making inroads into previously white Anglo-Saxon territory.

Jews were among the targets in the Richmond riot. Isaac Marcuse, Napthali Ezekiel, and Mina Schweitzer were all victims of the Richmond mob. In addition, at least one Jewish merchant was attacked in Mobile.<sup>51</sup> Anti-semitism abounded in the Richmond riot testimony and was not confined to the Richmond mob. For example, the testimony given by Mina Schweitzer and her brother, Lewis Lichtenstein is quoted in the Richmond Enquirer with heavy Yiddish accents.<sup>52</sup> Jews were on the other side of the riot equation as well. Mary Jacobs, a Jew, was also a convicted riot felon.

As with Miller's assertion that the Richmond merchants were connected to the blockade runners, the suggestion that a large number of Jewish merchants may have been involved in extortionate practices, cannot be substantiated. No study of the extortioners exists at this time which would enable this researcher to accept or reject either of these claims. The literature on the extortioners in the Confederate press seems to be extensive and would provide an appropriate starting place from which an examination on this topic could proceed. A study of these extortioners would prove

useful in helping to flesh out this examination of the Southern riots, and would help to shed additional light on the rioters' motivations.

Concerning the role of the police in suppressing riots, British historian, Clive Emsely, in his comparative examination of the development of law enforcement in France, England, and the United States, entitled Policing and Its Context, has commented that "the provincial police were probably more aware of and as a consequence perhaps more sympathetic to the plight of the poor in times of distress" than the administrators were. Police sometimes identified with the poor since they were often members of the laboring class. Thus, in a food riot, where many local policemen might have identified with the the rioters' cause, the police were often ineffective in suppressing the disturbance; and the use of the military was sometimes required.<sup>53</sup> Such was the case in Richmond.

The Public Guard which suppressed the Richmond riot was not the Richmond police, but a military unit under the command of Governor John Letcher. The police were known as the City Battalion, and at least three of its members or former members were arrested as part of the Richmond mob. Virgil Jones, whose membership in the Battalion is suspect, appeared before the court in his blue policeman's uniform, while another member of the Battalion, Benjamin Slemper, was also in the throng and

was apprehended while climbing into Knott's shoe store through a broken window. Robert McKinney was probably a member of the Battalion, too. He was one of the men accused of inciting the riot. A fourth policeman, described only as "a young man in a blue uniform," was arrested with Margaret Mudd in front of Hiram Tyler's store.

Policemen were involved on the wrong side of the riot in Mobile as well. There an officer came to the aid of two women who had been thrown to the sidewalk and were being assaulted by one of the Mobile merchants. The policeman stopped the merchant, secured the women's release, and then gave the shopkeeper "a severe beating."<sup>54</sup>

Even the use of a para-military force to suppress a group of female rioters was not without its problems. Two eyewitnesses of the Richmond disturbance, Ernest Walthall and Mrs. E. C. Kent, have both commented that the Public Guard would have refused to fire on the rioters, even if commanded to do so. They recognized the faces of too many friends and loved ones in the Richmond crowd.<sup>55</sup> A similar situation prevailed in Alabama, where the refusal of the 17th Alabama to put down the Mobile women led to the use of the Mobile Cadets, and their eventual repulse by the females insurgents.

The idea of using a military force to overpower these rioters seems to have been a repugnant one, and



suggests that in reality the crowds at Richmond and elsewhere were peopled with Confederate wives and mothers. It was one thing to put down a rebellion led by prostitutes and female vagrants and quite another to do so when the women were the wives of men who were pouring out their blood for the Confederacy. So repugnant was this idea, that, according to eyewitness J.J. Gillenwater, a number of soldiers encamped around Richmond at the time of the disturbance vowed to return to camp and get enough men to "clean out" the Public Guard if they dared to open fire on the women.<sup>56</sup>

\* \* III \* \*

The activities of the extortioners and impressment had placed these women in an ambiguous position. In order to provide nurturance for their families, another traditional female role, they had to sacrifice their femininity and become the "female warriors" the term "Amazon" suggests. But what about after the war was over? Did these experiments with civil disobedience permanently alter the way these women viewed or were viewed by the society in which they lived? No evidence suggests that this was the case. Although it might be tempting to agree with Mary Elizabeth Massey and Ann Firor Scott that the Civil War was some kind of a

watershed that altered women's roles in American society, the reality of the situation is probably more accurately expressed by Suzanne Lebsock who argues that, although the war helped women tap "new reserves of competence and daring," its conclusion, in the South, led to the return of a "demoralized" and "exhausted" male population whose social, political, and economic world had been shattered.<sup>57</sup> In light of these events, the only sensible thing for most Southern women to do was to return to their more traditional roles in society and to postpone their own needs until a later day.

This seems to have been the case with the women of Richmond. With the exception of the teen-aged prostitute, Melissa Jane Palmeter, and the escapee, Frances Kelley, none of the women involved in the Richmond riot appeared before the courts again.<sup>58</sup> Their entry into the world of power had been brief and was precipitated by the immediate needs the war had created. Lacking the political voice necessary to make their demands known, they had chosen the only one available - the voice of the mob. When the war was over, they chose to "speak" no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

### CHAPTER THREE

\* \* \* \* \*

The food riots in the South drew attention to serious problems of want and deprivation. Mobs in Richmond, Dalton, and Mobile were demanding food or blood, and accounts in the Southern press supported the idea that many people in the Confederacy were in situations of extreme need. In October of 1863, for example, a woman in Richmond, Virginia, was feeding herself and her two small children from the table scraps of the Chimborazo Hospital, and nine months later, some people in Rabin County, Georgia, would be subsisting upon grass, weeds, and roots.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, something had to be done to provide for the wives and children of Confederate patriots. The government officials had promised help, but the problem was where to get it? Relief programs on the scale that the war demanded had never before been undertaken in America.

Who would provide the relief the women so desperately needed? Would the newly-formed Confederacy be equal to the task? Or would the support have to come from elsewhere? How would the aid be distributed? And who would be eligible to receive help? The answers to all of these questions can be found in an examination of



the county relief agencies and free markets which were created in the riots' wake.

\* \* I \* \*

The Confederate government's role in providing relief has been examined by several scholars who have evaluated its success in relation to its ideological adherence to a states' rights philosophy. Historian Frank Owsley first considered this question in 1926, in a paper entitled, "Defeatism in the Confederacy." As the title of the article suggests, Owsley argued that, although the Confederate war effort was unprecedented in the histories of both Europe and America in terms of the numbers of volunteers, it was undercut by "a psychology of defeatism" which emanated from three main sources: a less than universal Southern interest in the institution of slavery; the suffering of the soldiers and their families; and perceptions of favoritism within the Confederate government which protected the rights and property of large plantation owners in the black belt at the expense of relief programs aimed at the soldiers and the up-country small farmers and backwoodsmen. This perception of favoritism brought the Confederacy into direct conflict with several southern states over its policies of conscription and impressment and over the

problem of relief--conflicts which exacerbated this sense of defeatism and, in some areas, led to the emergence of peace societies which diluted Southern loyalty and hampered the Confederate cause. The South, in a sense, "died of states' rights."<sup>2</sup>

This argument has come in for revision by Paul Escott who maintains that, although the Confederacy was born of a determination to protect the principle of states' rights, the Civil War plunged much of the South into sudden and abject poverty. Economically, the South was unable to be self-supporting. Conscription laws sapped the yeoman workforce and threw many women and children into immediate destitution. These problems led to a transformation in southern values concerning the functioning of a centralized government and its responsibility to provide relief. People expected help from all levels of government, and all levels responded.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, Escott's attempts to revise the Confederacy's welfare role fall short of the mark and he is forced to conclude that its efforts were inadequate and led to a renewal of states' rights conflicts. He never completely refutes Owsley's assertion concerning the inability of the Confederate government to conceptualize and address problems on a national level. Nor does he address the fact that Confederate aid, when provided, was often elitist in nature.

This states' rights question has proved to be

controversial and has provoked heated historiographical debate.<sup>4</sup> Its value, at this point, however, must be considered moot. The more important questions to be asked, now, are what exactly did the Confederacy do? How did it respond to the destitution of its civilian population? And how successful were its efforts in the context of what could have been done?

In truth, official government response must be characterized as offering too little, too late. In the early stages of the war, the Confederacy's attention was necessarily directed elsewhere - to provisioning and supplying an army which lacked the central supply system the Union already possessed - and the needs of its civilians were ignored. When it did act, however, it seemed to favor the planter class. For example, until the law was repealed in 1864, the Confederacy provided legislation which allowed planters with fifteen or twenty Negro slaves to avoid military service by hiring substitutes for themselves and their white overseers. This measure affected less than five per cent of the Southern population and completely neglected the plight of countless yeomen who owned few or no slaves, but were forced to join the Confederate army and leave their farms in the hands of their wives and mothers. Many from this class resented the unfairness of this provision and the hardships it created, and wrote vehement letters like the one David Siler wrote to North Carolina governor Zebulon B. Vance protesting the situation:



For every able bodied man taken from this county, there ought to be an able bodied man retained. We have a number of men in the field now falling little below the number of voters in the county. Our people having poor facilities for communication with other sections have learned to subsist mainly on the immediate productions of, their own labor. Deprive us of that labor and the innocent and helpless must perish though their pockets were filled with current money. You know all about men and their powers of endurance of their wives and children. They can turn away from the graves of comrades and brothers firm in resolve to die as they have died for the sake of objects coming to their recollections with thoughts of home. But what consolation or encouragement can come to a man's heart in an hour of trial from a home where the helpless are perishing for want of his hands to provide....

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The Confederacy's attempts to remedy this problem were spotty at best and most likely came at the urgings of governors like Vance or Georgia's Joseph E. Brown. In December of 1862, for example, Jefferson Davis suspended conscription in the mountainous region of North Carolina and, in the spring of 1863, permitted two hundred Mississippi militiamen to return home to plant crops. These two isolated incidents, however, did little to ameliorate the conditions of extreme want that the war was creating throughout the South.

The inception of the conflict had found the Confederacy unprepared to furnish food for both its army and its civilian population. Since much of the South was involved in single cash crop agriculture, government officials and journalists waged an earnest campaign to

encourage planters to switch over to a greater production of foodstuffs. For example, the Savannah Republican urged that "[o]ne grain of corn in the earth is as a bullet in the heart of a Yankee soldier, and a ridge of potatoes is worth any mile of breastwork from Vicksburg to the Rappahannock."<sup>6</sup> Calls like these came too late for the spring planting of 1861, and by 1862, commodities were in short supply. The absence of so many farmers from the field only exacerbated the problem.

Of course, the Confederate army could not spare the manpower to allow all of the farmers to return home for planting, but a more rational application of conscription and substitution regulations earlier in the war, such as those suggested by David Siler, might have alleviated some of the difficulties. Most of the food grown by the large plantations was earmarked for the Confederate Quartermaster's use, so exempting this class of men and their overseers from service did little to alleviate the deprivation of most civilians.

Later in the war, the Confederacy adopted legislation directed toward removing this exemption status for large plantations. In February of 1864, it passed a law requiring plantation owners seeking exemption to pay a fine of one hundred pounds each of bacon and beef for every able bodied slave in the plantation workforce.<sup>7</sup> The meat was to be sold to either the government or to the soldiers' families at previously

established government prices. This is a perfect example of the Confederacy's "too little, too late" approach. Coming as late as it did, this law lacked the impact it would have had if enacted earlier, before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in many areas of the South, and before a number of large plantations had been devastated by Northern invasion. If enacted in 1862 instead of 1864, for example, this measure would have provided considerably more provisions for the Confederacy to distribute. In addition, the planters operating under the 1864 law had a choice. They could either sell their produce in large quantities to a Confederate supply officer who had money in hand, or reserve it for the use of Confederate women who had little or no money available. Faced with this choice, it is hardly surprising that all but a few opted to do their patriotic duty and feed the Confederate war machine at the expense of its wives and children.

In the final analysis, then, the Confederate government's attempts to resolve its welfare problems must be considered unsuccessful. Hampered by a strict states' rights philosophy, elitist predilections and simple inexperience in difficult areas, the Confederacy in fact failed to address adequately the problems the war was creating on the home front. Into the vacuum that was created by Confederate neglect, state and local agencies stepped in to help.



Individual Southern states provided the preponderance of Confederate relief. In the early stages of the conflict, this took the form of legislation which provided for the allocation and distribution of funds to the impoverished, and attempted to limit speculation. As the war persisted, these programs became more aggressive and included efforts to stimulate home industry and manufacturing, as well as the establishment of state-run relief programs administered at the local level.

In the first year of the war, many southern states enacted welfare legislation. On December 1, 1861, South Carolina approved a law providing aid for the families of invalid veterans of the Confederate Army and Navy, and in the winter of 1862, Louisiana adopted a pension system administered through police juries in the local parishes which allocated ten dollars per month for every dependent wife, widow or parent of a Confederate soldier and five dollars per month for each dependent sibling or child.<sup>8</sup> Florida passed a law during this same time which established a welfare distribution system, and Georgia set aside two and a half million dollars for direct relief.<sup>9</sup>

The amounts budgeted for relief varied from state to state. Louisiana's pension system cost the state a total

of \$5,000,000, while Florida's resulted in the expenditure of \$1,200,000 in treasury notes over a two-year period.<sup>10</sup> Georgia earmarked an additional \$6,000,000 for state aid in December of 1863, and Mississippi distributed a total of \$1,600,000 over eighteen months.<sup>11</sup> Alabama appropriated \$1,000,000 in August of 1863, and, in December of that same year, approved the distribution of an additional \$3,000,000 over the next twelve months.<sup>12</sup>

In perhaps the most aggressive welfare program of the South, the state of North Carolina set aside \$500,000 for relief in 1862, which was followed by an appropriation of an additional \$1,000,000 by February of the following year.<sup>13</sup> These funds were to be distributed in seven North Carolina counties on the basis of the white population in the 1860 census.<sup>14</sup> In December of 1863, the legislature approved additional funds of \$1,000,000 for the indigent families of Confederate soldiers, and \$3,000 for the families of Indian warriors fighting for the Confederate cause.<sup>15</sup> In 1864, two further appropriations were made for this purpose, amounting to \$4,000,000 for white Confederates and \$17,000 for their Indian confreres.<sup>16</sup> In the years 1862-1864, then, the state of North Carolina appropriated a total of \$6,520,000 for relief.

Most states raised the revenue to fund these relief measures through taxes. In 1863, Mississippi imposed a

surtax of 150% on the regular state property tax and authorized its increase in areas of greater need.<sup>17</sup> In that same year, the South Carolina legislature approved a 2% tax-in-kind on rice, corn and wheat, and a similar 5% levy in manufactured goods.<sup>18</sup> As the war continued and Confederate money depreciated in value, more states shifted to this form of revenue funding.

The money was allocated for direct relief and usually took the form of food and clothing and, occasionally, fuel or labor. At times, money was distributed instead, as was the case with the Louisiana pension plan. The state of North Carolina devised an ingenious but initially unsuccessful scheme which required the distribution of cash value coupons to the female recipients which were redeemable for supplies by the local merchants. The initial value of the coupons - from \$5 to \$30 - was too large, however, and the coupons had to be reissued in smaller denominations.<sup>19</sup>

Most of the distribution systems that were established operated through existing county structures, utilizing justices of the peace or parole as county distribution agents. Usually these men were charged with the responsibility of receiving and distributing goods and funds, storing them prior to distribution, and certifying the credentials of those applying for aid. As the war progressed and the volume and scope of the programs grew, some states appointed government agents to



oversee the project. North Carolina took such a step in 1864, providing a salary of \$2500 per year and a matching expense fund for the head of its relief effort.<sup>20</sup>

Some state legislatures also passed laws which were designed as deterrents to extortion and speculation, or authorized governors or state commissioners to seize supplies intended for out-of-state use. In November of 1861, for example, the state of Alabama passed "An Act to Suppress Monopolies," a measure which provided fines or imprisonment for individuals purchasing commodities with the intent of withholding them from the market to raise the price.<sup>21</sup> North Carolina's governor, Zebulon Vance issued a similar proclamation on October 15, 1862, urging his citizens to turn speculators from their doors and to sell their produce, instead, to the state's welfare program.<sup>22</sup> One month later, Vance placed a thirty-day embargo on the exportation of "salt, bacon, pork, beef, corn meal, flour, potatoes, shoes, leather, hides, cotton yarn and cotton and woollen cloth," a measure designed to prevent goods from being exported from the state for speculative gain.<sup>23</sup> This embargo was extended for an additional thirty days on December 26; and, in March of 1863, South Carolina's chief executive, M.L. Bonham approved of a similar plan.<sup>24</sup> Both of these measures, however, exempted Confederate quartermaster and commissary agents, and individuals involved in relief programs in other southern states.<sup>25</sup>

Sometimes governors simply seized supplies to aid the destitute. For example, on November 8, 1861, Alabama's Governor Moore took possession of 1400 sacks of salt from a railroad depot in Montgomery, and, ten days later, Georgia's Joseph E. Brown did the same.<sup>26</sup> Later, when supplies were especially low, governors or commissary agents purchased provisions on the state's behalf. This was the case in 1864, for example, when the governors of Alabama, Louisiana, Virginia and Mississippi purchased corn, bacon, flour, sugar and beef, as well as cotton yarn and cotton and wool cards and cloth for distribution to the needy.<sup>27</sup>

Important commodities in the Confederate economy such as salt and spun cotton and wool cards pointed to the ways in which the individual states attempted to stimulate industrial and home manufacturing. Salt was a vital food preservative and prompted legislatures like that of Georgia to allocate \$500,000 for its purchase alone.<sup>28</sup> Governors like North Carolina's Vance worked to establish saltworks on the state coasts, financed by government subsidy and charged with selling the commodity to southerners at one-third the market price. The largest of these operations at Saltville, Virginia reclaimed salt from the waters of the Atlantic.<sup>29</sup>

Cotton and wool cards which prepared the fibers for spinning were important in stimulating the Confederacy's underdeveloped textile manufacture; but, on the market,

these cards were running for as much as \$75.00 each, a price well beyond the capabilities of most Confederate families. Energetic efforts by governors like Zebulon Vance who smuggled them through the Federal blockade; and states such as Georgia which allocated \$100,000 for their manufacture, brought these cards within the grasp of most Confederate households.<sup>30</sup> Some states even distributed them free.<sup>31</sup>

Measures concerning these two items were important in several ways. In addition to preserving valuable commodities and stimulating domestic production, they enabled Confederate women to contribute to the economy and the war effort by curing bacon and weaving cloth, thus preserving these two traditional roles in a time of turmoil and change.

Although the work of state legislatures was important to Confederate relief programs, county agents did most of the field work, interviewing prospective recipients and allocating and distributing supplies and funds. The records of the Richmond County, North Carolina, relief agency and the one in Spottsylvania County, Virginia, show how the system worked, certainly in two areas of the country and probably more generally.

The Richmond County, North Carolina, agency was large and was comprised of nine separate districts. Each was staffed by a district agent who reported to a Central Committee under the direction of county agent James Leak.



The function of the Richmond County agency was two-fold: to supply and equip several of the state's military units and to administer the state relief program to the families of Confederate volunteers. Stewartsville District agent James Roper's report to the committee on August 27, 1861 reveals both of these functions. At this early stage of the conflict, the preponderance of the committee's budget, which may, at this point, have been based strictly on voluntary contributions, was devoted to defense. In contrast to the \$18.50 allocated for the two women then known to be in need, the agency was expending \$2,954.63 to equip the Scotch Boys, one of the five military units it supplied.<sup>32</sup>

By 1863, however, this had changed, with the needs of the Confederate women and children comprising the bulk of the relief. By this time, the agency was responsible for 606 Richmond County families, a figure which changed not at all between the report of expenditures issued in April of 1863 and the one presented three months later in July. The amount of relief supplied, however, declined, with the July figures representing a 39% drop. (See Table 3.1.) The records for this agency are sketchy. It is difficult to tell why the amount declined or even if funds were distributed every three months, as the April and July reports suggest. End-of-the-month reports for the intervening time could simply be missing from the file.

Table 3.1: Report Of Expenditures, Richmond County, North Carolina Relief Agency, April, July 1863

District	Agent	#Families	April	July
Wolf Pit	Covington	55	230.00	140.00
Steele	Bowden	46	175.00	120.00
Beaver Dam	Gibson	42	175.00	105.00
Rockingham	Northam	108	400.00	275.00
Stewartsville	McLauren	31	125.00	80.00
Mineral Springs	Baldwin	49	225.00	125.00
Williamson	MCNeill	160	680.00	410.00
Laurel Hill	Monroe	50	225.00	125.00
Black Jack	Ellerbee	65	300.00	165.00
Total		606	2535.00	1545.00

Source: Leak-Wall Papers, Southern History Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

By way of contrast, the Spottsylvania County, Virginia, relief agency was a much smaller operation. In February of 1864, for example, it was supplying the needs of only thirty-eight families and two disabled Confederate soldiers. No disbursements for supplying military units are listed and the agency's only concern seems to have been the families of Confederate servicemen. In February of 1864, its sole agent, James Holladay, filed a report of expenditures covering the period from July 3, 1861 to February 20, 1864, showing the agency to have distributed a total of \$11,639.26 in food, cash, and labor.<sup>33</sup>

The Richmond County agents appear to have learned about the families' plights from the women themselves. The records of that agency are full of crudely written requests on ragged pieces of paper, like the one Mary Jane Scholl sent to Central Committeeman Robert Steele:

Sir, please send mee what is coming me by  
brother Jephtha an you will a blidg mee for  
my husban has been gone ever since the 26th  
march an i have not Rec'd nothing yet this  
September the 23d 1862. 34

Agents like Richmond County's Sam Terry went into the field to interview the applicants and to verify their qualifications for receiving aid. The women all had to meet specific criteria which served to reinforce upper-class standards of propriety. They had to be the legally-married wives or widows of Confederate volunteers, or their mothers, sisters or daughters, although an undated Committee report suggested that the aid should be extended to include conscripts as well.<sup>35</sup> No families of substitutes, however, were allowed. When the Wolf Pit District's agent, S.W. Covington, discovered that Sarah Ann Wright's husband had been paid \$250 for his service in the Confederate army, he recommended that her name be stricken from the relief roster.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, the women had to reside within the county in which their husbands or sons had enlisted. This created a difficulty for some women who may have returned home to live with family and friends but who crossed county lines in the process. Some counties cooperated to relieve the hardship such regulations caused. The Richmond County agency, for example, provided relief for a few families residing in Montgomery and Anson counties, but whose husbands had volunteered locally. Other counties, however, were not so generous.



Nearby Moore and Montgomery counties refused to reciprocate where Richmond Countians were involved.<sup>37</sup>

Although all of the Richmond County women were considered to be in need, some of their family members were employed elsewhere. For example, five people in Mrs. McCaskill's family worked in a local factory earning the sum of \$20.00 per month, yet the agent Sam Terry recommended they receive an additional two bushels of corn, thirty pounds of bacon, and fifty pounds of flour. Likewise Mrs. McKinnon received help as well, even though her daughter worked in the factory, too.<sup>38</sup>

Not all of the families helped in Richmond County may have been white. James T. Roper's report of August 27, 1861, carried a request for the county to consider assisting the family of a mulatto named Sanderson, who was a cook in the Confederate army.<sup>39</sup> The name never appears again in any of the records, so probably the relief was not supplied.

The number of dependent children aided in family groups varied. One undated Richmond County relief roster from an unknown district lists twenty-one women and a total of thirty-two dependent children. Five of the women in this group were mothers of Confederate soldiers and two were childless Confederate wives. Thus the remaining fourteen women had, on the average, two children each.<sup>40</sup> Another document in the group, a March, 1862, report for Steele's District, however, suggests a

higher ratio, where the thirteen women listed shared a total of forty-eight children between them. When the two mothers of soldiers are removed from this group, the ratio of women to children becomes 1 to 4.<sup>41</sup>

A similar situation prevailed in Spottsylvania County, Virginia, where Agent James Holladay concluded his 1864 roster with a question concerning what should be done about three applicants representing "difficult classes,...Mrs. Granville Brooks, whose husband is a substitute; Mrs. James Brooks, a mulatto woman; and Mr. Newton Sullivan for his daughters, Mrs. Mordecai Sullivan and Mrs. Barber Oaks, whose husbands deserted to the Yankees..."<sup>42</sup> Of the forty families that did receive aid in Spottsylvania County, thirty-seven were women with dependent children, while the remaining three groups were the relatives of the two disabled veterans and three sisters who were receiving relief under a special order of the court.<sup>43</sup> The families averaged three dependent children each.

Aid seems to have been awarded in relation to family size. The quantities received suggest that it was intended to last for a long period of time, usually a month. The Spottsylvania County records include a distribution schedule which apportioned the rate of supply according to the age of the children being supplied. (See Table 3.2.)

Although foodstuffs comprised the bulk of the relief

occasionally labor, money and clothing were given as well. For example, Richmond County relief agent Sam Terry recommended that several of the women in his Rockingham District receive a small sum for "some little extras" in addition to their monthly stipend of bacon and corn, and urged that the committee provide one dress each "of some warm goods" for the older women in his care.<sup>44</sup> And the Spottsylvania County record book shows that the women there were occasionally supplied with paid labor which was used to chop wood, make repairs, or plow fields for planting.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the Richmond County agents distributed bunches of cotton yarn supplied by the Richmond Manufacturing Company.<sup>46</sup>

Table 3.2: Monthly Rates of Supply  
Spottsylvania County, Virginia Relief Agency

Age in Yrs.	Portion Allowed	Flour	Bacon	Meal
13+	Full	32lbs.	5lbs.	48lbs.
10-12	3/4	24lbs.	3 3/4 lbs.	36lbs.
7-9	1/2	16lbs.	2 1/2 lbs.	24lbs.
4-6	1/3	nearly 11lbs.	1 1/2 lbs.	16lbs.
1-3	1/4	8lbs.	1lb.	12lbs.

Source: Holladay Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Relief efforts like these dotted the South, and, of course, generated their own problems and critics. State relief programs often became snarled in red tape and, at times, labored under charges of inequity and corruption. In 1862, for example, Governor Joseph E. Brown sent a harsh communiqué to the Georgia state legislature complaining that the six million dollars appropriated for



state aid was languishing in government coffers because the courts were not processing applications and sending in requests for funds fast enough.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, the Richmond County, North Carolina, relief agency argued that, although some district agents (like Sam Terry and Robert Steele) were conscientious about their work, others did little or no work at all.<sup>48</sup>

The distribution system was unequal from county to county and from state to state. Poorer counties competed with wealthier ones for the distribution of state funds which were often awarded on the counties' ability to pay taxes or taxes-in-kind rather than on the number of people in the county requiring help. Thus the wealthier counties in the coastal regions containing larger plantations, but fewer needy recipients, were entitled to more relief revenue than their poorer up-country neighbors. State activity also varied greatly. For example, Florida's \$1,200,00 appropriation was hardly utilized, while North Carolina ended the war some \$20,000,000 in debt.<sup>49</sup>

Abuse within the agencies also mitigated their success. At times, agents used the eligibility requirements to suit their own needs. In November of 1863, for example, Louisa Reaves of Wake County, North Carolina, wrote to Zebulon Vance, complaining that the county relief committee and the recipients were at odds. According to Reaves' account, the men were trying to keep

the women from receiving the aid they were due by sticking to technicalities concerning eligibility.<sup>50</sup> At other times, these regulations seem to have been relaxed to suit the needs of the committee. For example, despite the assertion of the Richmond County agency that no substitutes' families would receive help, John McDuffie's family did. McDuffie was substituting for John T. Roper, one of the members of the agency's Central Committee.<sup>51</sup>

Others complained of corrupt agents who withheld supplies or added their own surcharges. A committee of citizens headed by L.C. Wilson wrote to Zebulon Vance in December of 1862, complaining that relief agent Thomas Walton of Burk County was cheating them of their salt by charging then three times the rate demanded by the saltworks. In addition, Walton was also charging them extra fees for such items as transportation, wastage and "trouble with the salt agents."<sup>52</sup> Another letter written a week later complained of similar charges against a different agent and threatened to take the salt by force if something was not done to remedy the situation.<sup>53</sup>

Despite these evidences of inefficiency and corruption, however, the county relief system was a sincere effort on the part of the southern states to step into the void created by the Confederacy's inability to cope with the problem of relief. In the final balance, their successes at accomplishing this task far outweighed their failures.

\* \* III \* \*

In contrast with state and county relief agencies which administered aid to the indigent over larger and more sparsely populated areas, municipal authorities dealing with denser populations had another option at their disposal: the creation of free markets.

In the aftermath of the riot in New Orleans, that city established the first free market to distribute food to the destitute wives and children of Confederate volunteers. On August 13, 1861, the New Orleans free market opened for business in the new waterworks building at the head of Canal Street.<sup>54</sup> This market continued in operation long after the city fell to Federal troops the following year.

The New Orleans market was not unique. Numerous free markets appeared in other cities throughout the South, either as a direct response to female insurrection or as a deterrent to prevent such incidents from occurring. By 1862, for example, free markets were in operation in Atlanta and Savannah, Georgia, Natchez, Mississippi, Charleston, South Carolina, Mobile, Alabama, Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Richmond, Virginia.<sup>55</sup> Although the work of the markets differed in detail, they all bear enough resemblance to the New Orleans market for it to be used as a model of how these organizations functioned.



Evidently plans to establish a free market in New Orleans had been underway for a short time before the riot occurred; but the City Council had been slow to act. On Tuesday, July 31, 1861, the Board of Aldermen had met at 7 p.m. and were read a communiqué from Mayor John T. Monroe concerning his intentions to aid the soldiers' families and suggesting that they establish a depot for this purpose. The aldermen reviewed the mayor's request and decided that it should be "laid on the table subject to call."<sup>56</sup> The next morning the riot took place and the Mayor promised the women that something would be done.

A series of hastily called meetings over the next few days developed the plans for the New Orleans market. The Board of Aldermen approved the use of the waterworks building as a depot, and appointed a Volunteer Relief Committee charged with the organization and operation of the market. The committee was composed of Messrs. Stith, Forstall, DeLabarre, Huckings, Biggs, Davis, Leefe and Hodgkins, each man representing a specific New Orleans district and ultimately responsible for determining the eligibility of the female applicants.<sup>57</sup>

On August 2, 1861, the Board of Assistant Aldermen recommended that the sum of five thousand dollars be allocated for the market's use and, in less than a week, the City Council doubled that amount.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the council set up a subcommittee of the Volunteer Relief Committee, authorized to collect and distribute

vegetables and provisions sent to the waterworks building.<sup>59</sup>

By this time, the community was becoming involved in the project. Local plantation owners sent in their surplus produce in the steamboats the city provided, and local merchants contributed additional items. A.C. Merkel, a butcher in the French market, offered his services for any donated beef, and the Volunteer Relief Committee met daily in Room 6 of City Hall from 9 a.m. to noon to screen the applicants.<sup>60</sup> Like the women who were helped by the county relief agencies, the free market women also had to meet specific criteria. In order to receive aid, a woman had to be the wife of a volunteer and had to bring letters of qualification "from gentlemen in her district," usually doctors, ministers, or aldermen who knew she was destitute.<sup>61</sup> If eligible, the woman was issued a ticket which admitted her to the market on a bi-weekly basis.

The market was open on Tuesdays and Fridays, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. According to the New Orleans Crescent, in its first day of operation it served 732 families, or 2129 individual recipients.<sup>62</sup> As the ranks of the needy grew, the market was soon averaging 1350 families daily, representing an average monthly expenditure of \$8,966 in provisions and \$3,626 in cash.<sup>63</sup> A typical day in the market was described in DeBow's Review:

Each woman is taken in charge by one of the Committee who goes with her to the various stands in the vegetable department, the

baker's department, and the butcher's department...and the applicant retires by the opposite door with a well-filled basket and a dinner for a prince. Corn meal is freely distributed as well as molasses of the best quality, and sugar is given one day and rice the next at the option of the party. The supply is given according to the number of children and is generally sufficient to last until next market day.

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On the day in question, 1305 families were provided with:

39 barrels [of] meal, 9 barrels [of] rice, 1 barrel [of] grits, 1340 loaves [of] bread, 33 sacks [of] Irish potatoes, 11 sacks [of] onions, 2 barrels [of] green corn, 3 barrels [of] cow peas, 4 barrels [of] okra, 150 pumpkins, 5½ barrels [of] molasses, 6 barrels [of] mess beef, ¾ barrel [of] whitefish, ½ barrel [of] roe herring, 6 boxes [of] codfish, 2 kits [of] tongues and sounds, 4 beeves, 1 sack [of] salt, 6 boxes [of] soap, besides various vegetables.

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Four months later, on April 19, 1862, the market provided 1833 families with :

7 bullocks, 219 bushels [of] corn meal, 18 bbls. [of] rice, 155 sacks [of] potatoes, 13 bbls. [of] molasses, 7 bbls. [of] mackerel, 2 boxes [of] codfish, 850 cabbages, 88 bunches leeks, 21 sacks [of] peas, 3 bbls. [of] turnips, 5 sacks of salt, 2 bbls. vinegar.

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Both of these accounts, written from an upper-class perspective, are highly sympathetic to the markets's operation and were intended to refute accusations by Benjamin Butler that the New Orleans elite were



neglecting the needy. This, coupled with the fact that the sizes of barrels and sacks varied, makes it difficult to determine exactly how much each woman actually received. If it seems highly unlikely that the women went home with enough food to make "a dinner for a prince," and one is led to question the palatability of green corn, they did, however, receive a loaf of bread, one or two pounds of meat, cornmeal, and some vegetables twice a week--enough, with frugal management, to make a simple stew and a cornmeal mush. If the woman was fortunate enough to have some other income or a small garden of her own, so much the better.

In addition to commodities, the New Orleans free market also received cash donations from both private individuals and charitable groups which were used to purchase supplies and to defray operational costs. Many charitable organizations raised funds for the market. On August 1, 1861, the proceeds from a "mechanical exhibition of lifelike moving figures, and representations of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, and other grand naval and military spectacles," called "The Panopticon of the South," were contributed to help initiate the market's operation; and on August 8, 1861, a concert by Harry McCarthy netted \$200 for the same purpose.<sup>67</sup> In October of the same year, the German Society of New Orleans donated \$1,000.<sup>68</sup> In February of 1862, the New Orleans Gift Lottery Association raised the sum of \$59,789.50 for the market's continued operation.<sup>69</sup>

The market was supervised by Thomas Murray, and was staffed by a committee of male volunteers whom the DeBow's Review described as being largely composed of the city's "rich merchants."<sup>70</sup> The women the market served were mostly of Irish working-class extraction.<sup>71</sup>

For most of the time, the market ran smoothly, but occasional references to corruption and fraud can be found. On September 11, 1861, for example, the New Orleans Crescent carried an article expressing the Relief Committee's concern that some of the recipients had fraudulently qualified for aid, while another article a month later lamented the dearth of women seeking menial employment as servants and wetnurses and pointed to the market's overwhelming success as a source of the problem.<sup>72</sup> Evidently some thought the New Orleans poor were growing fat and lazy on the market's largess.

On January 1, 1862, Julia LeGrand Waitz, a transplanted Marylander living in the city, entered a pithy account of the market's problems in her diary. For Waitz, the scenes in the market were "quite ludicrous." The city's poor women were becoming so fastidious in their tastes that they grew angry when offered black tea instead of green, and turned up their noses when coffee was unavailable, many of them "cursing their benefactors heartily."<sup>73</sup> Despite these isolated incidents, however, the market continued in operation even after New Orleans was occupied by Benjamin Butler's Federal troops in May of 1862.

Most of the other free markets conformed to the New Orleans model. In Richmond, a committee of 48 men, two from each of the city's 24 districts, canvassed the city's poor neighborhoods and issued tickets to the women who qualified.<sup>74</sup> Two depots received and distributed supplies, one at the corner of Sixth Street and Clay and the other on Cary Street between Tenth and Eleventh. C. Bates and John Lyon served as depot managers, and the YMCA distributed additional provisions from a third depot on Bank Street.<sup>75</sup>

The Supply Association, a committee of "the most influential men in the city," backed the market in Mobile, sending agents throughout the counties to purchase market supplies and screening the female applicants.<sup>76</sup> The Mobile market itself was staffed by women. By September of 1863, the male members of the Citizen's Relief Association had been completely replaced by females, a measure which supposedly freed the men for more direct involvement in the war effort and gave the women something meaningful to do.<sup>77</sup> Despite the Advertiser's suggestions, however, none of the other free markets followed Mobile's lead.

The market in Savannah wasn't "free" at all, but was rather a municipally-owned and operated store, approved by Savannah's mayor Holcombe. It purchased supplies from



local planters and sold them to the public at cost.<sup>78</sup> Like the markets in New Orleans and Richmond, the free market in Natchez issued printed cards which the women exchanged for supplies.<sup>79</sup>

Almost all of the markets relied on private contributions to augment city funds. The market in Mobile was supported by a subscription drive which published daily appeals in the Mobile Advertiser and Register during the latter half of September, 1863, and the free market of Charleston was rescued from almost certain failure by an aggressive campaign involving private contributions and a series of "benefit grand balls" given by the local Hibernian society.<sup>80</sup> A series of concerts and tableaux financed the free market of Baton Rouge, and the fire department of Atlanta held a ball for the benefit of the soldiers' families there.<sup>81</sup>

As Margaret Massey has argued for the free market of New Orleans, the need to finance these free markets stimulated social activities in the South, and Confederate diaries and newspapers are filled with accounts of the preparations for such entertainments. They provided an opportunity for many upper-class Southern women to contribute in an indirect way to the war effort and, at the same time, diverted everyone's attention from the uncontrollably grim realities of the war. They also helped alleviate some of the lower-class suffering and, as a result, helped to reduce the

opportunities for open rebellions, like the ones that had surfaced in Richmond, Savannah, and Mobile.

Although the efforts of these agencies were, at times, heroic, none of them succeeded in completely erasing the face of destitution from the war-torn South. There is no way to determine accurately how many families were actually in need, and the records of the free markets and benevolent societies, where they exist, only show the numbers of those who applied for help. Some women, through a mixture of ignorance and misplaced Southern pride, must have never registered for assistance, while others failed to qualify. Nevertheless, these attempts by the South to deal with wartime destitution are important and show the degree to which the Confederacy was equipped to respond to the problem of social welfare and to the women residing within its borders.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CONCLUSION

\* \* \* \* \*

Herbert Gutman was right. When placed in the context of European riot historiography, the food riots of the Civil War South bear some important resemblances to the food riots which took place in Europe in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, in her examination of food riots in seventeenth-century France, historian Louise Tilly has made a distinction between market riots, entraves, and taxations populaires. She describes market riots as urban disturbances usually aimed at bakers charging too much or making too few loaves; or else at people suspected of hoarding; or at officials acting too slowly in times of food shortages. Tilly defines entraves as rural protests in which wagons of grain were detained in the locality to keep the products for local consumption; and taxations populaires as seizures of goods and their ordered sale at a "just price."<sup>1</sup>

Although the lines between the two are somewhat blurred, most of the Southern food riots examined here conform to Tilly's descriptions of both the market riot and the taxation populaire. They were usually urban or semi-urban protests precipitated by changes in the market



and were aimed either at price-gouging merchants, at people suspected of wartime speculation, or at slow-acting government officials. In many, the women demanded food at a fair price. The goal of the Richmond women who met at the pre-riot meeting was to get the merchants to roll back their prices to previously accepted government levels; and the women in Salisbury, North Carolina, demanded flour at the price paid by the Confederate army. In Durham, Salisbury, and Valdosta, Southern women raided Confederate supply depots, the objects of so much dissatisfaction over impressment activity and the speculation it generated; and the women in Richmond and Mobile bypassed the stores of sympathetic shopkeepers to attack those suspected of hoarding. In New Orleans, the rioters protested the City Council's failure to appropriate funds for their relief; and in Mobile, the women threatened to burn the city if the mayor reneged on his promised help.

As such, all of these crowds demonstrated the type of "moral economy" described by E.P. Thompson in his examination of popular disturbances in eighteenth-century England. For Thompson, "[i]t is possible to detect in almost every eighteenth-century crowd action some legitimizing notion...the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community."<sup>2</sup> John G. Rule and Douglas Hay concur, noting that

customary rights were strong legitimizing forces which provided rioters with the justifications needed for stealing enough food to stay alive.<sup>3</sup>

A belief in customary rights like these and their sanction by the wider society appears to have been at work in the Richmond riot of 1863. At least two accounts of the disturbance contain an apocryphal story about a young emaciated girl seated on a bench in Capitol Square. Her "skeletal arm" startled one of the observers, who noted the procession of women marching into the city and asked the girl if there was a celebration. The girl replied, "There is--we celebrate our right to live. We are starving. As soon as enough of us get together we are going to the bakeries and each of us will take a loaf of bread. That is little enough for the government to give after it has taken all our men."<sup>4</sup>

The women who rioted in America in the nineteenth century seldom took the actual "bread" they demanded, but its symbolic use in the riot rhetoric of the Civil War South suggests another way in which these riots can be compared with their European counterparts. Usually the term "bread" was coupled with the word "blood," as it had been in England in the early eighteenth century. The women who marched through the streets of Mobile carried placards lettered with just such a slogan, and, in Richmond, the women demanded the same. In Dalton, the

women called for "blood" or "salt." Likewise, in England, in 1816, the rioting women of East Anglia shouted, "We must have blood before dinner," and the women of Plymouth dipped a loaf of bread in calve's blood and left it lying in the street.<sup>5</sup> On both sides of the Atlantic, the message was the same. The women were using a similar rhetoric to describe their utter frustration with a society that confronted them with innumerable hardships, but left them with no legitimate voice through which to express their discontent.

Natalie Zemon Davis has examined women who rioted in seventeenth-century France under similar circumstances, and has come to the conclusion that riotous behavior by women was more or less sanctioned by society because the women lacked a political identity.<sup>6</sup> This also seems to have been true about the food riots in the Confederacy. Although the Richmond women were punished for the disturbance that took place there, the women in other Southern cities appear to have escaped prosecution. Despite the size of the riot in Mobile, no women were arrested, and the ones who were taken into custody in Savannah were released a few days later. In most of the other cases the women simply took what they wanted and went home unharmed. Clearly, except in the most flagrant cases, the city officials were not willing to prosecute the female insurgents.



A little more than two months before the riot occurred there, Sarah Bennetta Valentine, a member of one of Richmond's wealthiest families, wrote a letter to her brother, Edward, a sculptor, who was waiting out the war in Europe. Sarah was quite a writer and her letters were often small masterpieces. In this one, however, she chose to comment on the actions of the Virginia legislature which, a few days earlier, had "passed a resolution expressive of their appreciation of the women of Virginia, and unanimously resolved that when the war was over a monument should be erected" in their behalf.<sup>7</sup> If such a monument was ever created, it clearly would not have been intended to memorialize the women who marched through the streets of Richmond in 1863.

The women who rioted in the Civil War South were as much casualties of the war as the men who fought at Manassas and Vicksburg. Their actions focused the attention of society on the problems the war was creating and forced it to reevaluate its responsibilities to those in need. The result was the development of a rudimentary welfare system of fairly broad dimensions. At times, the free markets and relief agencies this system spawned were tainted by charges of fraud and corruption, but, more often they were honest attempts to alleviate wartime suffering. That they sometimes succeeded is to their everlasting credit.

INTRODUCTION:

<sup>1</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 2 August 1861.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 31 July; 3 August 1861.

<sup>4</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 3 August 1861.

<sup>5</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 8 August 1861.

<sup>6</sup>George Rudé, The Crowd in the French Revolution (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.69-79; and E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present 50(1971), p. 82.

<sup>7</sup>Herbert Gutman suggested this last question in 1977 in an essay entitled "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America," in which he argues the two New York City riots in 1837 and 1901 and "the Confederate food riots led by white women in Mobile, Savannah and Richmond" are all "classic European food riots." Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America," in Work Culture and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 59-60.

<sup>8</sup>Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority and Criminal Law," in Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England, by Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>Louise Tilly, "Food Riots as a Form of Political Conflict in France," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 2(1971): 23-4. Tilly describes a market riot as an urban disturbance aimed at bakers charging too much or making too few loaves, or at people suspected of hoarding, or at officials acting too slowly in times of food shortages. An entrave is a localized rural disturbance in which wagons of grain are detained in the locality to keep the produces for local consumption. A taxation populaire is a seizure of goods and an ordered sale of goods at a "just price" with the proceeds being returned to the proprietor.

<sup>10</sup>Thompson, "Moral Economy," pp. 78-9.



- <sup>11</sup> Hay, "Property, Authority and Criminal Law," p. 36.
- <sup>12</sup> John G. Rule, "Wrecking and Coastal Plunder," in Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England, by Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), pp. 185-6.
- <sup>13</sup> Rudé, Crowd in French Revolution, pp. 69-79; and E.P. Thompson, "Moral Economy," pp. 110-119.
- <sup>14</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in Society and Culture in Early Modern France by Natalie Zemon Davis (California: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 127-131.
- <sup>15</sup> David A. Grimsted, "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting," American Historical Review 77(1972): 361-397; and Gutman, Work, Culture and Society.
- <sup>16</sup> Sam Wright, Crowds and Riots: A Study in Social Organization (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978); and Richard Wolff, Riots in the Streets (USA: Tyndale House Publishers, 1968). See also Jules Archer, Riot! A History of Mob Action in the United States (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1974).
- <sup>17</sup> Francis Butler Simkins and James Welch Patton, The Women of the Confederacy (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1936; reprinted by Scholarly Press of St. Clair Shores, Michigan in 1971), pp. 127-128; Bell Irvin Wiley, The Plain People of the Confederacy (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1945), pp. 68-69; and Bell Irvin Wiley, Confederate Women (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 149.
- <sup>18</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, Bonnet Brigades (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 170-174.
- <sup>19</sup> John Beachamp Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, ed. by Howard Swiggett (New York: Old Hickory Bookshop, 1935), pp. 284-286; and Judith W. McGuire, Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War (New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. 202-3. Other descriptions of the riot can be found in Varina Howell Davis, vol. II, Jefferson Davis. Ex-President of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir by His Wife (New York: Belford Co. Publishers, 1890), pp. 373-376; Benjamin R. Fleet, Greenmount: A Virginia Plantation Family During the Civil War, ed. by Betsy Fleet and John D.P. Fuller (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1962), pp. 216-217; Mrs.



E.C. Kent, Four Years in Secessia (n.p., 1864), pp. 24-25; Sarah Radford Munford to Elvira Peyton, 4/1/63, in Sarah Radford Munford Papers, Mss. #2M9237a1, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia; Mrs. Roger A. Pryor, Reminiscences of Peace and War (New York: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1904), pp. 238-239; John Townsend Trowbridge, The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities (Hartford Connecticut: L. Stebbins, 1866), p. 167; and Ernest Taylor Walthall, Hidden Things Brought to Light (Richmond, Virginia: Diets Printing Co., 1933), p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Many of the court records concerning the riot litigation were destroyed in the evacuation and fire of 1865. Only one small portion of the hustings court proceedings and a few documents in Governor John Letcher's papers remain. See Husting Court Minutes, 1862-3, Reel # 96, Virginia State Library and Archives; and Executive Pardon Papers, July 1863, and Executive Papers - Letters Sent to Governor, March - June, 1863, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>21</sup> David Maydole Matteson Papers, Mss. #2955, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>22</sup> Alfred Hoyt Bill, The Beleagured City: Richmond, 1861-1865 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), pp. 165-166; Virginus Dabney, Richmond: The Story of a City (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1976), pp. 181-182; and W. Asbury Christian, Richmond: Her Past and Present (Richmond, Virginia: L.H. Jenkins, 1912), pp. 240-241. Also Paul M. Angle and Earl S. Miers, The Tragic Years 1860-65 (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1960), pp. 526-528 and F.N. Boney, John Letcher of Virginia (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1966), pp. 189-190.

<sup>23</sup> Michael B. Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines? A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riot," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 92(1984): 131-175.

<sup>24</sup> William J. Kimball and Douglas O. Tice have studied the Richmond riot, too, but, unfortunately, their works shed little additional information on the disturbance and lack the scholarly precision that Chesson brings to the topic. See William J. Kimball, "The Bread Riot in Richmond, 1863," Civil War History 7(1961): 149-154; Kimball, Starve or Fall: Richmond and Its People, 1861-1865 (Monograph Publishing-University Microfilms International, 1976); Kimball, "War-Time Richmond," Virginia Cavalcade (Spring, 1962), pp. 33-40; and Douglas

O. Tice, "Bread or Blood," Civil War Times Illustrated 12(1974), pp. 12-19.

<sup>25</sup>H.E. Sterkx, Partners in Rebellion: Alabama Women in the Civil War (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970).

<sup>26</sup>Emory M. Thomas, The Confederate State of Richmond: A Biography of the Capital (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 122. Also by Thomas see The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865 (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); "To Feed the City: Welfare in Wartime Richmond," Virginia Cavalcade, (Summer, 1972); and "The Richmond Bread Riot of 1863," Virginia Cavalcade, (Summer, 1968).

<sup>27</sup>Charles W. Ramsdell, Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy, ed. by Wendell H. Stephenson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969); Frank Owsley, "Defeatism in the Confederacy," North Carolina Historical Review 3(1926): 446-456; and Paul D. Escott, "The Cry of the Sufferers': The Problem of Welfare in the Confederacy," Civil War History 23(1977): 228-240.

<sup>28</sup>Mary Elizabeth Massey, "The Free Market of New Orleans, 1861-1862," Louisiana History 3(1962): 202-220; Leak-Wall Papers, Mss. # 1468, Southern History Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Holladay Family Papers, Mss. #147185a, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

## CHAPTER ONE:

<sup>1</sup>Emory M. Thomas, The Confederate State of Richmond: A Biography of the Capital (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Myra Inman Diary, Mss. # 1866, Southern History Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The term "press" is a derivative of the verb "impress" and means to seize or take by force for public use. It seems to be related to the term "impressment" and could refer both to British practices during the War of 1812 or to Confederate impressment activity in the 1860s.

<sup>3</sup>Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 7 November 1862.

<sup>4</sup>Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 8 November 1862.

<sup>5</sup>Richmond Examiner, 27 March 1863. An account of the riot also appeared in the Charleston Mercury, 25 March 1863.



<sup>6</sup>Savannah Republican, 15 April 1863, reprinted from the Raleigh Progress.

<sup>7</sup>Savannah Republican, 13 April 1863.

<sup>8</sup>Mobile Advertiser and Register, 1 October 1863.

<sup>9</sup>Richmond Whig, 25 March 1864.

<sup>10</sup>Richmond Dispatch, 26 April 1864.

<sup>11</sup>Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel, 23 April 1864.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>New York Herald, 16, 17 July 1861; New York Times, 18 July 1861.

<sup>14</sup>New York Herald, 13 May 1862.

<sup>15</sup>GPO, The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, (Washington, D.C.: n.d.), hereafter cited as O.R., Series 1, Vol. 18, p. 958.

<sup>16</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 3 August 1861; Mobile Advertiser and Register, 11 September 1862; Alexander Lawrence, A Present for Mr. Lincoln: The Story of Savannah from Secession to Sherman (Macon: The Ardivan Press, 1961), pp. 91-92; Richmond Sentinel, 7 April 1863; Charleston Mercury, 17 April 1862.

<sup>17</sup>New Orleans Crescent, 28 April 1862.

<sup>18</sup>Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William Still, Jr. Why the South Lost the Civil War (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 210.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas, The Confederate State of Richmond, p. 112.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., and Bell Irvin Wiley, Confederate Women (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 146.

<sup>21</sup>Thomas, Confederate State of Richmond, p. 112.

<sup>22</sup>Richmond Enquirer, 10 October 1863.

<sup>23</sup>Louis H. Manarin, ed., Richmond at War: Minutes of the City Council, 1861-1865, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 321.



- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 313-319.
- <sup>25</sup>O.R., Series 1, Vol. 18, p. 958.
- <sup>26</sup>P.G. Coughlan to John Letcher, 4/4/63, Executive Papers, Letters Sent to Governor, March-June, 1863, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- <sup>27</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, Vol. 18, pp. 977-978.
- <sup>28</sup>Fred Fleet to Benjamin Fleet, 4/7/63/ in Greenmount: A Virginia Plantation Family during the Civil War, ed. by Betsy Fleet and John Fuller (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1962), pp. 216-217.
- <sup>29</sup>Judith W. McGuire, Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 204. Also Catharine Ann Edmondston, Journal of a Secesh Lady, ed. by Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1979), p. 378; and Richmond Examiner, 4 April 1863.
- <sup>30</sup>Edward A. Pollard, The Life of Jefferson Davis with a Secret History of the Southern Confederacy, (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Library Press, 1869; reprinted 1969), p. 216.
- <sup>31</sup>Varina Howell Davis, Jefferson Davis, Ex President of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir by His Wife, Vol. II (New York: Belford Co., Publishers, 1890), p. 374.
- <sup>32</sup>Richmond Examiner, 4 April 1863.
- <sup>33</sup>Richmond Whig, 6 April 1863.
- <sup>34</sup>Sallie Brock Putnam, Richmond During the War (New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., Pub., 1867), pp. 208-209.
- <sup>35</sup>John Townsend Trowbridge, The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities (Hartford, Conn.: L. Stebbins, 1866), p. 167.
- <sup>36</sup>Michael B. Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines? A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riot," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 92(1984): 133, fn. 5.
- <sup>37</sup>Richmond Examiner, 6 April 1863.
- <sup>38</sup>Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 2 November 1862; Sarah Katherine Stone Holmes, Brokenburn: The Journal of

Kate Stone, ed. by John Q. Anderson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), p. 181.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Radford Munford to Elvira Peyton, 4/1/63, Sarah Radford Munford Papers, Mss. #2m92373a1, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>40</sup> John Beachamp Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, ed. by Howard Swiggett (New York: Old Hickory Bookshop, 1935), p. 200.

<sup>41</sup> Putnam, Richmond During the War, p. 209.

<sup>42</sup> W. Asbury Christian, Richmond: Her Past and Present (Richmond, Va.: L.H. Jenkins, 1912), p. 253.

<sup>43</sup> J.L. Gray to William Gray, 10/21/61, Valentine Family Papers, Mss. # 67-171, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>44</sup> O.R., Ser. 4, Vol. 2, pp. 469-72 and 559-62.

<sup>45</sup> Richmond Dispatch, 7 October 1863; John S. Wise, The End of An Era (New York: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1899), p. 392.

<sup>46</sup> J.B. Jones, Rebel War Clerk's Diary, p. 288.

<sup>47</sup> Richmond Examiner, reprinted in the Savannah Republican, 3 March 1863.

<sup>48</sup> J.B. Jones, Rebel War Clerk's Diary, pp. 294-295.

<sup>49</sup> Richmond Whig, 16 February 1863, quoted in Thomas, Confederate State of Richmond, p. 118.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas S. Berry, "Richmond Commodity Prices," unpublished article printed by Bostwick Press, University of Richmond, 1985, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia, pp. 1-3.

<sup>51</sup> Richmond Examiner, 4 April 1863.

<sup>52</sup> Richmond Examiner, 24 April 1863.

<sup>53</sup> Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?" 134-135.

<sup>54</sup> Richmond Examiner, 4, 27 April 1863.

<sup>55</sup> Richmond Examiner, 7, 18, 24 April; 15 May; 13 October 1863.



- <sup>56</sup>Richmond Examiner, 4, 15 April 1863.
- <sup>57</sup>Richmond Enquirer, 13 October 1863.
- <sup>58</sup>J.B. Jones, Rebel War Clerk's Diary, p. 288.
- <sup>59</sup>Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 7 November 1862; Trowbridge, The South, p. 445; and Savannah Republican, 16 April 1863.
- <sup>60</sup>Charleston Mercury, 19 March 1863. Also Savannah Republican, 25 March 1863.
- <sup>61</sup>John K. Bettersworth, Confederate Mississippi: The People and Policies of a Cotton State in Wartime (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), p. 139.
- <sup>62</sup>O.R., Ser. 4, Vol. 2, pp. 404-405; 943-944.
- <sup>63</sup>Jackson Crisis, 16 January 1863, quoted in Bettersworth, Confederate Mississippi, p. 112; and Catherine Devereaux Edmondston, Journal: 1860-66, ed. by Margaret Mackay Jones (privately published, 1954), p. 44.
- <sup>64</sup>Savannah Republican, 13 April 1863; Richmond Examiner, 27 March 1863.
- <sup>65</sup>Zebulon B. Vance, The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance, ed. by Frontis W. Johnston, vol. 1 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1963), pp. 293-295; 304-305; and 313.
- <sup>66</sup>Mary C. Moore to Zebulon B. Vance, quoted in Charles W. Ramsdell, Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy, ed. by Wendell H. Stephenson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 49.
- <sup>67</sup>Savannah Republican, 23 February 1864.
- <sup>68</sup>Mobile Advertiser and Register, 10, 27 September 1863; Charleston Mercury, 19 May 1863; Raleigh Standard, 9 October 1861; Savannah Republican, 8 April 1863; Richmond Whig, 16 February 1863; Richmond Dispatch, 8 August 1863.
- <sup>69</sup>Raleigh Standard, 9 October 1861; 7 November 1862; Richmond Examiner, 16 April 1863.
- <sup>70</sup>Savannah Republican, 10 April 1863.
- <sup>71</sup>Catherine D. Edmondston, Journal, p. 60.



<sup>72</sup>John R. Hornaday, Atlanta: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (n.p.: American Cities Book Company, 1922), p. 421.

<sup>73</sup>Lawrence, Present for Mr. Lincoln, p. 91.

<sup>74</sup>This account appeared both in Lawrence's Present for Mr. Lincoln, p. 91; and in Peter Joseph, A Little Boy in Confederate Mobile (Mobile: Colonial Mobile Bookshop, 1947), p. 13.

<sup>75</sup>Charleston Daily Courier, 23 February 1863.

<sup>76</sup>Quoted in Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 524.

## CHAPTER TWO:

<sup>1</sup>Richmond Enquirer, 13 October 1863; Richmond Examiner, 4, 6, 24 April 1863.

<sup>2</sup>John Townsend Trowbridge, The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities (Hartford, Connecticut: L. Stebbins, 1866), p. 167; Richmond Whig, 6 April 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 23 May 1863; Richmond Dispatch, 20 January 1889. Prostitutes in the Confederacy were usually described as painted women who dressed in silks and satins and laces rather than in the calico or homespun "respectable" women wore.

<sup>4</sup>Savannah Republican, 13, 15 April 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 7, 8 November 1862; Richmond Examiner, 27 March 1863; New Orleans Picayune, 2 August 1861; Myra Inman Diary, 4/4/62, Mss. #1866, Southern History Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>6</sup>This world of nineteenth-century American women has been ably described by such historians as Barbara Welter, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Barbara Berg. See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," American Quarterly 18(1966): 151-174; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," Signs 1(1975): 1-29; and Barbara Berg, The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism, The Woman and the City, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978; reprinted 1981), pp. 60-142.

<sup>7</sup>Michael B. Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines? A New

Look at the Richmond Bread Riot," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 92 (1984): 156-157.

<sup>8</sup>Richmond Examiner, 7 April 1863.

<sup>9</sup>Richmond Dispatch, 1 May 1863.

<sup>10</sup>For example, see Mrs. Roger A. Pryor, Reminiscences of Peace and War (New York: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1867), p. 239.

<sup>11</sup>John Beachamp Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, ed. by Henry Swiggett (New York: Old Hickory Books, 1935), p. 150.

<sup>12</sup>Richmond Examiner, 24 April 1863.

<sup>13</sup>Richmond Examiner, 6 April 1863.

<sup>14</sup>Richmond Examiner 7 April 1864.

<sup>15</sup>Richmond Whig, 4 April 1863.

<sup>16</sup>Myra Inman Diary, 4/4/62, Mss. # 1866, Southern History Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; New Orleans Picayune, 2 August 1861; Mobile Advertiser and Register, 1 October 1863; and Richmond Examiner 27 March 1863.

<sup>17</sup>Ordinance passed by the Richmond City Council, 4/13/63, in Richmond at War Minutes of the City Council, 1861-1865, ed. by Louis H. Manarin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 320.

<sup>18</sup>Richmond Whig, 6 April 1863.

<sup>19</sup>Executive Pardon Papers, July, 1863, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>20</sup>Richmond Examiner, 6 April 1863.

<sup>21</sup>Richmond Examiner, 4 April 1863.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

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

<sup>24</sup>Richmond Examiner, 6 April 1863.

<sup>25</sup>Richmond Examiner, 4, 6, 8 April 1863.

<sup>26</sup>Richmond Examiner, 15 May 1863.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Richmond Dispatch, 17 June 1863.

<sup>29</sup> Richmond Dispatch, 9 May 1863.

<sup>30</sup> Richmmond Examiner, 6 April; 15 May 1863; Richmond Enquirer, 14 May 1863.

<sup>31</sup> The Code of Virginia: Second Edition including Legislation to the Year 1860 (Richmond: Ritchie Dunnivant & Co., 1860), pp.801-803.

<sup>32</sup> Richmond Examiner, 8 April 1863.

<sup>33</sup> Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?" 164.

<sup>34</sup> Richmond Enquirer, 13 October 1863.

<sup>35</sup> Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?" 163. Chesson's assertion that a large proportion of the crowd were Confederate wives and mothers cannot be substantiated by the evidence used.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>38</sup> Richmond Examiner, 11 May 1863.

<sup>39</sup> Richmond Examiner, 4 April 1863.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Richmond Examiner, 6 April 1863; 15 May 1863.

<sup>42</sup> Richmond Examiner, 4 April 1863.

<sup>43</sup> Richmond Examiner, 20 April; 15 May 1863; Richmond Enquirer, 14 May 1863.

<sup>44</sup> Executive Pardon Papers, July 1863, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>45</sup> Executive Pardon Papers, August 1863, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>46</sup> Richmond Examiner, 15 May 1863.

<sup>47</sup> Executive Pardon Papers, July, 1863, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Virginia.



<sup>48</sup>Richmond Dispatch, 30 December 1888.

<sup>49</sup>Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?" 177.

<sup>50</sup>Nannie E. Haskins Diary, 3/3/63, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>51</sup>Mobile Advertiser and Register, 1 October 1863.

<sup>52</sup>Richmond Enquirer, 4 June 1863.

<sup>53</sup>Clive Emsley, Policing and Its Context, 1750-1862 (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), pp.134-135.

<sup>54</sup>Mobile Advertiser and Register, 1 October 1863.

<sup>55</sup>Ernest Taylor Walthall, Hidden Things Brought to Light (Richmond: Dietz Printing Co., 1933), p. 24; Mrs. E.C. Kent. Four Years in Secessia (n.p., 1864), p. 25.

<sup>56</sup>Richmond Dispatch, 20 January 1889.

<sup>57</sup>Ann Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Mary Elizabeth Massey, Bonnet Brigades (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966); Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1869 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), pp. 246-247.

<sup>58</sup>Palmeter was arrested again in late September of 1863 and was found guilty of grand larceny. She was sentenced to a year in the State Penitentiary. Richmond Enquirer, 1 October 1863.

### CHAPTER THREE:

<sup>1</sup>Richmond Enquirer, 12 October 1863; Savannah Republican, 24 June 1864.

<sup>2</sup>Frank L. Owsley, "Defeatism in the Confederacy," North Carolina Historical Review 3(1926): 446-456.

<sup>3</sup>Paul D. Escott, "'The Cry of the Sufferers': The Problem of Welfare in the Confederacy," Civil War History 23(1977): 228-240.

<sup>4</sup>For the most recent examination of this question see Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones,

and William N. Still, Jr., Why the South Lost the Civil War (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 203-235.

<sup>5</sup>David Weimar Siler to Zebulon B. Vance, 11/3/62, Zebulon B. Vance, The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance, ed. by Frontis W. Johnston, vol. 1 (Raleigh, North Carolina: State Department of Archives and History, 1963), pp. 302-303.

<sup>6</sup>Savannah Republican, 6 April 1863.

<sup>7</sup>The Exemption Law of February 17, 1864 required that plantation owners who wanted their overseers exempted from conscription pay a fine of 100 pounds each of bacon and beef for every able-bodied slave in the workforce. This was to be sold at established low prices either to the government or to the families of Confederate soldiers.

<sup>8</sup>Charleston Mercury, 1 December 1861; Charles W. Ramsdell, Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy, ed. by Wendell H. Stephenson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 60.

<sup>9</sup>William Watson Davis, The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida (New York: n.p., 1913), p. 188; Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 62; Davis, Florida, p. 189.

<sup>11</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, pp. 62-62; John K. Bettersworth, Confederate Mississippi: The People and Policies of a Cotton State in Wartime (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), p. 121.

<sup>12</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup>Clyde Olin Fisher, "The Relief of Soldiers' Families in North Carolina During the Civil War," Southern Atlantic Quarterly 16(1917): 62.

<sup>15</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 65; Fisher, "Relief of Families," 61.

<sup>16</sup>Fisher, "Relief of Families," 61-62.

<sup>17</sup>Bettersworth, Confederate Mississippi, p. 121.



<sup>18</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup>Report of Central Committee for Relief, Richmond County, North Carolina, n.d., Leak-Wall Papers. Mss. # 1468, Southern History Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>20</sup>Fisher, "Relief of Families," 62.

<sup>21</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup>Proclamation to the People of North Carolina, 10/15/62, Vance, Papers, pp. 265-267.

<sup>23</sup>Proclamation of November 26, 1862, Vance, Papers, pp. 404-405.

<sup>24</sup>Charleston Mercury, 18 March 1863.

<sup>25</sup>Vance, Papers, p. 405; Charleston Mercury, 18 March 1863.

<sup>26</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, pp. 63-66; Bell Irvin Wiley, The Plain People of the Confederacy (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), p. 42.

<sup>28</sup>Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup>Vance, Papers, p. xlviii.

<sup>30</sup>Vance, Papers, p. xlix; Ramsdell, Behind the Lines, p. 62.

<sup>31</sup>Vance, Papers, p. xlix.

<sup>32</sup>The other four units were Dockey's Company, B.F. Little's Company, Webb's Company, and the PeeDee Guards. James Roper's Report, 8/27/61, Leak-Wall Papers. The Union Defense Committee fulfilled a similar function in the city of New York, but, through mismanagement, was unable to account for the distribution of large sums of money it received from the City Council. This caused the Board of Aldermen to cut off the UDC's funds, which led to a recurrence of the New York bread riot in May of 1862. See the New York Herald 13 May 1862.

<sup>33</sup>Statement of Supply, 2/20/64, Holladay Family Papers, Mss. # 147185a, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.



- <sup>34</sup>Mary Jane Scholl to Robert Steele, 9/23/62, Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>35</sup>Report of the Central Committee for Relief, Richmond County, North Carolina, n.d., Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>36</sup>S.W. Covington to R.L. Steele, 7/11/62. Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>37</sup>Report of the Central Committee for Relief, Richmond County, North Carolina, n.d., Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>38</sup>Sam Terry's Report, n.d., Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>39</sup>James T. Roper's Report, 8/27/61. Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>40</sup>Relief Roster, no district, n.d., Leak Wall Papers.
- <sup>41</sup>Steele,s District Report, 3/8/62, Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>42</sup>Spottsylvania County Roster, 2/15/64, Holladay Family Papers.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup>Sam Terry's Report, n.d., Leak Wall Papers.
- <sup>45</sup>Holladay Family Papers.
- <sup>46</sup>Report of the Central Committee for Relief, Richmond County, North Carolina, Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>47</sup>Savannah Republican 14 March 1864.
- <sup>48</sup>Report of the Central Committee for Relief, Richmond County, North Carolina, Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>49</sup>W.W. Davis, Florida, p. 189; Fisher, "Relief of Families," 68.
- <sup>50</sup>Louisa Reaves to Zebulon B. Vance, 11/61, quoted in Fisher, "Relief of Families," 67.
- <sup>51</sup>Black Jack District Roster, n.d., Leak-Wall Papers.
- <sup>52</sup>L.C. Wilson to Z. Vance, 12/8/62, Vance, Papers, pp. 427-428.
- <sup>53</sup>J.A. Reves to Z. Vance, 12/5/62, Vance, Papers, pp. 438-439.
- <sup>54</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 8 August 1861.

<sup>55</sup>Alexander A. Lawrence, A Present for Mr. Lincoln: The Story of Savannah for Secession to Sherman (Macon: The Ardivan Press, 1961), pp. 91-92; Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 29 November 1862; Natchez Courier, 29 August 1862; Charleston Courier 17 April 1863; Mobile Advertiser and Register, 1 October 1863; John D. Winters, The Civil War in Louisiana (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), p. 41; Richmond Sentinel, 7 April 1863; Richmond Examiner, 3 April 1863.

<sup>56</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 31 July 1861.

<sup>57</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 3 August 1861.

<sup>58</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 3, 7 August 1861.

<sup>59</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 7 August 1861.

<sup>60</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 8,9 August 1861.

<sup>61</sup>Marion Southwood, "Beauty and Booty": The Watchword of New Orleans (New York: M. Doolady, 1867), p. 85.

<sup>62</sup>New Orleans Crescent, 16 August 1861, quoted in Jefferson Davis Bragg, Louisiana in the Confederacy, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1941), p. 89.

<sup>63</sup>Bragg, Louisiana, p. 89.

<sup>64</sup>DeBow's Review, Vol. 31, December 1861, pp. 558-559.

<sup>65</sup>Southwood, "Beauty and Booty", p. 78.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>67</sup>New Orleans Picayune, 1, 9 August 1861.

<sup>68</sup>Winters, Civil War in Louisiana, p. 40.

<sup>69</sup>New Orleans Crescent, 24 December 1861; 3 February 1862; Bragg, Louisiana, p. 90.

<sup>70</sup>DeBow's Review, December, 1861, p. 559.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>New Orleans Crescent, 11 September; 21 November 1861, quoted in Bragg, Louisiana, p. 90.



<sup>73</sup>Julia E. LeGrand Waitz, The Journal of Julia LeGrand, ed. by Kate Mason Rowland and Mrs. Morriss L. Croxall (Richmond: Everett Waddy Co., 1911), pp. 37-38.

<sup>74</sup>Richmond Sentinel, 7 April 1863.

<sup>75</sup>Richmond Examiner, 3 April 1863.

<sup>76</sup>Kate Cumming, Kate: The Journal of a Confederate Nurse, ed. by Richard Barksdale Harwell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 3/3/63. p. 190.

<sup>77</sup>Mobile Advertiser and Register, 29 September 1863.

<sup>78</sup>Lawrence, Present for Lincoln, pp. 91-92.

<sup>79</sup>Natches Courier, 29 August 1862.

<sup>80</sup>Mobile Advertiser and Register, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 29, 30 September 1863; Charleston Mercury, 25 November 1862; 15, 17, 22, 24, 25 May 1862; Charleston Courier, 10 March; 23 April 1863.

<sup>81</sup>Winters, Civil War in Louisiana, p. 41; John. R. Hornaday, Atlanta: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (n.p., American Cities Book Co., p. 421.

#### CONCLUSION:

<sup>1</sup>Louise Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 2(1971): 23-24.

<sup>2</sup>E.P. Thomspon, "The Moral Economy of the Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present 50(1971), p. 78.

<sup>3</sup>John G. Rule, "Wrecking and Coastal Plunder," in Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England, by Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), pp. 185-186; Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority and Criminal Law," in Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England, by Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), pp. 135-136.

<sup>4</sup>John Beachamp Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, ed. by Howard Swiggett (New York: Old Hickory Bookshop,



1935), pp. 284-285; Mrs. Roger A. Pryor, Reminiscences of Peace and War (New York: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1904), pp. 238-239.

<sup>5</sup>Thompson, "Moral Economy," p. 135.

<sup>6</sup>Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in Society and Culture in Early Modern France by Natalie Zemon Davis (California: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 131.

<sup>7</sup>Sarah Bennetta Valentine to Edward Virginius Valentine, 1/27/63, Valentine Family Papers, Mss. #67-171, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.

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