ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Communications in the Civil War

By **Dr. Thomas R. Flagel,** Columbia State Community College Tennessee

In 1850, wagon trains could transport information from St. Louis to San Francisco in ten weeks. In 1860, the Pony Express conducted the transmission in ten days. By 1862, the telegraph accomplished the task in ten minutes. Not since the invention of movable type printing presses had humankind experienced such acceleration of information. This communication revolution directly impacted the course of the Civil War, both through its enormous capability and its newborn fragility. Telegraph lines, for example, could send detailed information nearly in real time, yet they could be silenced with axes and wire cutters. Railroads were truly lines of communication, yet William Tecumseh Sherman noted that it only took a man and a match to disable them. Over 2,500 newspaper companies were in operation at the start of the war, but shortages soon left many printers without paper and ink, particularly in the Confederacy. At any given time, civilians and combatants could find themselves basking in the dawn of progress or lost in the dark ages.

As the conflict progressed, residents in Union-held areas generally experienced increases in available intelligence, while those within the Confederacy experienced considerable declines. By 1864 this imbalance had become decisive, enabling the Lincoln government to unify a final push to military success, while supporters of the Davis administration increasingly felt isolated within shrinking pockets of resistance.

Overall, the most common forms of wartime communication included:

The spoken word

As simple as it was, speech was the single most ubiquitous form of communication, largely because mid-nineteenth-century America itself functioned primarily by word of mouth. Public transmissions—from sermons to political rallies—revolved around protracted speeches, and skilled orators were the celebrities of the age. Formal education included the staples of rhetoric and elocution. For most of the nation's four million enslaved, much of their existence revolved around verbal communication, deprived as the vast majority were of the enormous power of literacy.

When civilians entered military service, their oral customs went with them. "It should be remembered," said a soldier from the 55th Illinois, "this was the epoch of speech-making, and that the most popular stump orator was apt to be considered the most deserving officer."[1] From top brass to lowly privates, their news, orders, gossip, instructions, warnings, passwords, and taunts came chiefly through voice, partly by necessity. Somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of Union soldiers could not read or write. For Confederates, the proportion was nearer 20 percent. In some remote rural areas, illiteracy reached 40 percent. In addition, officers and sergeants on both sides worked around a shortage of manuals, maps, time, and paper. Enlisted men spent interminable hours in drill, learning to perform via simple verbal cues; "move at the quick step," "wheel right," "charge bayonets," etc.[2]

Naturally, the medium could be problematic. Without written instructions, detailed orders were easily forgotten, misinterpreted, or refuted. During the Battle of Fair Oaks, for example, the otherwise dependable James Longstreet either forgot or misunderstood verbal orders and marched his troops down the wrong road in the wrong direction. The real-time pressure of combat also dictated verbal chains of command. For instance, the practice of massing infantry in close quarters was less a matter of obsolete tactics than a reflection of primitive communication, and it was often most lethal to the officer class. Field officers routinely conducted combat operations in person, issuing commands directly to their troops. Notably, around 6 percent of all enlisted men were killed in action or died of their wounds, whereas the same fate claimed over 12 percent of generals.[3]

During periods of rest, conversation was a principal pastime. Soldiers chatted about home, politics, past and impending battles, and everything else from the lofty to the mundane. Troops in opposing trenches commonly exchanged words with their counterparts. From jibes of "why don't you come on over, Billy Yank?" to offers of tobacco for coffee. In many instances, men in opposing rifle pits were kind enough to warn each other of an imminent attack, giving each other a few precious seconds to vacate their sacrificial positions before it was too late.[4]

In the postwar era, talking eventually became a primary coping mechanism among combat veterans, where formal and informal gatherings intrinsically functioned as group therapy. Reconnecting with those who underwent the same trials, created a safe and supportive environment for those otherwise unable to address the past on their own.[5] In time, this would become known as

[1] *The Story of the Fifty-Fifth Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Clinton, MA: W.J. Coulter, 1887), 49.
[2] Antebellum literacy rates from James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 19-20.
[3] Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), xxi.
[4] David Madden, ed., *Beyond the Battlefield* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 83-85, 164-5.
[5] For the use of group engagement of shared memories among veterans, see Erwin Randolph Parson, "The Role of Psychodynamic Group Therapy in the Treatment of the Combat Veteran," in Harvey J. Schwartz, ed., *Psychotherapy of the Combat Veteran* (Lancaster, U.K.: MTP Press, 1984), 153-219.

"the talking cure," an organic act similar to the late nineteenth-century invention of psychotherapy.[6]

Newspapers

For civilians and soldiers alike, most of the war involved their immediate and personal surroundings. Whatever sense they attained of the big picture came primarily through newsprint, much like it had in the antebellum years. Yet even then, papers were most accessible for those in urban areas, and nine of the ten largest cities in the US were in the North. With its million residents, New York boasted nearly a score of dailies, whereas Richmond had five. The sensationalist New York *Herald* printed more than 100,000 copies daily, thanks to state-of-the-art steam-powered printers and a small army of employers and correspondents. By comparison, the fire-eating *Charleston Mercury* printed just three times a week and rarely surpassed 5,000 subscribers.[7]

Once again the lack of materials, withering transportation systems, and inflation steadily eroded the Confederacy's ability to stay connected.[8] Seceding states possessed over 600 newspapers during the war, but that total fell to fewer than 260 by 1865.[9] In contrast, the North hosted over 1,500 papers, and most fared well due to demand, although many also felt pressures brought on by the war. The editor of the *Cedar Valley Times* in Iowa lamented rising costs, noting that he paid $6 per bundle to print his paper in 1861, and at war's end the cost reached $16 per bundle."[10]

Regardless of their loyalties, reporters and editors also struggled to find accurate information, a prime example being the frantic guesses of Robert E. Lee's objectives at the start of his summer 1863 campaign. The New York *Herald* hypothesized his targets were Harrisburg and/or Philadelphia.[11] The *Memphis Appeal*, printing in absentia in Atlanta, believed Lee was headed for Wheeling or Pittsburgh.[12] In the District of Columbia, editors of the *Alexandria Gazette*

[6] For further descriptions of the "talking cure" in the early twentieth century, see: Joseph D. Lichtenberg, "*The Talking Cure": A Descriptive Guide to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2012), ix-x; and Man Cheung Chung and Michael E. Hyland, *History and Philosophy of Psychology* (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley and Sons, 2012), 193-4.
[7] Robert A. Rutland, *The Newsmongers: Journalism in the Life of the Nation, 1690-1972* (New York: The Dial Press, 1973), 163, 189, 193; Andrews. *The North Reports the Civil War* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955), 19-21. J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil W*ar, 36-37; David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 187.
[8] Michael T. Bernath, *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2010), 252.
[9] For an examination of newsprint decline in the wartime South, see Debra Reddin van Tuyll, Nancy Mackenzie DuPont, and Joseph R. Hayden, *Journalism in the Fallen Confederacy* (New York: Palgrave, 2015).
[10] *Cedar Valley Times* editor C.M. Hollis quoted in Luther A. Brewer and Barthinius L. Wick, *History of Linn County of Iowa: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time,* 2 vols. (Chicago: Pioneer Publishing, 1911), 1:112.
[11] *New York Herald*, May 30, 1863, p. 6.
[12] *Memphis Appeal* (Atlanta, GA), July 6, 1863, p. 2.

believed the Army of Northern Virginia would either move southwest from Fredericksburg, to solidify its position in Virginia, or he would attack Washington, D.C.[13] Editors of Alabama's *Mobile Register* joked about this common example of journalistic guesswork, stating that they would not surprise them if Lee "alights from a balloon in the park of New York City, sweeps like an eagle upon Grant in the great valley, or sails up the Mississippi River on board of the fleet built for the Emperor of China."[14]

One area in which reporters tried to be considerate and careful (but were often at the mercy of rushed information) involved reporting casualty lists. Such data was particularly important to community papers, whose readership rightly anguished over pending battles involving loved ones. Regiments and companies frequently consisted of men from the same area, and any military engagement they encountered could prove costly to multiple families. As one editor from an Iowa weekly recognized, "We were not sensationalists in those days. The events that we had to chronicle needed no trickery of headlines or large type to command attention. Here are the lists of dead and wounded in an Iowa regiment at the battle of Winchester. Do you think it needed a flaming poster effect to secure reading of that column? There are the names of friends and neighbors."[15]

Comparatively, papers were more abundant in Union camps, a direct reflection of easier access, wider selection, and greater supply of paper and machinery. Confederates attained a considerable amount of this print via trade. One Virginia soldier wrote home, "The Yankees are still on this side of the river. The picket lines are within speaking distance of each other and we exchange newspapers with them every day…"[16]

When the enlisted men failed to get their hands on civilian newspapers, they wrote their own. Printing on nearby presses or on small traveling ones acquired along the way, soldiers produced as many as 150 camp, garrison, and hospital papers in the war, with names like the *Waltonville War Cry*, *The Rebel Banner*, *The Federal Knapsack.* At least three Union presses named their paper *Stars and Stripes*.[17]

Mail

The most prevalent and lasting link between the military and civilian populations came by way of personal mail. Surviving letters have also given later generations intimate glimpses into a soldier's everyday life. On every kind of paper under all imaginable conditions, combatants also

[13] *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, D.C.), May 29, 1863, p. 4.
[14] *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register* (Mobile, AL), June 20, 1863 quoted in J. Cutlery Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 307.
[15] *History of Linn County*, 1:112.
[16] Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 165.
[17] Williamson County Archives, Microfilm *Franklin Review Appeal* (Misc.) 1821-1941, Franklin, TN; Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 112; Wiley, *Life of Billy Yank*, 179-83.

wrote or dictated millions of letters, expressing their fears, desires, frustrations, assumptions, and experiences. In turn, the men read of the same from home.

Mail also functioned as a physical lifeline as much as an emotional one. Troops asked for clothes, food, medicines, illicit alcohols, and news of any type. Friends and family obliged as best they could, as did the postal services. There were accounts of deliveries speedy enough to transport cooked meats and jarred fruits to their addressees.[18] Book, journal, magazine, and newspaper publishers also supplied their subscribers through the mail. More than anything else, the men simply asked their friends and family to send a letter in return, plus paper, ink, and stamps if they could. Unfortunately, enemy activity, mobile armies, and the low priority of mail bags on supply trains meant that soldiers wrote far more letters than they received.[19]

In June 1861, both the United States and the Confederacy suspended all service to the opposing side, forcing citizens to use private couriers for any correspondence between North and South. Thereafter, as the dominant rail and shipping power, the Union allowed its populace in and out of uniform to stay relatively well-connected. In turn, the Confederacy, highly dependent on Northern and European sources for ink, paper, and transportation equipment, struggled severely. Richmond's periodical the *Christian Observer,* as an example, could only ship its editions to less than half its subscribers \ by the summer of 1864.[20] Countless bags of Confederate mail went undelivered, either captured or cut off with increasing frequency.

Photographs

For many men in the middle 1800's, the Civil War was the first, and for some the only time they had their photograph taken. When circumstances allowed, soldiers ventured to a nearby studio or traveling photographer, parted with a week's pay, and received a dozen copies of their shadow, as the photographs were called. Thus, friends and family could stay visually connected to their boy. Conversely, soldiers in the field received images of family and sweethearts from back home, although the privilege came more often to Union troops, whose region had greater access to the equipment, glass, and chemicals required.[21]

By late 1862, unit photos, cityscapes, and landscapes became more common, shown in studios and through individual copies (the technology was not yet available to transfer images to newsprint). These images of camps, forts, and hospitals brought a sense of realism to the public. Shots of battlefields and their dead, taken from a few hours to several days after the fighting, brought much attention to the hearts and minds on the home front. In a foreshadowing of

[18] Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield,* 214-5.
[19] Ibid., 217-8; Wiley, *Life of Johnny Reb,* 194.
[20] Michael T. Bernath, *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2010), 252.
[21] Madden, *Arms and Equipment,* 113; Wiley, *Life of Billy Yank,* 25.

television's impact on the Vietnam Conflict, ghastly scenes intensified popular movements for and against the war's continuation.[22]

A few insightful military men recognized photography's potential. The camera made an excellent copy machine for large and complex maps. Intelligence officers poured over group photos to find spies. The Union Navy photographed battle-damaged coastal forts to gauge the effects of naval bombardment. The Union Army studied landscape shots, scrutinizing the topography for prime defense and depot positions.[23] Through more than one hundred images taken in his political career, Lincoln used his own likeness to bond with his electorate and to foster an image of a statesmanship (to counter perceptions that he was merely a backcountry lawyer). In contrast, Jefferson Davis rarely had his portrait taken, opting for personal presence to communicate his authority. [24]

Despite the newness, expense, and fragility of their medium, photographers produced more than ten thousand landscapes on tin, copper, or glass during the Civil War. Of the *carte de visite* taken of the humble soldier, there were perhaps a million, the vast majority being northern exposures.[25]

Written reports and dispatches

The Civil War transpired before science and technology brought typewriters, photocopiers, and even carbon paper, yet the military machines from both sides still managed to produce enough paperwork to fill archives beyond capacity in a few short years. By 1865, written dispatches and printed materials from the Union Adjutant General's Office were so voluminous as to occupy a third of the floor space of the War Department. The Confederate military retained far less paperwork due to a smaller administrative network, shortages of writing and printing equipment, and the destruction of much of their documents in the last month of the war, yet whole warehouses in and around Washington were filled with captured or copied Confederate documents by 1866.

A considerable amount came from the necessary bureaucracy of conducting a continental war. Requisitions required at least three copies, and muster sheets required five. For every immortal quote on any major battlefield, there were thousands of pages of maneuver orders, promotions and reassignments, muster rolls, quartermaster reports, medical reports, correspondences, and responses that kept the machine running.

[22] Madden, *Arms and Equipment,* 11; Bob Zeller, *Civil War in Depth* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997), 13-17.
[23] Henig and Niderost, *Civil War Firsts,* 251-2.
[24] For insightful analysis on Lincoln's purposeful relationship with visual imagery as a means of public and private connecting, see Mark E. Neely, Jr, and Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln Family Album* (Urbandale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006),
[25] Henig and Niderost, *CW Firsts,* 250-2.

In 1864, the U.S. Congress allocated $15,000 to assemble for posterity the war's most important military reports and dispatches. Some $3 million and several decades later, the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* totaled 200,000 pages, which was only a fraction of conflict's paperwork. Excluded from the series were items not from the two armed forces, any post war reports, contracts, discharges, invention proposals, and anything deemed historically insignificant. Also lost to time were the untold mountains of communiques, though traces and caches are still being discovered in public and private collections.

Telegraphy

The era of electronic information essentially began in the 1830s with the emergence of the magnetic telegraph. The rudimentary system consisted of a sending and receiving device, a battery, and a length of copper wire strung along poles and through trees. Additional receivers and batteries, set at regular intervals, amplified and forwarded the signal. By 1860, though multiple messaging languages were in operation, the industry gravitated increasingly toward a simple binary code developed by Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail.[26]

Both Confederate and Union telegraph operations were largely conductored through civilian companies and employees for the first two years of the war. Thereafter, the warring governments formalized greater control, with the Confederacy networking through the Adjutant General's Department, and the U.S. through a Military Telegraph Corps, the latter working in conjunction with the Signal Corps until competition for resources led to separation of the two entities in August 1864. All Union military wire service was under the control of the War Department and not the generals in the field, much to the frustration of the latter. (Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton was in fact a former director of the Atlantic and Ohio Telegraph Company.)[27]

More than any other form of communication, the Union dominated telegraphy. The South employed approximately 1,500 telegraphers whereas the North had over 12,000—a number larger than most Confederate armies. Both sides continued to depend heavily on private corporations for hardware and operation, but Southern interests had nothing that could rival the size or wealth of northern-based companies such as Western Union or American Telegraph. The Confederacy gradually lost what little equipment it possessed, never having more than 500 miles of wire in operation at any given time. In contrast, the Union eventually laid down 15,000 miles of wire, enough to span the continent five times. While Lincoln ended each working day with a visit to the War Department telegraph office, often spending extended hours reading and sending messages

[26] E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (New York: New American Library, 1979), 59-61; Michael J. Varhola, *Everyday Life During the Civil War* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1999), 178.
[27] Jack Coggins, *Arms and Equipment of the Civil War* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1990),106-7.

through his boys in the telegraph office, Jefferson Davis had reason to keep use to a minimum. With limited means and engineers, Confederate cipher was often intercepted and deciphered far more often than Union code.[28]

Signal corps

In 1859, Army surgeon A.J. Myer and West Point instructor Edward Porter Alexander experimented with a new long-distance communication system called wigwag. With the use of flags or torches, Myer and Alexander could send and receive visual messages miles away from each other. In two short years, the system would prove its worth under fire.[29]

Perched on hilltops and in tree roosts, in fort towers and on sailing vessels, both Union and Confederate Signal Corps maintained lines of communication, day and night, through much of the war. The method proved most valuable when other means, such as telegraphs and couriers, were cut off altogether. Some relays stretched as far as thirty miles. In the field, each brigade or division had a crew of three to five men. The team perpetually manned a telescope, awaiting incoming messages. In sending, a single flag or torch wigwagged numeric signals. For example, a wave right to left signified a 1, a wave only from the right meant 2, and a dip forward showed 3.[30]

There were disadvantages. As was feared, transmission from open positions made messages susceptible to interception. Commanding the high ground at Gettysburg, for example, Union forces reportedly intercepted a number of Confederate directives on troop movements. Both sides minimized risk by coding, encrypting, and abbreviating messages as often as possible. The job itself was a relatively dangerous one. Flagmen were prone to heavy concentrations of enemy fire. On both sides, one out of every twelve in the Signal Corps became a casualty.[31]

The success of the wigwag system came largely from the direction and initiative of its inventors. Myer went on to become the U.S. Army's first signal officer. Alexander, a Georgian, served as the Confederate Chief of Signal Service at First Manassas. He later became an artillery officer under Lieutenant General James Longstreet.[32]

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[28] Mark M Boatner III, *Civil War Dictionary* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 792; Ken Beauchamp, *History of Telegraphy* (London: Institute of Engineering and Technology, 2008), 111-2. On Lincoln and the War Department Telegraph Office, see David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 392; David H. Bates, *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939).

[29] Philip Katcher, *Civil War Source Book* (New York: Facts on File, 1992), 85.

[30] Coggins, *Arms and Equipment,* 107.

[31] United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. in 128 parts (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, volume 27, part 1, p. 199-207;; Coggins, *Arms and Equipment,* 107;

[32] Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 7, 576-7; Gerald S. Henig and Eric Niderost; *Civil War Firsts* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books 2001), 91.

Battle flags

Whether symbolizing the company, regiment, or country, a battle flag could be as instructional as it was inspirational. Lines could move, break, shift, and move again. Rumbling wagons, screaming animals, and thundering weapons drowned out voices and bugles. Throughout all the confusion, a soldier depended on his unit's banner to instantly show where his comrades were and where they were headed.

It was the highest honor and a considerable act of courage to be in the color guard, for not only did flag bearers act as the nucleus for the unit, they were also destined to be a key target for the opposition. One Texas infantry regiment lost eight flag bearers at Antietam. A North Carolina unit lost fourteen at Gettysburg. There are several accounts where men held their standard aloft in battle despite missing parts of their bodies.[33]

Accordingly, capturing a battle flag was a most prestigious accomplishment. Such a prize testified that the opposition was rendered effectively headless during a fight. Nowhere was this better proven than at First Manassas, where the general lack of battle flags contributed to the chaos of one of the ugliest and most disjointed contests of the war.[34]

One flag often sent the wrong signal. The first national flag of the Confederacy, with its three horizontal bars of red and white, with an upper-left canton of white stars on a blue field, looked too much like the Union flag at a distance. To resolve the problem, a new version was adopted in March 1863, sporting a canton of the square Army of Northern Virginia Battle Flag resting on a white field. But in a calm wind, this second version resembled a flag of surrender. A final version contained a vertical red bar at the flag's right edge, but this came just months before the end of the war. Regardless, national banners garnered little attention during pitched battles. Emblems of immediate importance were those representing companies, regiments, and occasionally brigades, the units with which the individual combatant mostly identified and operated. For Confederate soldiers especially, national and army battle flag were rarely seen and far from uniform. The rectangle Confederate flag so common in nostalgic paintings and current events made its first appearance in 1864 for the dwindling Army of Tennessee, and even then its presence was uncommon and its manifestations varied.[35]

Drums and bugles

[33] Wiley, *Life of Johnny Reb*, 81-82.
[34] Herman Hattaway, *Shades of Blue and Gray* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 50.
[35] John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 12-5, 42-4.

Union regulations called for a minimum of two musicians in each regiment—a drummer and a bugler. On the field, verbal communications traveled only so far, especially during the noise of battle. Visual communications were just as limited by weather, smoke, terrain, and cover of woods. Drums and bugles however, could relay instructions to a thousand men in seconds.

Each brigade North and South had between fifteen and forty different bugle and drum calls. There were the basics, such as Reveille or the similar Assembly, the Officers Call, or the much-awaited Dinner Call. In camp, men knew when to fall in for drill, water horses, prepare to march, assemble for roll call, and extinguish campfires by way of snare rattles and sounding brass. Posted closely to commanding officers, drummer boys and buglers also relayed commands in combat.

From sunup to lights out, from saddle up to march forward, bugles and drums directed the concert. The tradition lingers today. Reveille and Taps, the latter call originating in the Civil War, and both are played every day in the U.S. Army.[36]

Soundscapes

A growing approach Civil War historiography involves the role of sound, and both warring parties deliberately used noise to inform, control, and intimidate. Mark M. Smith hypothesizes the relative dearth of secondary material on wartime sound stems from print-centric research by scholars living within an increasingly visual society. He assesses that nineteenth-century Americans were far more attuned to their soundscapes, or what R. Murray Shafer refers to as collective "keynote sounds," the familiar acoustic ambiences of everyday life.[37]

Some of it was random and acute, like rifle shots. Much of it was pervasive, such as soldiers, laborers, wagons, caissons, and animals milling about to show power over potentially uncooperative populations. For civilians under occupation (especially for the ruling classes) the emerging atmosphere sounded alien, insistent, intrusive, and it perpetually reminded them that they no longer controlled the volume and tempo of social composition. This was especially the case with Union occupation sites in the South, and the tactic often worked. Stephen Handel finds that prolonged exposure to invasive sounds tends to induce resignation and even submissiveness, particularly if such noises are so overpowering that they fatigue the intended audience.[38] Evidently

[36] Coggins, *Arms and Equipment*, 20; Hans Halberstadt, *The Soldier's Story* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2001), 30-33.
[37] Mark M. Smith, "Of Bells, Booms, Sounds, and Silences: Listening to the Civil War South," in Joan E. Cashin, ed., *The War was You and Me: Civilians in the Civil War*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 9-12; Mark. M. Smith, *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); 6, 30, 139-40.
[38] Stephen Handel, *Listening: An Introduction to the Perception of Auditory Events* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), chap. 6.

such was the subjugating effect in many occupied areas when Union fortifications stamped their authority with repetitious din and random percussions. As Smith puts it, garrisons could be garish to the point where "sound itself became part of psychological warfare on the Southern home front."[39]

From both sides, one of the more frequent and intense communications of power came through the boom of artillery. Audible from a dozen miles and more, volleys at closer ranges could feel like punches to the chest. In battle and during gunnery practice, crews used concussive blasts to frighten opponents. The better-supplied Union batteries often used any noteworthy occasion, such as the arrival of a dignitary or the passing of a national holiday, to blast ceremonial rounds in unison, clarifying to anyone within earshot who was in charge.

Perhaps no sound impacted the Southern white psyche more than African American voices expressing a growing sense of autonomy. For generations, when it came to people of color, slave-society whites were accustomed to seeing slaves in volume but hearing little volume from them. In turn, the enslaved well knew that while owners were in earshot, quietude was a prerequisite for personal survival. But by the war's midpoint, freed persons began to experiment with public expression. Few voices had greater freedom and leverage than those in uniform, so long as their officers allowed. In fact, black enlisted men and their white officers alike soon learned that one of the most intimidating weapons they possessed involved the noise and motion of their own rank and file. When the 49th and 55th USCT regiments transferred from Corinth to Memphis in late 1863, they announced their arrival with strident speech, stomping feet, and grinding wheels. One of their regimental officers thoroughly enjoyed the pained reactions he witnessed among the white citizenry at "what they had never before seen and had never expected to see—their own former slaves powerfully and lawfully armed for their overthrow, and led and commanded by those whom they considered their invaders."[40]

Conversely, occupation also meant quieting or silencing those who previously used sound as the primary voice of their social authority. Numerous are the accounts of pro-Confederate civilians, especially of women, expressing audible forms of resistance. In *Mothers of Invention*, Drew Gilpin Faust's influential examination of women in the slave South, she finds that elite white females under occupation fashioned a belief that their feminine wiles enabled them to "manage" their occupiers.[41] One of their most consistent examples includes performing melodies for garrison

[39] Smith, "Of Bells, Booms", 11.
[40] Robert Cowden, *A Brief Sketch of the Organization and Services of the 59th Regiment of the United States Colored Infantry* (Dayton, OH: United Brethren, 1883), 51-52.
[41] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 198-9.

officers, with repertoires laden with secessionist songs, but it must be recognized that these resistors conducted such acts almost exclusively within private parlors.[42]

Conclusion:

Arguably every facet of the war involved communicating a message, from battle flags directing regiments to partisan newspapers rallying the public. In multifarious ways, the war continued to communicate long after the fighting, through cemeteries and monuments for instance, with some being somber and reflective and others defiant and declaratory. But during the war itself, especially by late 1862, the Union's greater collection of skilled labor, capital, technology and trade manifested near dominance in communications. By late 1864, the disparity was such that residents in New York learned about the Federal victory at the Battle of Nashville in less than 24 hours, whereas Southern whites in communities less than a hundred miles away received sparse information of their defeat two weeks after the fact, if even then. While the contest continued in print and rhetoric for generations thereafter, the Union's multiple advantages in communication contributed greatly to its success during the war itself.

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[42] Ibid.