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Killing Time: An Analysis of Civil War Soldiers' Discussion of Free Time in Camp

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Killing Time:
An Analysis of Civil War Soldiers' Discussion
of Free Time in Camp

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Department of
History

Department of History
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While most Civil War history deals with a glorified and romanticized version of a soldier's experience of war, the time a soldier spent combating the idleness of camp proved to be a more consuming battle. Though lacking in grandeur, how a soldier 'killed time' provides an important yet often overlooked insight into the camaraderie and culture of Civil War soldiers. Historians that have looked into camp amusements and vices tend not to go beyond the soldiers psychological need to mentally manage the war. This thesis takes their theory a step further. Examining soldiers' records of their experiences in camp activities in date order and by season reveals distinct patterns of criticism, disassociation, indifference, and participation. Furthermore, analyzing their observations based on rank shows the antagonistic relationship between officers and soldiers based on discipline and behavior.

Fifty letter and diary entries written by thirty-five men were obtained by searching key terms related to entertainment in indexes, contents, and online databases of Union and Confederate soldiers. Biographical information on the authors was collected in order to understand the context of the soldier at the time he wrote the letter or entry. It included the soldier's name, correspondent, date of writing, affiliation, age, rank, regiment, enlistment location, recent battles, marital status, and pre-enlistment occupation. The activities the soldiers discussed as well as their reactions, categorized by criticism, disassociation, indifference, or participation, were also noted.

Mention of soldiers' morale over the course of the war appears frequently in Civil War studies, so the data collected was first organized in date order to observe

changes over time. It revealed three distinct periods of changing tone and opinion towards camp activities such as drinking, gambling, and swearing. Between June 1861 and June 1862, there is an overwhelming criticism of camp behaviors, perhaps reflecting the soldiers' early disappointment with war's lack of honor and glory. Between July 1862 and December 1863 a dramatic shift to indifference and even participation in the camps' more unseemly activities indicates the soldiers' surmounting need for distraction or perhaps their altering views of socially acceptable behavior. The very end of the war, from January 1864 to June 1865, returns back to the criticism of and disassociation from morally questionable activities as the soldiers prepared to rejoin civilian society.

The data also that reveals that the stationary winter encampments meant an increase in the number and uniqueness of activities discussed, including snow battles and dances. In soldiers' descriptions of winter camp activities, the content and tone varied from indifference to excitement about participating. To overcome boredom and discontentment, many sought emotional and physical comfort in the company of comrades.

Lastly, the data was organized by rank in order to observe the relationships between the officers and privates through their reactions to camp activities. In the letters and diary entries, there was criticism from the officers against the privates, the officers against each other, and the privates against the officers. The criticism of the participation in or punishment of camp activities demonstrates the sensitive relationship between the officers and privates dependent on their respective views of behavior and discipline.

Chapter One: Introduction

After Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 and inauguration in 1861 spurred secession in the United States, men in both the North and the South waited eagerly to witness the new course of the nation. When the secession of the seven southern states went unchallenged, the South Carolina militia moved to attack Fort Sumter. Lincoln responded to the unorthodox battle and surrendering of Fort Sumter by calling for seventy-five thousand military volunteers and commencing the Civil War. The call for troops was met on both sides by a staggering number of volunteers. Northern and southern boys and young men flocked to be the first in line to enlist. Whether they volunteered or were drafted later in the war, enlisted men on both sides experienced similar mustering in—swift goodbyes followed by immediately joining their regiments in camp. Quick to volunteer, the new soldiers were hopeful for war glory and honor on the battlefield. Little did they know, the drilling and downtime in camp would consume most of their war years.

Civil War soldiers did not see battle every day or even every week. Often soldiers went months without battle. In a typical day, a soldier woke at 5:00am roll call by the first sergeant. After a quick breakfast of usually biscuits and potatoes, the soldiers participated in up to five, two-hour drill sessions perhaps followed by picket duty. To the eager young soldiers anxious for glory, the tediousness of

practicing fighting was futile and repetitive. When they weren't drilling, their tasks sometimes included cleaning the camp, building roads, and digging latrines.¹

Although drilling took up part of the day, the soldiers had to get creative in order to combat the idleness of camp. In response to the chronic boredom, the soldiers used a variety of distractions. While not often glorified or revered in soldiers' stories as battles, hospitals, politics, or prison camps, the simple distractions and amusements of camp life were an enormous part of a soldier's service. While the expected practicing of religion, reading, and writing absorbed some of the monotony of camp, other more creative forms of entertainment became popular. These amusements included singing, drinking, gambling, performing, snowball fights, baseball and humor. Though lacking in grandeur, these downtime activities and their prevalence are an important yet overlooked insight into the camaraderie and culture and of Civil War soldiers.

Literature Review:

The literature that has concerned the Civil War soldier's camp life has seemed to approach the topic through very narrow focuses. Recent authors tend to discuss wartime activities and entertainments through either humor or religion. While analyzing humor as a coping mechanism is important it is only one facet of the camp downtime that deserves attention. What these authors discover about the coping mechanisms of humor needs to be broadened and investigated more

¹ Brooke C. Stoddard and Daniel P. Murphy, "Camp Life," Netplaces: The American Civil War, <http://www.netplaces.com/american-civil-war/life-in-the-service/camp-life.htm> (accessed November 19, 2013).

thoroughly. Religion on the other hand tends to ignore camp activity unless it is considered sinful. Morality is a very important issue to soldier life, but religion alone is too fine of a lens in which to analyze the broad base of activities. Another issue with recent literature is its use of the abundant letters from soldiers criticizing other soldiers for their participation in camp time amusements. The sweeping under the rug of soldiers and historians alike has buried an important part of history through their potential dishonesty and unwillingness to de-glorify war.

As far as the research on the Civil War soldier's life goes, Bell Irving Wiley remains the leading historian in the field. His two books, The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union and The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy, have remained the foundation of Civil War soldier exploration since their publications in 1952 and 1978. Wiley's first book, *The Life of Billy Yank*, was the first of its kind in terms of its intimate detail of a soldier's life. He wrote that after long mornings of discipline, drill, and fight, "The net result was to leave the soldiers largely to their own devices in seeking relaxation. And the men in blue...displayed considerable ingenuity in meeting the problem."² Wiley separated his discussion of these activities in groups in the order he deemed to be most prevalent. Starting with reading, he then moved to singing, sports, games, and pranks. For soldier's reading, he wrote that newspapers catered to the soldier's humor, as "...editors depended heavily on jokes, humorous stories and conundrums

² Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: A Common Soldier of the Union* (New York: The Boss-Merrill Company, 1951), 153

as filler for their columns.”³ He wrote how soldiers often changed lyrics, parodied songs and “...sang to combat homesickness, to buoy drooping spirits, to relieve boredom and forget weariness.”⁴ He described pranks on visitors, recruits, and even generals. Wiley’s sources were distinctive because they were untapped at the time. He particularly emphasized and interpreted the humor in order to understand the camaraderie behind each of the activities the soldiers participated in.

In *The Life of Johnny Reb* (1978), on the other hand, Wiley’s argument was that historically, the Confederate army soldier was narrowly viewed through the impressive religious impulses and revivals that occurred throughout its encampments. He argued that the religious lens used by earlier historians blurred and veiled the accurate depiction of a Confederate soldier. He claimed, “...objective study of soldiers letters and diaries make inescapable the conclusion that all the evils usually associated with barrack and camp life flourished in the Confederate Army.”⁵ He used diaries and letters to argue, “the most pervasive of the ‘sins’ which beset Johnny Reb was gambling”.⁶ He pointed to the different prohibitions and disapproving acknowledgments of General Lee and Braxton Briggs as evidence of pervasive gambling and drinking. Aside from his clear emphasis on drinking and gambling, he also mentioned raffling, horse racing, prostitutes, stealing and swearing as additional Confederate soldier pastimes. He maintained that beyond religious focus of camp life, the sins of Confederate soldier were abundant.

³ Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 182

⁴ Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 159

⁵ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (New York: The Cornwall Press, 1943), 36

⁶ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 36

Beyond Wiley's work, the earliest secondary literature relating to soldier amusements and recreation has been predominantly written about Lincoln's dry humor or newspaper cartoons and satires. Lincoln's public humor was insightful in terms of stylizing the humor of the American people. Historian Benjamin P. Thomas was one such author that analyzed his humor in terms of its reflection on the society of that time period:

Lincoln's humor, in its unrestraint, its unconventionality, its use of back-country vernacular, its willingness to see things as they were, its shrewd comments in homely, earthy phrase, its frequent contentment with externals, typified the American humor of the time. Two stains –pioneer exaggeration and Yankee laconicism—met in him. In his humor, as in his rise from obscurity to fame and in his simple, democratic faith and thought, he epitomized the American ideal.⁷

According to this journal, Lincoln's dry, offbeat, and rugged humor was not unlike that of the average citizen, and therefore common soldier, of the period. As an iconic figurehead of the Civil War, Lincoln's humor has been examined thoroughly throughout the years providing and inviting many different interpretations. The interpretations of his humor are then generalized over the common soldier as well.

However, humor and entertainment used specifically by soldiers when in their military camps have only very recently been investigated and distinguished from Lincoln's. The closest research dedicated to Civil War soldier humor, entertainment, and amusements in particular has, until very recently, been only in the context of wartime newspapers and publications. Examples included the North's Robert Henry Newell's articles in New York *Sunday Mercury* under the pseudonym

⁷ Benjamin P. Thomas, "Lincoln's Humor: An Analysis," *The Journal of Abraham Lincoln Association* 3, no. 1 (1981): 28-47, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0003.105/--lincoln-s-humor-an-analysis?rgn=main;view=fulltext> (accessed September 29, 2010).

Orpheus C. Kerr or his Confederate comedic rival Bill Arp.⁸ While the publication's popularity and success inferred soldier opinions and preferred subject matter, using this material to interpret soldier humor is inefficient to understanding the soldiers themselves. The second hand humor and criticisms not published by soldier's themselves speak little in terms of the actual soldier wartime experience or entertainment. Aside from being angled from Lincoln and periodical humor, there is little to no research investigating Civil War soldier humor and entertainment. Most secondary source literature on the free time amusements of Civil War soldiers has been primarily from the last couple of decades. Little secondary research on the topic has been collected previous to 1992.

A lot of this current research surrounding Civil War camp life humor and entertainment has compiled evidence to suggest that the humor and merriment within camp was a coping mechanism used by soldiers. Author Alice Fahs discussed the use of humor in this way in her book, The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865 (2001). Fahs set out to prove that the Civil War was in fact a written war through the documented poetry, stories, novels, humor, and songs.⁹ In her chapter on humor, she wrote that laughter was used to deal with the discontent of war. "War humor, in contrast, emphasized fear, incompetence, culpability, advance, and racism of those involved in the war effort".¹⁰ She said that they used exaggeration to expose war and its failures and that

⁸ Jon Grinspan, "Laugh During Wartime." *The New York Times: Opinion Pages*, January 9, 2012 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/09/laugh-during-wartime/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0 (accessed November 19, 2013).

⁹ Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North & South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War*, 201

their bitter jabs were just ways to subtly acknowledge war opposition. In her opinion, the Civil War humor motivated diversity of new opinions on war and made the war seem ridiculous.

Similarly, author Jon Grinspan agreed with Fahs in saying that the laughter of the Civil War soldier was just nervous laughter and used as a way to cope. In his journal article, "Sorrowfully Amusing: the Popular Comedy of the Civil War", Grinspan used published letters, letters from civilians and diaries, and soldier's letters to demonstrate the psychologically medicinal nervous laughter.¹¹ He explained, "For the most part, Civil War comedy confronted suffering with humor. Jokers mocked their darkest experiences to manage the horror of war and squeeze some laughter from their tragedies".¹² In general, those closest to the war were able to make light of it while those not as involved avoided the comedy. Americans who could no longer hide behind heroic rhetoric used humor as a tool to confront the unprecedented violence of the Civil War.¹³ He discussed confrontational jokes and the bluntness of hard war humor. Grinspan argued that war began very serious but could no longer hide behind heroic rhetoric and used humor to confront violence in common sentimental themes:

Though they used different styles, they engaged the subject for the same reasons. Most cracked jokes to confront their sufferings and disappointments, to use the sharp pinch of humor against the dull pain of war. One cannot be said to have led the other; together they shared humor as

¹¹ Jon Grinspan, "Sorrowfully Amusing: The Popular Comedy of the Civil War," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 2 (2011): 313-338.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_the_civil_war_era/summary/v001/1.3.grinspan.html (accessed September 29, 2013).

¹² Grinspan, *Sorrowfully Amusing*, 314

¹³ Grinspan, *Sorrowfully Amusing*, 315

a tool, demonstrating the thin line between literary humor and popular comedy.¹⁴

He argued that the style of humor was unchanged but its content evolved as the war progressed.

In his own way, Cameron Nickels agreed with Fahs and Grinspan's angle on soldiers using humor as a coping mechanism. Nickels' Civil War Humor argued that the soldiers and the home front used humor to cope with their horrific position.¹⁵ He claimed that the majority of soldier and war humor was free of partisanship because it dealt with situations faced by both sides. He discussed different types humor used throughout the war. For example, he said prisoners used humor to create the normal under abnormal conditions, and soldiers used humor to surpass the fear of death or of being wounded. He wrote that both sides made fun of authority which "...reflects a fundamentally American affirmation of democratic good sense and distrust for authority: the common soldier, like the common man, respects real worth not artificial rank".¹⁶

Humor is also a very specific aspect of Civil War entertainment shared equally by the home front. The differences of the home front humor and soldier humor were difficult to distinguished in some secondary literature. This obfuscation and lack of clarification blurred the interpretation of soldier camp life. However, it is important to see the humor used as a coping mechanism and recognize how other forms of entertainment were probably used similarly. While all three authors look at the amusements of Civil War soldiers through their use of humor and games as

¹⁴ Grinspan, *Sorrowfully Amusing*, 332

¹⁵ Cameron C. Nickels, *Civil War Humor* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

¹⁶ Nickels, *Civil War Humor*, 99

coping mechanisms, they lack information from the soldiers themselves. It is important to understand at what point soldiers needed to cope the most. The idea of soldiers' responding to their environments with different forms of entertainment is very important. The circumstance—location, battles, armies, and timing—of the coping is important for a more complete analysis of soldier life. The amusements of soldiers can tell us how and when they needed to mentally manage the war.

Another way recent historians have approached Civil War camp life has been through describing the religion in the camp. Through the religious lens, authors are able to describe activities soldiers participated in during camp downtime. Many authors argued that the soldiers turned to religion at the end of the war instead of their usual entertainments. They described religion as a coping mechanism that made soldiers abandon 'sinful' entertainments as the war progressed. Through their discussion of the religious transformation of soldiers, these authors described the sinful amusements of soldiers as the war began.

In Gardiner Shattuck's article in a Christian history journal, *Revivals in Camp*, he looked at the Union and Confederate soldiers to interpret how soldiers accepted and even reach for religion as war progressed.¹⁷ He concluded that religion was more prevalent in the North but had a greater lasting effect in the South. He argued that religion was not a common observance in the beginning of the war by saying,

¹⁷ Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., "Revivals in the Camp," *Christian History* 11, no. 1 (1992): 28. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=7&sid=d6019538-26f0-4c52adad1108316df99b%40sessionmgr111&hid=108&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=9604291014> (accessed October 3, 2013).

“Religion did not seem to have left home with the soldiers”.¹⁸ He described how the soldiers drank, gambled, and forgot Sabbath in the beginning of the war years but then transformed as the war progressed. He wrote, “The situation changed, however, as the war became more serious and prolonged. After the decisive campaign at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga in 1863, revivals became a regular feature of Union army life.”¹⁹ Shattuck talked about the entertainments and amusements of camp life only negatively through the eyes of religion.

Additionally, Kenneth Noe’s book, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861*, made a similar argument to Shattuck but focused primarily on Confederates alone. He described the changing attitudes of Confederate towards religion as the war continued.²⁰ Throughout the book, his thesis narrowed in on the motives of the later enlisters and the struggle between war depression and remaining patriotic. His chapter on religion described the soldier’s move towards religion when the war got tough. He argued that the soldiers at first were fonder of sin than religion:

The first eighteen months of the war produced army camps that strayed far from resembling Christian communities. Freed from parental and societal expectations, soldiers anxious to assert their masculinity instead cut loose from their moral moorings. Drunkenness, gambling, profanity, and licentiousness became rampant in both armies, while pious soldiers sometimes found themselves a shunned minority, condemned as weaklings.²¹

¹⁸ Shattuck, *Revivals in Camp*, 28

¹⁹ Shattuck, *Revivals in Camp*, 28

²⁰ Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

²¹ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 129

He then argued that as the war advanced, the soldiers were drawn towards religion in order to cope with the war and provide motivation:

Patriotic ministers assured congregations that the Southern way of life, slavery included, was not only in accordance with scriptures but indeed helped fulfill them. Freely borrowing from American exceptionalism and millennialism, Southern religious and political leaders increasingly maintained after Fort Sumter that the Confederacy in fact was the new Israel and its citizens the new chosen people.²²

He determined that religion was not only prevalent through the Confederate army but was also used to boost morality and absolve monotony. He stated that the, “...devout embraced faith only as a way to combat homesickness by repeating comforting rituals connected to home”²³ because “[n]othing sustained soldiers more than faith.”²⁴ He argued that soldiers moved towards religion as the war went on because “Their Christian faith convinced them to fight on, providing a powerful sustaining motivator.”²⁵ While his clever interpretation of the changing morality of camp life opens up a fascinating insight into the Civil War soldier, his focus on religion overlooked other activities as sinful.

By looking at Civil War activities through religion, the Shattuck and Noe tended to describe all other activities in the camp as sinful. By focusing exclusively on religion in the camps, the two authors neglected to consider non-sinful amusements and overplayed the religious influence of the soldiers. Negating their argument of the transformed soldier, historian Keith Miller argued that gambling surpassed the intolerance of religion and law. In his article “Chance and the Civil

²² Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 128

²³ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 129

²⁴ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 130

²⁵ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 149

War”, he wrote, “From the moment the first shots were fired in 1861, gambling and the Civil War embarked on a volatile relationship.”²⁶ He described the gambling and sin that occurred from the moment the boys became soldiers:

Even though soldiers on both sides believed they were fighting for the good and moral cause of either defending their homes and property or preserving the Union, many Federals and Confederates quickly discarded their morals when they took off their civilian clothes and donned their new blue or gray uniforms.²⁷

He described the gambling in the camps through the different ways generals and chaplains tried to shut it down. He portrayed the Ministers feeble attempts in the field to, “...tend to the souls, character and moral fiber of the soldiers...”. His argument that gambling overpowered religion downplays the religious revival. Although Miller argued that sin prevailed over religion, authors like Shattuck and Noe who argued that soldiers chose God at the end of the war might be a biased way for historians to preserve the honor and glory of soldiers. However, religion was an important part of army life that deserved as much attention in terms of soldier life and entertainment.

Some authors chose to interpret the significance of the lack of primary research on the entertainment and activities of camp life. In Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader, Fred Shannon described the common life of a soldier in the Union

²⁶ Keith Miller, “Chance and the Civil War,” *Civil War Times* 45, no 4 (2006): 34-40
<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=c633321b-6f02-470c-86da-5fc770a1893c%40sessionmgr112&vid=1&hid=122&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#d b=31h&AN=21314648> (accessed September 26, 2013).

²⁷ Miller, *Chance and the Civil War*

army.²⁸ In which, he argued that the romantic side of war outweighed the hardships and discomforts in history. He wrote, "It is only the retrospect of a generation later—in reminiscences, rather than in the diaries and letters of veterans—that the romantic side of war is found to outweigh the hardships and discomforts".²⁹ Similarly, author Richard Selcer claimed that drunkenness was downplayed throughout history in his journal article, "Fighting Under the Influence".³⁰ Although his thesis argued that drunkenness was part of the culture of nineteenth century and was fostered by military life with their routine of monotony and nerve shattering combat, he also criticized historical recognition of drinking. He claimed the issue of drinking was never properly document because of its embarrassing and negative attention to soldiers and generals:

It was left to those who followed to clean up history by taking alcohol out of the story of the war. Union officers Horace Porter and Henry Davies, consciously or otherwise, burnished the myths of Ulysses Grant and Phil Sheridan, respectively, by downplaying their drinking problems.³¹

Both authors emphasized that historians sometimes purposefully disregarded the activities that tend to make soldiers and heroes look bad. Instead of reading a letter complaining about soldiers drinking and gambling and looking at that in terms of soldier's dissatisfaction and hatred of war, those activities themselves need to be recognized as a very real and prevalent part of war. In Fah's book, she wrote a

²⁸ Fred A. Shannon, "The Life of the Common Soldier in the Union Army," in *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, ed. Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002)

²⁹ Shannon, *The Life of the Common Soldier in the Union Army*, 103

³⁰ Richard Selcer, "Fighting Under the Influence" *America's Civil War* 10, no. 6 (1998): 38 <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=9&sid=f1a95595-8dc4-4953924369dba4b72cc2%40sessionmgr113&hid=112&bdata=jnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=9712095760> (accessed September 26, 2013).

³¹ Selcer, *Fighting Under the Influence*, 38

chapter on the sentimental soldier's focus on the anonymous dead, the dying soldier, mother, poor boy, manliness, homesickness, the hospitalized soldier, and heroism. Her point was that the soldiers had a habit of glorifying themselves as well. It is important that the soldiers' time in camp is not glorified or romanticized. The criticisms, immoralities, and depravities need real and uncensored examinations in order to fully understand the Civil War soldiers true changing attitudes towards war and relationships towards each other.

In the book Weirding the War: Stories from the Civil War's Ragged Edges author Peter Carmichael criticized historians on the way they interpret letters and diaries.³² He discussed what was hidden inside the language of letters and what was left out of letters. He deconstructed the sentiment behind 'poor soldier' and 'soldier boy' as used to distance from an express the randomness of war. He wrote, "When these oral expressions are considered as shapers of events, not just reflections of wars reality, we can see how soldiers dialogue was more than a descriptive vocabulary" and that soldier's language enabled them to, "...engage in mockery without ever losing sympathy, to criticize without ever appearing to be seditious, and to engage in the bloody business of war without ever succumbing to pure, impenetrable hatred."³³

In the same way he studied orality to offer a deeper look into the cognitive process of soldiers, this thesis will try to analyze how the soldiers talked about the

³² Peter S. Carmichael, "Soldier Speak," in *Weirding the War: Stories from the Civil War's Ragged Edges* ed. Stephen William Berry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 272

³³ Carmichael, *Soldier Speak*, 257

amusements and entertainment of camp in order to understand soldier camaraderie and comfort. It will try to mirror the way Carmichael moved away from the cliché categorization of the soldiers as victims and victors, idealist or disillusion, nationalist or no political will to continue.

Data has been collected from fifty letters and diaries from both Union and Confederate Civil War soldiers from January 5, 1861 to December 20, 1865. There are twenty Confederate Soldiers' letters and diaries and thirty Union soldiers' letters and diaries in the Data. Their ages range from sixteen to fifty-three, and positions from infantry to major general. Their particular letter or diary entry was attained by going to a website database or book index and searching for words such as 'entertainment', 'gambling', 'drinking', 'religion', and 'boredom'. Once these letters were collected they were organized into an excel spreadsheet and listed by name of soldier, side, date written, age, rank, type of source (and recipient of letter), enlistment location, regiment, battles near date of writing, whether or not it was written during winter camp, marital status, and pre-enlistment occupation. Not all of these topics ended up becoming significant enough for interpretation, but it is important to add that they were noted and analyzed. The following topics were then picked out and checked off as the soldier discussed them: gambling, drinking, religion, snowball fighting, writing, singing, drilling, homesickness, boredom, baseball, reading, dancing, and other. Along with these specific topics, the letters and diaries were categorized by criticism of the activity, disassociation from those involved with the activity, and participation in the activity.

After the data spreadsheet of soldier activities had been finished, it was obvious that there were no clear distinctions between the Union and Confederate army soldiers in terms of how they discussed camp activities. Both sides discussed the same sort of activities with similar reactions: criticism, disassociation, indifference, or participation. Because of the similarities between the sides, their records were grouped together and conclusions were made to reflect what the average soldier, North or South, experienced during the war.

Patterns appeared in the data depending on how it was arranged. By putting the letters and diaries in date order, the data revealed distinct groups of criticism and participation throughout the course of the war. The first chapter describes how these periods demonstrate clear changes in attitude over the course of the war. The different tones and attitudes used when discussing the camp downtime entertainments shows the changing morale of the Civil War soldier as well as their changing relationships to their comrades as the years of war advanced.

Once the distinction of the dates was established, the next step was to see if there were particular times during the course of the year where immoral, unique and prevalent activities were occurring more frequently. The second chapter explains how the data showed that the permanent winter quarters from the months of November to March affected the soldiers. Participation in both the typical and creative activities occurred more frequently. Increased participation in entertainments and the new unique activities were used to deemphasize the depravity of their condition.

The last chapter focuses on the relationship between the different rankings among the soldiers in terms of their discussion of camp activities. The officers abstained from admitting their own participation in the activities but heavily discussed the activities of their privates as well as other officers. The reaction of the officer to how the men behaved during the camp down time reflected the relationship between the officers and the privates. There was also a distinct difference in the reaction and punishment of immoral activities depending on the rank of the soldier.

As Carmichael took the language of soldiers and used it to reveal deeper reflections of war, this thesis will use distractions and camp life amusements to more fully understand a soldier's experience in during the Civil War. This thesis will use data collected from letters and diaries from both the North and the South in order to demonstrate a link between morality and boredom. A soldier's reaction and tone when describing what he experienced or witnessed in camp reflects his opinion of war as well as his relationship to his comrades and officers. This thesis uncovers the relationship between the soldiers and war, the soldiers and each other, and the privates and officers all through the tone and attitude in their discussion of camp activities.

Chapter Two: Date Ordered Letters and Diaries

The first pattern appeared when the letters and diaries were sequenced in date order. Looking at the letters in date order conveyed how the soldiers attitudes and morale changed as the war progressed. Clusters of bitter soldiers and groups of indifferent soldiers expressed the general morale of soldiers during different periods of war. The data makes suggestions for why the soldiers may have universally changed their views and feelings towards camp life and life as a soldier as the war progressed.

With the spreadsheet organizing the letters and diaries in date order, the data showed three distinct periods of change in both the Confederate and Union soldiers' morale. The first period occurred in the beginning of the war between June 1861 and June 1862. This period contained mostly soldier criticism of and disassociation from the immoral activities of "others" during the war's downtime. The next period occurred during the middle years of the war, between July 1862 and December 1863. Unlike the Civil War's early years, this middle period contained more indifference in the letters towards the soldiers' behavior in camp. Letters from the middle years also showed a spike in participation in the immoral activities by the authors of the letters themselves. The last period lasted throughout the end of the war, from about January 1864 to June 1865. This period seemed to mimic the first in the soldiers' criticism of their fellow soldiers. However, participating in the

religious revival and willingness to correct immoral behavior in camp also occurred during this phase of the war. While there were a few outlying letters and diaries in the data, for the most part these three periods were distinctive based on the random selection of soldiers' discussion of camp life activities in letters and diaries. The distinction between the soldiers' morale in these three phases of war suggested serious morale and attitude changes over the course of the war that expanded over every age, rank, and side.

Beginning years: January 1861- June 1862

The beginning years of the war seemed tough on soldier's optimism. One clear pattern that emerged in the overview of the data was the heavy criticism of camp life within the letters and diaries during the war's first year and a half. Many early letters discussed their criticism and dissociation from the immoral activities within the camp. For example, a nineteen-year-old Confederate soldier named John McCauley distanced himself from the immoral reputation of the other soldiers in his company in a letter to a friend, Simon Cameron, on January 5, 1861:

I am one of those who never drink, gamble, frolick or swear, and who think that duty to God and our Country can be performed together. I think myself qualified for any position to which I may aspire, and always make it the object of my life to do promptly and faithfully whatever I undertake.³⁴

In this letter, McCauley wrote to Cameron in hopes to receive a position in his office after the war. The 'those' he refers to are other soldiers. Here, he distanced himself

³⁴John McCauley to Simon Cameron, January 5, 1861, *The Valley of the Shadow* <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/F8035> (accessed March 10, 2014).

from the other soldiers as well as put himself above them. His letter demonstrated his defensiveness against the immoral reputation of soldiers. Another Confederate, Elliot H. Fletcher, Jr. discussed his aversion to the gambling in the camp in a letter to his father on November 6, 1861. He wrote, "...it is impossible for me ever to be guilty of gaming or even playing cards for amusement. I have educated myself to look upon gaming as a crime."³⁵ Not only does he admit that gambling was a crime in his opinion, but his use of the word guilty means that gambling was some sort of wrongdoing worthy of punishment. His harsh criticism of gambling exhibited his disapproval of the game as well as his disassociation from those involved. This disassociation from fellow soldiers was not limited to Confederate men.

Union soldiers shared their similar dissatisfaction with and defensiveness against the reputation of idle soldiers. On January 17, 1862, just two months later than Fletcher's letter, Union soldier Oliver Wilcox Norton wrote a letter describing his contempt of gambling. Norton enlisted in the 83rd Pennsylvania Infantry and according to his regiment's history, had not seen battle and will not until Hanover Court House Virginia on May 27, 1862:

Those whose tastes incline them that way are playing with the "spotted papers," but you will be glad to know that not one game of cards has been played in our tent since I lived in it, or in the old one, either, and more than that, I have not played a game since I've been in the U. S. service. I don't know as I am principled against it so much, but I don't know how to play and don't care to learn.³⁶

³⁵ Elliot H. Fletcher, Jr. to Elliot H. Fletcher, Sr., November 6, 1861, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1762-D009> (accessed October 27, 2013).

³⁶ Oliver Wilcox Norton to his sister, January 17, 1862, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1536-D022> (accessed October 27, 2013).

In the way he wrote to the unknown recipient, there was definite contempt from the game. The quote marks suggest that he was not familiar enough with the game to feel comfortable calling it by its nickname. He also was reassuring the recipient, knowing they would be upset if he was participating in the games. He was so offended by the game that he says it is not allowed anywhere near him. His letter also gave examples of what he was doing instead of gambling. "I spend much time in writing. The boys laugh at me for writing so many letters, but I think it is as good a way of spending time as many others."³⁷ The mockery from his soldier friends suggested though that he might have been one of the few who did not participate in the gambling. Regardless, his effort to distance himself from the gambling soldiers mimicked the two earlier Confederate letters.

Unlike Norton, Some soldiers rejected gambling on principal. Confederate soldier William F. Brand wrote his future wife Kate Armentrout on June 23, 1861, "Some of the men are blaying cards, oh that men would fear the lord more & searve him better."³⁸ His criticizing letter concerning the behavior of the men in camp described his anxiety for the religious morality of the other soldiers.

Finally, there was criticism from people in the camp because the immorality of the soldiers caused problems. Union soldier Thomas T. Ellis described in his diary on October of 1861 the problems drinking was causing in the camp:

...many temptations to drunkenness held out to the men by the adjoining bar-rooms, greatly increased my labors, and materially swelled the daily list of those reported sick and asking exemption from duty. There not being any accommodation for the officers in the camp aggravated those evils, as their

³⁷ Norton to his sister, January 17, 1862

³⁸ William F. Brand to Kate Armentrout, June 23, 1861, *The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/A9632> (accessed March 10, 2014).

absence at night, when the men returned to quarters drunk and disorderly, frequently permitted rows, often attended with serious personal injury.³⁹

He complained that the drunken soldiers made his job more difficult as well as burdened other people when they couldn't perform their duties properly. He also offered some reasoning behind their depravity. The 'lacking accommodation's aggravation of those evils' provided insight into the reasons behind indecent camp life entertainments.

From both Union and Confederate forces, the beginning of the war was met with criticism towards and disassociation from the depravity of camp life activities. However, the number of letters and diaries concerning their detachment from the bad reputation of soldier behavior during the down time of war had a few different implications. First of all, the denial, criticism, and disassociation proved the abundant existence of gambling, drinking, swearing, and so on. Beyond that, the overwhelming disassociation from and criticism of those who imbibe, gamble, and swear in the first part of the war between 1861 and 1862 might have had something to do with the hopeful soldiers' disappointment with war. "Thousands of men and boys had second thoughts about enlisting as a realization of what they had done began to set in."⁴⁰ For most boys, this realization came before they ever even witnessed battle. When young men enlisted, they were expecting war glory and honor. Instead they were quickly faced with the harsh reality of boredom, repetition, and terrible living conditions. Their dissatisfaction in the early years of the war was

³⁹ Ellis, Thomas T. "Diary of Thomas T. Ellis," New York. New York, October 1861, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1395-D003> (accessed October 27, 2013).

⁴⁰ Williams, *A People's History of the Civil War*, 197

reflected in their epistolary expressions of disappointment with war life. They entered the war hopeful and naïve, and if they did not succumb to the camp time immorality then they were horrified by it. Historian Noe wrote, “The ugliness of battlefield death, disease, harsh discipline, the ill treatment of enemy civilians, the boredom of camp, and the drinking and gambling that followed all rudely shocked recruits who expected war to be grand and glorious,” and this disappointment was definitely reflected in the early letters.⁴¹ They were probably disappointed too with the reputation of soldiers. Their constant reassurance to friends and family in their letters home demonstrated their insecurity with the non-glorious and dishonorable reputation of soldiers. Without a doubt, letters and diaries from the early years of the war were not only filled with criticism of and disassociation from camp life routine and morality of soldiers, but might also be reflective of the soldiers early disappointment with war.

Middle Years: July 1862 - December 1863

At the end of the summer of 1862, there was a dramatic change in the way soldiers discussed camp life during the war. The criticism of and detachment from the more illicit camp activities turned into indifference of and participation in those same activities. The tone of the letters and diaries switched from disapproval to apathy and no judgment observation. Sixteen-year-old Union soldier Chauncey Herbert Cooke provided an example of this indifference. On June 11, 1862, Cooke

⁴¹ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 173

wrote his mother nonchalantly describing how bombs disturbed the soldier's card games in his 25th Wisconsin Infantry regiment:

The fellows who are well are passing the time away playing cards in the ditches behind trenches. Now and then a bursting shell spoils the game, mixes the count and starts a row. By and by peace is declared and the game goes on... Once in awhile a shell drops amongst us and then every fellow playing cards or taking a nap gets a move on himself.⁴²

In his letter, there was no malicious language directed at the gentlemen playing cards and gambling. There was also no attempt to deny his participation in the game. In these subtle ways, the language of the letters changed during the middle years of the war. Another Union soldier, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, wrote about gambling in his diary on December 10, 1863:

Bridgeport, Sun so hot as to be quite warm. Much like a spring day in Wisconsin. Everybody lively and full of fun, troubled with nothing but "nothing to do", which to me is a serious cup. Gambling among the indulging ones quite brisk. Watches and pens raffled for, etc..⁴³

Like Cooke's, his commentary on everyday camp life was neither critical nor serious. Jones implied that having 'nothing to do' leads to the gambling. He also implies that it is a burden every soldier endures, including himself.

An additional example of observation and indifference appears in James Kendall Hosmer's letter of November 13, 1863. In his letter, Hosmer poetically and non-judgmentally described the men playing cards in his tent:

To-night there are in the tent at least fifteen men. There are three sets of men playing cards.... Slap go the cards on to the table. Every moment comes up some point for debate. Throughout the tent there is loud and constant

⁴² Chauncey Herbert Cooke to his mother, June 11, 1864, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1630-D060> (accessed October 30, 2013).

⁴³ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, "Diary of Jenkin Lloyd Jones," Wisconsin, December 10 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1627-D017> (accessed November 4, 2013).

talking, sometimes swearing; generally good-natured, sometimes ill-natured.⁴⁴

Hosmer's vivid description of the camp did not paint the picture of sin or immorality like the letters from the beginning of the war. His language was more conversational than critical. This tone seemed to be more prevalent throughout the middle years of the war.

There are also many letters and diaries between June 1862 and December 1863 that have the soldier discussing their own participation in the camp's leisure activities. Previously, there were a few that admitted to their participation, only one of the fifteen letters and diaries collected. But the overwhelming majority, fifteen of the twenty letters and diaries collected between June 1862 and December 1863, in some way or another admit to their participation in drinking, gambling, smoking, singing, and so on. To begin, Union private Wilbur Fisk described on August 10, 1863 how the hardships and privations were easier to endure with the help of the camp games and sports:

...we have also, now and then, a time for sport, joyous, heath-inspiring, and full of fun. We have our games of chess, backgammon, draughts, cards, and others, to make merry many a full, listless hour. We occasionally get a book to read, sometimes a paper, or what is often better than either a letter from home...Many hours are pleasantly spend in answering these letters, many in visiting our friends in other portions of camp, many more in fishing and foraging; and thus the day often closes before we are aware or wish to have it.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ James Kendal Hosmer, November 13, 1862, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1425-D001> (accessed October 30, 2013).

⁴⁵ Wilbur Fisk, Letter to *The Green Mountain Freedmen Newspaper*, August 10, 1863 August 10, 1863, "Hard Marching Every Day", 129.

Fisk's cheerful discussion of his own participation in the camp time entertainments is clearly divergent from the war's beginning years letters where soldiers complained and were upset by how soldiers amused themselves. Likewise, Confederate private Junius Newport Bragg wrote to his wife Anna Josephine Goddard Bragg in January 1863 describing his typical night at camp:

Then I eat some three or four pounds of peach pie, or the half of aged fowl, smoke again and play a game of "Drafts" or Euchre until it is time to visit the sick again. After supper I smoke three pipes of tobacco in quick succession, sing "Tom Moore" and retire.⁴⁶

In his description of a typical night, he admitted to smoking, gambling, and singing. "Tom Moore", otherwise known as "The Minstrel Boy", was a sentimental song sung by both sides concerning a soldier's fight for justice and willingness for peace.⁴⁷

While this song was not immoral, there were songs used in the military for humor and entertainment. For example, after describing the men in his regiment of the 44th Massachusetts Infantry knocking down bee-hives on November 11, 1862, Zenas T. Haines penned a song dedicated to apple-jack, a popular alcohol made from freezing apples⁴⁸:

The sight and taste of that white honey-comb will not soon pass from the memory of our jaded and hungry soldiers Nor you, apple-jack, beverage of the South, cheering *and* inebriating, welcome substitute for whisky rations.

"Here's to good old apple-jack,
Drink her down;
Here's to good old apple-jack,
Drink her down;

⁴⁶ Junius Newport Bragg to Anna Josephine Goddard Bragg, January 8, 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/phil/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1923-D037> (accessed October 27, 2013).

⁴⁷ "The Minstrel Boy," Ancestry.com, <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gollaher/minstrelboy.htm> accessed March 10, 2014)

⁴⁸ Rachel Black, "Alcohol in Popular Culture: An Encyclopedia", (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010)

Here's to good old apple-jack,
It will lay you on your back,
Drink her down,
Drink her down!"⁴⁹

His enthusiasm and zeal for drinking and the drinking song seemed to be a rare occurrence at anytime in the earlier years of war.

Although they admit that they participated in illicit activities, there are some that claim that they will quit when the war ends. Six months after Bragg explained his nightly routine to his wife without embarrassment, his July 30, 1863 letter suggests that his wife expressed concern about him succumbing to bad habits, particularly swearing:

I can break myself of any habit I desire to, I believe. When the war is over and I go to live with you forever and a day, I will quit the use of expletives and strong language. This will I do for the best woman in the world. It affords me a sort of savage pleasure to let off occasionally when everything seems to be going wrong. It is a kind of revenge.⁵⁰

In this letter, Bragg's admission to his wartime swearing described the camp distractions as guilty pleasure. He acknowledged that the behavior was not the same in the normal social world, but like the others was not opposed to it during the middle war years.

Without a doubt, the middle of the war letters and diaries rang a new note of indifference to the immorality around them or participation themselves. Although not disappearing, the disassociation and criticism that characterized the letters of the beginning years were definitely more rare in the months between June of 1862

⁴⁹ Zenas T. Haines, November 11, 1862, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1393-D014> (accessed October 30, 2013).

⁵⁰ Junius Newport Bragg to Anna Josephine Goddard Bragg, July 30, 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1923-D055> (accessed October 27, 2013)

and December of 1863. For example, Henry H. Pennimen wrote a letter criticizing the soldiers' immoral distractions in a way that mirrored the letters from the beginning of the war letters. Pennimen was surgeon that wrote this letter to his wife following the battle of Gettysburg:

War is a dreadful evil, and the army is a school of bad morals; about nine-tenths of the troops entering the army irreligious, become worse and worse. A great crowd of men, without the restraints of society, and no influence from woman, become very vulgar in language, coarse in their jokes, impious, and almost blasphemous in their profanity.⁵¹

While not all the letters were written with indifference, the overwhelming majority of those letters in this data set were not nearly as judgmental. His reaction to the actions of soldiers during this period showed that these immoral activities were going on in full force. With immoral camp behavior continuing, perhaps even growing, the indifference of the other soldiers writing letters becomes even more significant.

There are many significant conclusions that can be drawn from the indifference and admission in the middle war years. Perhaps the soldiers, tired of war, became more honest in their letters. There might not have been as much incentive to keep up the 'glorified soldier' reputation when war became monotonous and repetitive. Their admittance to participation also could indicate that the war became harder to bear. Soldiers looked for distractions any way they could get them. On August 10, 1863, Union soldier Wilbur Fisk observed, "Living in camp is a peculiar kind of life, but like every other situation one may become so

⁵¹ Henry H. Penniman, Henry Penniman to wife, June 6, 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1441-D085> (accessed October 30, 2013).

accustomed to it that the evil and the good bear a relation to each other very nearly approaching to what may be found in almost any other pursuit.”⁵² After years in the war, instead of merely months, war took its toll on the soldiers. As Fisk described, they grasped at any type distraction for comfort, care less and less about its moral implications. Perhaps the extended separation from civil society altered soldier’s views of appropriate and acceptable behavior. The more used to the gambling, swearing, drinking and smoking around them, the more indifferent they became. This indifference, participation, and lightheartedness of the letters during the middle years of the wars definitely point to a change in morale and soldier attitude.

Ending Years: January 1864 – June 1865

So far, patterns in the beginning of the war’s letters and diaries have expressed criticism and detachment from some camp life activities while the letters in the middle of the war presented indifference or participation. During the last stages of war, January 1864 to June 1865, the soldiers did a full circle in expressing their criticism and disassociation as they did in the beginning. Different though was their renewed commitment to religion in the letters.

By 1864, the disassociation and criticism reappeared. Some, like Confederate Spencer Glasgow Welch, are subtler with their discomfort. He wrote on January 3, 1864 in a letter to his wife, Cordelia Strother Welch, “He and I are good friends and always get along very agreeably together, but he is too fond of drinking and

⁵² Fisk, *Hard Marching Every Day*, 129

gambling to suit me.”⁵³ Others, like Union soldier William Newton Price, were more angry and critical. He wrote in his diary on October 9, 1864, “This is the Sabbath day, but gambling, trading, swearing and all manner of wickedness is the order of the day with most of the soldiers; a few exceptions to the rule, thank God.”⁵⁴ His entry was clearly a little more hostile towards those that participated in the camp’s immoral activities. By using religious terms like ‘Sabbath Day’ and ‘Thank God’, he framed his critique with religion.

Another interesting criticism that appeared during the final years of the war was criticism of the enemy’s immoral behavior. Instead of criticizing their own comrades, a few soldiers noted the indecent actions of their enemies. Confederate Phillip H. Powers wrote on May 3, 1864 in a letter to his wife about the immoral actions of the Union soldiers:

Yesterday many of the prisoners taken were drunk. Their army is doubtless much demoralized but Grant is obstinate and his reputation is at stake. He will fight as long as he can make his men stand to it, but God I trust will give us the first victory.⁵⁵

The prisoners he referred to were clearly Union soldiers and it can be inferred that his disgust with their demoralization really refers to their immoral behavior. His belief that God was on his side supported this argument that the southern soldiers were morally above northern soldiers. This Confederate soldier was clearly critical of the Union Army’s immoral behavior and in a way suggested that the Confederate

⁵³ Spencer Glasgow Welch to Cordelia Strother Welch, January 3, 1864, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1602-D035> (accessed October 30, 2013).

⁵⁴ William Newton Price, “Diary of William Newton Price”, October 1864, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1892-D007> (accessed October 27, 2013).

⁵⁵ Phillip H. Powers to his wife, May 3, 1864, *The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/A0325> (accessed March 10, 2014).

Army would not tolerate that sort of dissipation. However, a letter from Union Captain Stephen Minot Weld to his father on March 25, 1864 suggested that the drinking occurred on the other side as well:

We left camp, as you know, on Sunday morning, the men and officers being in the best of spirits, and with but few of the men, I am glad to say, drunk. The day before we left, over forty gallons of liquor were confiscated at General Peirce's headquarters, being found on the persons of the soldier's friends, or rather enemies.⁵⁶

In this letter, though not as directly as negative as Power's, Weld discussed the liquor confiscated from the Confederate soldiers and officers, and that "but a few" of the Union soldiers had imbibed too much of it. This letter was evidence of the prevalence of drinking still criticized in the Union Army. However, it also showed that army officers tried to cut down on immoral behavior. Latter on in the same letter, Weld described how officers dealt with immoral and unruly soldiers:

This same morning, that is, Wednesday, lots of our men got into the town, and drank much bad whiskey, besides bringing a lot more into camp. About noon camp began to be a perfect pandemonium, and as the colonel was away, the major and I sallied out to restore order. We put all the noisy drunkards in the guard-house, and soon quelled the disturbance outside. In the guardhouse, however, confusion reigned supreme for a long time. We tied up any number of men, and finally succeeded in getting quiet restored.⁵⁷

His description and criticism of the drunken men and the reaction of the officers in terms of their punishment was interesting because it exhibited the Army's no toleration reaction to the drinking at the end of the war.

Beyond criticism, there was a definite theme of revival and renewal of commitment to God and their respective causes in both armies. Union soldier Prince

⁵⁶ Stephen Minot Weld to Stephen Minot Weld, March 25, 1864, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1610-D144> (accessed October 30, 2013).

⁵⁷ Weld, March 25, 1864

already demonstrated the sense of religious revival that appears at the end of the war when he criticized other soldiers for not keeping the Sabbath. There was also a definite theme of helping the soldiers adjust their wicked habits. Similar to Prince, a Confederate soldier named John Scott wrote on December 20, 1865, "There is some "drinking" among the boys and I long for a place where I can speak to them, and arouse them to the danger and the sin of intemperance."⁵⁸ Both men criticized the immoral behavior as well as expressed their willingness and hopefulness to correct it.

Similarly, there were also letters in which soldiers declared their own personal revival in which they returned to their normal moral habits. Confederate soldier David Demus wrote to Mary Jane Demus, "...and tell giney that i have qite drinking Wiskey and qite swearen fer the last to months and i gest get a lon as well With out..."⁵⁹ This letter reflects Bragg's previously letter to his wife about quitting swearing when the war is over. There was also a letter from Union soldier Taylor Peirce to his wife written on February 15, 1865 where he defends himself when being accused of drinking. The letter starts with him recognizing the reputation of soldiers by saying, "I was somewhat Surprised at Some of Mary's fears for my Sobriety but may be if I could see myself as others see me here fears are well founded..."⁶⁰ Because the war is winding down, Peirce tries to recover the reputation of the honorable and glorified soldier by quickly saying, "But you can let

⁵⁸ John Scott to Samuel Hunt, December 20, 1865, *The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/A7103>, (accessed March 10, 2014).

⁵⁹ David Demus to Mary Jane Demus, February 24, 1864, *The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/F3049> (accessed March 10, 2014)

⁶⁰ Taylor Peirce, *Dear Catharine, Dear Taylor: The Civil War Letters of a Union Soldier and His Wife*, Ed. Richard L. Kiper (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 354

your fears subside. For I can say with clear conscience that the desire for it never gave me trouble nor have I tasted it more than 3 or 4 times since I was home..."⁶¹

His defensiveness against the reputation of soldiers demonstrates his hope to regain the honorable soldier role before rejoining society at the end of the war.

Furthermore, he write, "If it will do you any good and make you feel any happier I promise never to taste it again unless prescribed by the doctor."⁶² This promise, like Demus's and Bragg's letters, is a promise to correct his depravities before returning home. Though these examples were not particularly religious, there was a definite sense of revival in the last few years of the war.

The end of the war's criticism was an important pattern to observe because it circles back to the beginning of the war. In the beginning, the disassociation and criticism could be attributed to the disappointment in the soldier's expectation of the glory of war. The end of war criticism might similarly be the soldier's hope to recapture that image as the war dwindled down. By criticizing others, the soldiers put themselves above the dishonorable actions of their comrades or enemies.

Furthermore, the religious revivals and attempts to fix not only themselves but also each other were important indicators of their hope to end the war with the correct moral reputation. The religious and revival and renewal of honor and morality was important at the end of the war as soldiers came to terms with their wartime behavior. The end of the war meant the end of immoral actions and time to rejoin a society that looks down on drinking, smoking, gambling, and so on.

⁶¹ Peirce, *From Taylor, From Catharine*, 354

⁶² Peirce, *From Taylor, From Catharine*, 354

The results of the date ordered letters and diaries of Civil War soldier's who discussed camp life activities clearly demonstrated three distinct periods of soldier changing attitude and morale. The beginning of the war's criticism towards downtime activities and disassociation from other soldiers indicated disappointment from the naïve soldiers who yearned for war's glory. The middle year's indifference and participation suggested that the soldiers became more understanding of the immoral behavior having been accustomed to the war's monotony and dread. As the war ended, soldier's reverted directly back to the early criticism and began talk of restoration. Their revolution to the beginning of the war may have reflected their own rejoining of society and final attempt to remodel the poor reputation of a soldier. Understanding the changing morale and attitude of the Civil War soldier is important for historians in their effort to engage and understand the soldier's emotions and thoughts behind the letters. Collecting and analyzing their epistolary confessions in date order explained a lot about the different tolls the war took on the young men psychologically and socially. Interpretations of these three distinct periods of uniform attitude change are imperative to recognize and analyze in order to fully understand the depth of a Civil War soldier.

Chapter 3: Winter Encampments

After looking at the data in date order, the next step became finding particular times of year when the soldiers' were particularly enthusiastic about writing about camp downtime entertainments. Because the chief campaigns of war were fought in the Northern part of the Confederate States where, "The winters of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, and northern half of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi [were] surprisingly cold and marked by heavy rains and occasional snows," commanders would order men into their more permanent winter quarters.⁶³ Historian Bell Irvin Wiley wrote, "The commanders of neither side were particularly anxious to carry out large-scale movements under such circumstance. Consequently, when the rigors of winter besieged military encampments, the prevailing practice was to lay aside offensive weapons and go into a state of semi-desuetude, known politely as winter quarters."⁶⁴ Though their location and duration varied, the winter encampments usually began in late November or early December and lasted into March and April.⁶⁵ The letters and diaries proved that the activities of soldiers' during winter camp were amplified compared to their summer and fall counterparts. Historian Noe noticed the change in the men in the winter of 1862-1863. He wrote, "Homesickness undermined morale from the first, but conscription, resentment, privation, and battle created a

⁶³ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 59

⁶⁴ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 59

⁶⁵ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 59

serious crisis of war weariness and depression in the winter of 1862-63.”⁶⁶

However, examining the data over the four years showed that this depression was not only present in every winter, but also lead to and increased interest and participation in camp amusements. Furthermore, there was an abundance of new and creative activities.

As the weather grew colder, James I. Robertson explains, “Orders finally would come down the line for the army to go into winter quarters. Then men responded with speed and zest because frigid temperatures were usually at hand by the time the commanding generals suspended army movements until springtime.”⁶⁷ Initially, much of the soldiers’ time was spent constructing more permanent cabins and huts in which to live. Robertson describes both soldiers’ building activities and the changed landscape that resulted from building thousands of shelters:

Axes at once became the most sought-after weapons; and so armed, men fanned out in every direction and felled trees for logs until the land for miles around the campsite stood naked in the winter sunlight. When trees were in abundance, troops constructed log cabins reminiscent of frontier life. Tents with dirt walls, as well as materials confiscated from buildings in the neighborhood, also came into use.⁶⁸

The appearance of the winter encampments basically turned into rustic cities as “the huts were arranged in orderly fashion along company regimental streets.”⁶⁹

Though troop movements and battle temporarily ceased, entertainment in the winter encampments thrived. After the constructing of their houses and

⁶⁶ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 173

⁶⁷ James I. Robertson Jr., *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 74.

⁶⁸ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Grey*, 74

⁶⁹ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Grey*, 75

neighborhoods, the “men took pride in their residential creations.”⁷⁰ Many secondary source authors described the humorous names given by the men on their huts through wooden placards or in charcoal writing:

Members of a Louisiana battery used wooden signs to christen two of their huts “Sans Souci” and “Buzzards Roost.” Other favorites nicknames were “Swine Hotel,” “Yahoos.” “Rest for Pilgrims”, “Hole in the Wall,” “Pot-pourri,” “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” “Devils Inn,” “The House that Jack Build,” and “We’re Out.” While camp streets initially bore such titles as “Lincoln Avenue” and “Lee Boulevard,” they soon became “Mud Lane” and “Starvation Alley.” A quagmire near a Chaplain’s tent was promptly dubbed “Holy Parl.”⁷¹

Their amusement in naming their homes away from home was unique to winter camps as opposed to traveling camps. It is just one example of the entertainments that accompanied the winter camps. The names as well, were usually either mocking or patriotic. The use of humor or patriotism as comfort is a reoccurring theme of soldier’s letters and diaries throughout the Civil War. However, it seems that during the winter camps, more soldiers turned to humor to combat their emotional and physical distresses during the war. Historian Alicia Fahs agreed, writing, “War humor provide a means of registering dissatisfaction with the war...”⁷²

Some amusements described by other authors were even more unconventional:

A common occurrence in winter was the routing of soldiers from their quarters by the cry “Chimney afire!” The peril could usually be met by simply knocking the burning keg to the ground with a pole. Replacements were readily obtainable from the commissary, and the excitement produced by the conflagration afforded momentary relief from boredom.⁷³

While the humor of christening their huts with fun names or brief excitement of fires seemed common in winter encampment literature, historians Wiley and

⁷⁰ John Davis Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee* (Boston, Massachusetts: George M. Smith & Co., 1993), 76

⁷¹ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Grey*, 76

⁷² Fahs, *The Imaged Civil War*, 202

⁷³ Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 57

Robertson also described how the idleness took its toll on the soldiers. Wiley wrote, "But as weeks lengthened into months most Rebs tired of the inactivity and confinement. Small mannerisms that had once seemed amusing now provoked irritation, jokes and stories no longer entertained, and conversation became dull. Discipline, once accepted as a matter of course, now began to irk and offend."⁷⁴ However, the letters and dairies collected for this study from both sides show that during the winter month's creativity often replaced idleness.

Although some of the same activities continued in the camp year round, there were many that appeared in the letters and diaries that detailed new entertainments and amusements. The winter camp was a particularly interesting time to analyze encampment entertainment because there was hardly any fighting or movement. This time, more than any, demonstrates the lengths soldiers would go to in order to find a distraction. Since the beginning and ending of winter camps vary and are not well documented, the letters and diaries investigated were of Confederate and Union soldiers writing during the months of November through March between the years of 1861 and 1865 were used. The results of their letters showed that both Union and Confederates participated in the more year-round forms of entertainment, such as drinking and gambling, during the winter months as well. But they also demonstrated their interest and participation in the games of snowball fighting and baseball. Additionally, the Union boys described even more unique entertainments, such as holidays, singing, debating societies, chasing animals, dancing, and more.

⁷⁴ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 63

Letter and diaries from both sides showed the recurrence of regular activities described and performed throughout idle winter encampments. These included drinking, gambling, and card playing. In a letter written in early March, Confederate Adam Wise Kersh described the false alarm that occurred when men who had snuck away from camp to get drunk and had irresponsibly wandered back:

[O]n the 27th we had another false alarm. we were ordered to the ditches about 8 o'clock in the night. what caused this false alarm was two of our men went down the Greenbrier River road after whiskey. one got drunk. his companion got him as far back as he could thinking to get him back to camp but could not which detained him till after night. he lost his way come to the pickets. they fired on him taking him to be the Yankees. he fired five times at our pickets with a revolver in return. our pickets fell back to the next post at wilfongs...⁷⁵

This description of drinking in the camp showed the extent to which soldiers were willing to go in order to obtain alcohol. While this extract was written by a Confederate soldier, Union soldier Wilbur Fisk humorously described on December 8, 1863, "We are in the 'best of spirits' almost any time when we can get the best of spirits to put into us..."⁷⁶ Furthermore, Union soldier Junius Newport Bragg described his nightly routine by saying, "After 'Tea' I play a game of 'Euchre' till eight o'clock, then I read some more, or think of *the absent* until I grow weary, when I recline my pious body upon a 'vehicle of repose'. This is the daily routine of my life. Of course it is varied at times by slight changes. Frequently I walk down to the river, in the evening for the sake of the exercise."⁷⁷ It is important to recognize that the

⁷⁵ Adam Wise Kersh to George P. Kersh, March 1, 1862, *The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/A0329> (accessed March 10, 2014).

⁷⁶ Fisk, *Hard Marching Every Day*, 74

⁷⁷ Bragg to Anna Josephine Goddard Bragg, January 8, 1863

same activities of cards, drinking and gambling still existed in the camps because it demonstrates that the new entertainments were not in lieu of the former. These additional activities occurred alongside the regular forms of amusement and demonstrated the soldiers' creativity and resourcefulness during winter encampment.

Of the letters and diaries from the time spent by the men in winter quarters, the activities in which they participated were certainly unique and more numerous than any other season of the Civil War. In the camps of both the North and the South, activities such as snowball fighting and baseball were only recorded in during these winter months. Soldiers on both sides depicted snowball fighting in great detail. While some described from small insignificant fights, many recorded giant snow battles. On the Confederate side, Ephraim Shelby Dodd simply wrote in his diary on February 6, 1863, "Boys had grand snowball."⁷⁸ However, Confederate Captain Charles M. Blackford wrote to his wife a much larger description of the men killing time during the long winter camp days in the snow:

I wish you could have seen the great snow-balling we have down here in the army since the snow was so deep. The soldiers fought great battles like real battles, four or five thousand on each side. Generals were in command, with their staffs, leading brigades and colonels and majors leading regiments, keeping up a line of battle several miles long. It was about as exciting as a real battle. Generals and colonels riding about everywhere amidst the thickest fighting, cheering on their men, and of course as they were officers

⁷⁸ Ephraim Shelby Dodd, "The Diary of Ephraim Shelby Dodd," February 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1622-D003> (accessed October 28, 2013).

the balls came down on them like hail, but they stood them manfully and in good nature though they hurt very much, often drew blood...⁷⁹

The likeness to battle is an important part of the snowball activity. While it may seem sensible to get the practice while the battles were rare, the practicality of the battle formation does not seem to be the motive. In fact, humor appeared to be the intention. Historian Robert E. Bonner wrote, “The best that most could manage was to leaven their misery with a dose of humor.”⁸⁰ The soldiers mock themselves and make light of their situation, which is in reality horrifying and unimaginable.

Blackford noted that even the revered leader of the Army of Northern Virginia experienced the snowball battle: “Part of the fight was just outside General Lee’s headquarters. He came out to see it and found much difficulty in protecting himself from the balls, which made the air white. He was struck several times.”⁸¹ The mention of the battle outside of General Lee’s headquarters and even the description of him getting hit with snowballs demonstrated that the snowball battles had the potential to disrupt military rank. Blackford concluded his description: “It has been a great snow battle all through the army. Regiments fought regiments, brigades fought brigades and even divisions fought divisions.”⁸² The men playing at war in the snow was a way for them to mock themselves. The battles they performed made light of war and found the humor in such a dark and humorless subject.

⁷⁹ Charles Blackford, *Letters from Lee's Army*, ed. Susan Leigh Blackford and Charles Minor Blackford, (New York: Scribner, 1947), 165

⁸⁰ Robert E. Bonner, *The Soldier's Pen: Firsthand Impressions of the Civil War* (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 49.

⁸¹ Blackford, *Letters from Lee's Army*, 165

⁸² Blackford, *Letters from Lee's Army*, 165

The Union men seemed to use the same tactics of finding comfort in the snowball fighting. Wilber Fisk, a Union private who wrote to a newspaper back in his home town in Vermont called *The Green Mountain Freeman*, described a very similar snowfield of battle:

We had some glorious sport this forenoon snowballing. The weather was fine and the snow just right. The 2nd and 6th regiment had a regular pitched battle, which resulting in the discomfiture of the latter. A squad of our boys, principally from Co. C, went up to the Sixth, and stumped the crowd for a snowball fight. The Sixth came out and drove them back. It was now evident that the squad from the Second must have reinforcements or call themselves whipped. Some of our officers, eager for fun, collected quite a force, and headed by our Major, we rallied to the assistance of the defeated party. Snowballs flew thick and fast, some of the foremost on each side getting completely plastered over with them, head, ears, neck, and all. A reserve of reinforcements coming up in the nick of time, virtually decided the contest. They all charge on the Sixth, shouting and snowballing to their utmost. The Sixth was obligated to fall back, fighting valorously as they retreated. We saw our advantaged and followed it up till we drove them clear back to their camp. We started to return and they attempted to follow us, but we face about again, and they saw it wouldn't do, and acknowledged that it was enough. Both regiments let off snowballing, and went to shaking hands with each other. All were good-natured, and no one lost his temper. We claim that we captured their colors, and three or four of their officers. Each regiment had a flag improvised for the occasion. They admit a defeat, but think our force was the strongest. It was a lively "charging" and snowballing, capturing and recapturing officers. Though it was ruinous for army coats, and the wear and tear of clothing in come of our encounters was immense.⁸³

Just like the Confederates, the Union boys engaged in the snowball fight as if it were a real battle. The writers of both describe tactical maneuvers and use war imagery for comedic emphasis. Both Blackford and Fisk used humor to show how the soldiers don't take themselves too seriously. Blackford described, "The funniest part was, when the battle was over, both parties would join us and go through the camp and every man they found who had shirked the fight they rolled over and over and

⁸³ Fisk, *Hard Marching Every Day*, 209

covered him with snow. Wouldn't you have liked to see the fun?"⁸⁴ Similarly to the Confederate snow 'burial', Fisk ended his letter joking, "I haven't had time to get a complete list of the killed and wounded, but as our surgeon was on the ground, I am confident that all the wounded were well cared for."⁸⁵ As these men describe the snow battles humorously, it can be imagined that the men that participated did so as well. Snowball fights of this magnitude on both sides suggested that the men were not only bored but also willing to laugh at themselves. According to Joseph T. Glatthaar, "Massive snowball fights... offered a wonderful opportunity for men to revert to boys, to take their minds off the hardships of war and to have some good fun together."⁸⁶ The distraction of the snow and the humor allowed soldiers to momentarily forget the seriousness of battle.

Similarly, both sides played an early form of baseball during the winter camps as a retreat from the monotony and boredom. Historian George B. Kirsch wrote *Baseball in Blue and Gray*, in which he draws conclusions between Civil War baseball and nationalism. He wrote, "Military authorities permitted recreation for soldiers at appropriate times and places between campaigns and during winter camps because it supplied diversion and proved useful."⁸⁷ He continued, "Officers on both sides encouraged sport on holidays, in winter camps, and during breaks between drill sessions to relieve boredom of camp life and to enliven the training

⁸⁴ Blackford, *Letters from Lee's Army*, 165

⁸⁵ Fisk, *Hard Marching Every Day*, 209

⁸⁶ Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York, New York: Free Press, 2008), 221.

⁸⁷ George B. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime During the Civil War*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 31.

period with activities that were enjoyable and exciting.”⁸⁸ In the data collected, there was evidence of baseball played on both sides, but only during the winter encampments. In his diary, Seth James Wells wrote, “Bright and clear. Drill forenoon and afternoon. Dress parade in the evening, the same as yesterday. We had a game of baseball in the evening. I worked all day on the pay rolls.”⁸⁹ Confederate James M. Cadwallander similarly wrote in his diary on February 13, 1864, “Took up the line of march and went into camp 2 miles side of Orange. Had a game of ball this evening.”⁹⁰ The baseball games were played as both a distraction and morale booster. According to Kirsch, baseball’s popularity was intensifying just before the first shots were fired on Ft. Sumter. The pre-war popularity of the sport made its use on during the winter encampments a way for the soldiers to connect home. He wrote, “Contest played on both the home front and the battlefield provided common experiences for soldiers and civilians, as the games in both locales boosted both the soldiers’ morale and the sprits of civilians in northern communities”⁹¹ Playing baseball in camp was a home comfort available to the men both North and South during a period of inactivity like the winter encampment. It was used militarily as for exercise, but informally a distraction and reminder of pre-war life.

The letters and diaries of Union soldiers during the winter camps demonstrated more varied ways of passing the time than their Confederate

⁸⁸ Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray*, 32

⁸⁹ Seth James Wells, “Diary of Seth James Wells,” March 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1634-D005> (accessed October 28, 2013).

⁹⁰ James M. Cadwallander, “Diary of James M. Cadwallander,” February 13, 1864, *Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/AD1010> (accessed March 10, 2014).

⁹¹ Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray*, xiv

counterparts. For example, Oliver Norton described how the men had organized and participated in debating societies. He wrote in a letter on January 14, 1862, "How am I enjoying myself? Well, as philosophically as I can. We have rather dull times, but evenings we write letters or sing, and we have started a debating society with considerable interest."⁹² He elaborated in another letter written three days later:

You will ask what we have busied ourselves about. In the daytime we sit round the tents, reading, telling stories, grumbling about the rations, discussing the prospects of marching, cursing the English about the Mason and Slidell affair, expressing a willingness to devote our lives to humbling that proud nation, and talking of this, that and the other.⁹³

These two letters, besides describing common discussion and singing, revealed the political interests of Union soldiers. The debating society as well as discussions over the Mason and Slidell affair, exemplify another form of camp life entertainment. While political talk was by no means limited to the winter camps, the organized debating society was an occurrence found within the data was only mentioned during the winter camp.

Another Union man, surgeon John Gardner Perry, described his boredom after a long winter, and how he amused himself. On March 20, 1864, he wrote a letter describing how he had been filling his downtime:

There is too little occupation; I am read out and wearied to death. To-day, beside my sick calls, I have done nothing but loaf with my hands in my pockets, from tent to tent, for it has been too cold to sit outside, and my chimney has smoked too much for a fire.⁹⁴

⁹² Norton, January 14, 1862

⁹³ Norton, January 17, 1862

⁹⁴ John Gardner Perry, April 20, 1864, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1566-D061> (accessed October 27, 2013).

Perry describes himself wondering around camp. Although he is a surgeon and has to check on the sick, he makes it sound like he wonders from tent to tent by choice just to kill time and stay warm in the cold. Having exhausted his regular past times, Perry pursued a new amusement:

Yesterday, for variety, and the hope of benefit, I shaved off my mustache, -- but I allow it did take moral courage, -- and then had a most laughable time calling upon our officers at their respective huts. Not one of them recognized me until I spoke, and then they roared with laughter. Not so with Abbott and Uncle Nathan, though. They were really put out with me, and saw no joke whatever, -- said I looked like the devil, and I think Abbott would have liked to put me under guard, and for the simple reason that the loss of a mustache broke the military uniformity of the regiment!⁹⁵

Presumably, the men were not as mobile and definitely idler than during the other seasons. There was more time for grooming and other nonessential military activities. But Perry described his change in hair and beard style as a way to entertain himself and overcome the idleness of camp. His shave not only entertained himself, but his comrades as well.

Furthermore, Zenas T. Haines writes about another winter camp entertainment: chasing of animals. Haines described, "It was not a little entertaining to see some of our boys, now in hot pursuit of half-frantic poultry and pigs, and then wildly beating the air in the vicinity of bee-hives which they had ruthlessly overturned in an irrepressible passion for stored sweets."⁹⁶ This letter, written on November 11, 1862, then went on to described the "apple-jack" alcohol that had taken place of whiskey rations. The apple-jack was produced in their own camp.

⁹⁵ Perry, April 20, 1864

⁹⁶ Haines, November 11, 1862

Zanas T. Haines also described in great detail the holiday observances that occurred in his regiment. On January 2, 1863 he described the recent Christmas in the camp: "Christmas was less extensively observed than Thanksgiving at Newbern, although not a few of us were enabled to indulge in a dinner a little better than usual. One or two of the barracks were trimmed with evergreen, and something like amusement was attempted by the aid of contraband minstrelsy and dancers."⁹⁷ Like the decoratively named huts, holiday decoration was also used around camp. Haines also described the New Years party hosted by a different Company, Company D, which shows the company's relationship with each other. It included dramatic and musical entertainment by the 44th Regimental Dramatic Association, which performed music, the Grand Trial Scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, a grand minstrel scene, and concluded with 'A Terrible Cat-Ass-Trophe on the North Atlantic Railroad'.⁹⁸

In a later letter from January 23, 1863, Haines described the humorous celebration of the Terpsichorean festival in which men dressed as women in order to have a proper dance party:

The first grand Terpsichorean festival of the New Year in our regiment transpired on the evening of the 20th instant, in the barracks of Co. D. The much lamented absence of the feminine element was in part atoned for by female apparel donned for the occasion by a number of young men with smooth faces and an eye to artistic effect...Some of the gallants of the young women were scarcely less stunning in their make up. The insignia of military office, from that of Major Generals to Lieutenants, extensively prevailed. Dancing, of course, was the order of the night...⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Haines, January 2, 1863

⁹⁸ Haines, January 2, 1863

⁹⁹ Haines, January 23, 1863

He then described the order of the dances including a Sicilian circle, polka, waltz, and Redowa. Furthermore, Haines explained the unique choice of costumes by saying, "The majors were decorated with official rosettes, a solid square of hard tack forming the centre of each. Even some of the belles of the evening were resplendent with pendant jewels cut from the same tenacious mineral."¹⁰⁰ The partying and dancing alone was an interesting and unique form of entertainment, but the humor involved in the partying shows again the soldiers' ability to take themselves lightly. The men wearing women's clothing and decorating themselves with hardtack showed their dependency on humor to survive encampment by making fun of their lack of women and proper food.

Haines then described a masquerade party held under Company C. Haines wrote, "Only a few hours were given to preparation, but the affair assumed an extent, as well as an appearance of elegance and grotesque humor not a little surprising, considering the limited resources of soldiers in camp."¹⁰¹ Like the last party, there were men dressed as women, but there were even more distinctive costumes at the Masquerade:

Several personations of the Prince of Darkness were voted admirable. Not the worst Satan was a young divinity student of Co. D, who had evidently studied his *role*. Bird o' Freedom Sawin was there as a Pilgrim Father. There were harlequins, clowns, policemen, men of impenetrable visage, and one venerable monk with crucifix and beads.¹⁰²

This was an interesting letter because of the men's choice of costume not only reflected their humor but also their willingness to make fun of religion. The

¹⁰⁰ Haines, January 23, 1863

¹⁰¹ Haines, January 27, 1863

¹⁰² Haines, January 17, 1863

important hint at the boy who dressed as Satan having 'studied his role' implied that immorality was not uncommon. Besides dressing as the literal devil, the men also humorously mocked religious icons such as priest and monks by dressing as them alongside harlots and clowns.

The jabs at religion are noteworthy because they describe another pattern apparent in the winter encampment data: the lack of religion. In fact, of all of the winter camp data collected, only one person, John Scott, even mentions religion seriously and his letter was to his minister and dated near the end of the war in the winter of 1865. Neither Union nor Confederate soldiers mentioned religion in the letters and diaries collected during winter encampment. The lack of record implied that religion was not nearly as significant or participated in as it was during the other months of the war. Perhaps this was so because the men were not as near to death and battle and the comforts and idleness of camp led them astray. Or perhaps the other camp time entertainments that arose during the winter encampments were distractions from their personal or group religious activities. Regardless, the lack of mention of religion is an important observation to make within the winter camp data.

For the soldiers, the move to winter encampments was an exciting change of pace. Wiley explains, "During the winter months inclemency of weather and the tendency toward a more settled mode of life combined to produce a great change in soldier dwellings."¹⁰³ While this change mostly included settling into log huts and cabins, the four or five month period of low mobility and diminution of battle

¹⁰³ Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 57

provided a camp life experience for a soldier very distinct from the other months of the year:

The youths and men who rushed to arms at war's outset discovered as the months passed that active campaigning was but a small part of this civil war. Long static intervals followed battles and were devoted to recuperation, reorganization, and waiting to see what the opposing side would do. As year's end approached and the weather grew colder, soldiers generally became 'muddy, wet, ugly, sour, and insubordinate'.¹⁰⁴

While continuing to smoke, drink and gamble, the winter letters and diaries collected showed that the encampments opened doors for more unique and creative forms of entertainment. Baseball, snowballing, holiday, dancing, and plain goofing off quickly filled the battle-less and idle months away from home. While some activities were used as comforts, others used humor to deemphasize the graveness of their duties and the deficiencies of their surroundings. While Bonner wrote, "Union and Confederate armies each had men who would confront the unpleasant novelty of lousy food, shelter, and sanitation by making jokes," humor was just the beginning of a soldier's reach for distraction during the winter months.¹⁰⁵ A letter written by Union soldier Taylor Peirce to his wife on November 26, 1862 describing a happy night in camp demonstrates the temporariness of happy distractions:

There is gay old time in camp to night. The violin Tambourine and bones are going it. The men are all enjoying themselves to the utmost. While I set here and write I hear shouts and laughter of the men...They are a joyous set of boys and one to hear them and see them in their frolics they wouldn't think they never thought that they were on their way to mix in deadly strife where many a one might lay down his life ere another month rolls around.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Grey*, 74

¹⁰⁵ Bonner, *The Soldiers Pen*, 50

¹⁰⁶ Peirce, *From Taylor, From Catharine*, 51

His enthusiastic description of the fun fades quickly as he reminds himself of the fate of his comrades. His letter exemplifies how the distractions of camp are only brief liberations from the horrible duties and conditions. Whether it was for physical comfort or emotional defense, there was distinct increase in both the number and uniqueness of activities participated in during the winter encampments.

Chapter 4: Officers and Soldiers

In addition to revealing the changing attitudes about leisure over the course of the war and the distinction between the morale of winter and mobile camps, the diaries and letters revealed patterns of attitudes dependent on military rank. In this section the privates and corporals were separated from the higher officers including (in order from lowest to highest rank) assistant surgeons, surgeons, Sergeants, First Lieutenants, Captains, Lieutenant Colonels, Colonels, Brigadier Generals, and Major Generals. Before detailing the interesting patterns and observations found in these primary sources, it is important to understand the relationships between officers and privates during the Civil War as recorded by other historians.

Most scholars found that the relationship between the two groups seemed to be very rocky. Historian James I. Robertson, Jr. described the more general reasons tension surfaced between the two classes of soldiers:

Disrespect for authority was the first and most prevalent offense committed by the men of blue and gray...Much of the insubordination also resulted from factors common in any war: recruits adjusting badly to army regimentation, the natural tendency of subalterns to find fault with those placed in command, plus the disillusionment that came when the harsh reality of war erased the rosy dreams of glory.¹⁰⁷

Adjusting to military life and the horrors of war were not the only cause for tension between the ranks. One source of friction was taking orders. The volunteers for the armies, both North and South, were usually headstrong in their commitment to the American ideals of honor and freedom from tyrannical authority as they entered the

¹⁰⁷ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Grey*, 124

service. Because of this, they were not easily broken into the strict demands and discipline of soldiering. Historian Paul Cimbala wrote, “Most white Northern and Southern volunteers had had little experience with being commanded about by others; many, especially in Southern units, resented it.”¹⁰⁸ According to Wiley, the southern soldiers were resentful because they felt like slaves: “When commanders seemed to bear down on them too heavily, other privates were apt to complain to their homefolk that they were being treated like Negroes.”¹⁰⁹ Instead of sympathizing with the institution they were fighting to preserve, taking rather than giving orders led to frustration and insubordination.

As the soldiers tried to maintain their dignity, the officers struggled to maintain order in the camp with discipline:

Union and Confederate officers attempted to impose cleanliness, uniformity, and orderly appearance on their men even as they trained them to fight; they tried to keep their men from swearing, and in general, they imposed on them to behave well. All such efforts on their part could earn them the unfair reputation of being martinets, especially among the new recruits still resisting discipline.¹¹⁰

Familiarity could cause resentment when a pre-war friend or foe issued commands. Privates and officers in the company often came from the same town, which meant. “[m]ost of the men had been longtime acquaintances with their company captains, and in some instances even with their regimental commanders, before civil war erupted. They had addressed one another then as Tome, Dick, or Harry.”¹¹¹ When neighbors became commanders, order was difficult to maintain without punishment

¹⁰⁸ Paul Cimbala, *Soldiers North and South: The Everyday Experiences of the Men Who Fought America's Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 85.

¹⁰⁹ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 236

¹¹⁰ Cimbala, *Soldiers North and South*, 88

¹¹¹ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Grey*, 123

and discipline. Discipline was a major cause for tension between the ranks and often led to insubordination. Wiley wrote, "Insubordination was shockingly prevalent during the early period of the war, owing to the civilian soldiers' aversion to discipline and the incompetency of officers."¹¹² Most often the insubordination would be direct, such as "...the use of contemptuous or disrespectful language toward superiors..."¹¹³ More specifically, the soldiers chose derogatory names for officers who sought to discipline refractory soldiers. These included, "...such uncomplimentary titles as 'buggar,' 'dog,' 'green-horn,' 'whore-house pimp' and 'skunk.' But by far the most frequently applied expletive was the time-honored 'son of a bitch.'"¹¹⁴ How officers reacted to insubordination depended on the officer in charge, his rank, and the infraction of the soldier.

In their descriptions of unseemly behavior in camp, officers and surgeons differed significantly from those of privates and corporals. In the letter and diary samples collected, there were no officers that admitted to their own participation in the immoral the activities of camp such as drinking, gambling and playing cards. There were records of officers and privates criticizing other officers for their participation, but none of the officers actually admitting to their own involvement. This implies that either the officers were lying or not writing about their own immoral camp entertainments.

It is important to note that the officers felt the same sense of monotony and boredom in camp that the privates did. Union Lieutenant Colonel Charles Write

¹¹² Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 198

¹¹³ Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 199

¹¹⁴ Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 199

Wills and Brevet-Colonel Charles Fessenden Morse described the boredom of camps instead of admitting participation in immoral activities that usually followed. Wills wrote, "I've been bored like sin the last two weeks drilling new recruits, but I'm glad of it, for it is rather pleasant to me to have something disagreeable when I'm bored feeling good."¹¹⁵ Morse described an afternoon out in a nearby town and at dinner with friends and wrote, "Days like these are like oases in our ordinary dull routine, and they come rarely enough to be enjoyed."¹¹⁶ The letters and diaries showed that boredom was equally rampant with the non-infantry men. However, the higher officers certainly refrained admitting their participation in anything other than honorable forms of entertainment.

Instead, some officers wrote more about camp activities that were not considered immoral. For example, 1st Lieutenant Oliver Wilcox Norton's letter described his writing and singing within the camp.¹¹⁷ Also Confederate Captain Charles Blackford wrote about snowball fighting.¹¹⁸ Not only are both of these examples of harmless activities, but they also both occurred during the winter, where the previous chapter showed increased participation in activities by all soldiers. Captain Elliot Fletcher, billeted in a Confederate camp, even described his refusal to play cards and denied witnessing any officers' engaging in this activity:

¹¹⁵ Charles Wright Wills, "Diary of Charles Wright Wills." September 1861, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1561-D006> (accessed October 27, 2013).

¹¹⁶ Charles Fessenden Morse, October 20, 1862, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/cwld/getdoc.pl?S1524-D050> (accessed October 27, 2013).

¹¹⁷ Norton, January 14, 1862

¹¹⁸ Blackford, Letters to Lees Army, 165

Even if I was fond of cards, I would have but a limited opportunity of playing, for from the time I entered the army I have never seen a commissioned officer throw a card..¹¹⁹

He disassociates all officers from the immoral behavior of camps and distinctly distinguishes officers from the lower ranks by their refusal to participate in gambling. Only admitting their participation in moral entertainments and not confessing their involvement in the immoral ones showed that higher-ranking officers held themselves to a higher esteem than the privates.

While the officers themselves never admitted to participating in anything other than the honorable activities, there were many cases in the letters and diary entries where officers criticized other officers or privates criticized officers for their partaking in immoral entertainments. This evidence infers that either officers were lying about their involvement in the immoral activities or simply not admitting it. One of the accusations that came up often in the letters and diaries was officer drinking. One such negative comment was written by Union Captain De forest. He described the intoxication of the officers as a means of comfort, just as it was in the lower ranks:

It must be added in fairness that intoxication is not confined to the soldiers. The officers are nearly as miserable, and are tempted to seek the same consolation. Lately a lieutenant reeled into my tent, dropped heavily on a bed, stared at me for a minute as if to locate me, and said in a thick voice, 'Capm, everybody's drunk today. Capm, the brigade's drunk.'¹²⁰

While he is not directly upset about the drunkenness of his staff and brigade, he never refers to himself being drunk; rather it is a lower ranking officer who tells him of the brigade's drunkenness.

¹¹⁹ Fletcher Jr. to Elliot Fletcher Sr., November 6, 1861

¹²⁰ De Forest, *A Volunteer's Adventures*, 41

Union surgeon Henry H. Penniman criticized officers' drinking as well. He vented his frustration with the amount drinking among the army officers including one of the generals:

Drinking is abundant in the army, though this is a luxury denied at these situations except to officers. By liquor time is killed, spirits supported, care dismissed, and thought drowned. Indeed, I had no idea how dreadful are morals in the army. I will explain these matters to you. Every other man will get drunk if he can, and every officer is frequently drunk. General John A. L -- is stupidly drunk, report says, every night; and officers follow suit...¹²¹

In the tone of his letter, Penniman sounded as if he was disgusted and ashamed of the officers' behavior. His letter also specifically targets officers as the source of drinking issues in camp. Furthermore, Union Surgeon John Gardner Perry described his frustration with the improper actions of other officers while he was on picket duty:

I am not fond of picket duty at any time, but under present conditions it is almost intolerable. I came out here yesterday among a lot of ignorant, swearing, drinking officers, unknown to me, and all intensely disagreeable.¹²²

Moreover, the Confederate surgeon Spencer Glasgow Welch described his dislike for tent-mate "Dr. Tyler" because of his fondness for drinking and gambling.¹²³ Welch's letter described his dislike of his fellow surgeon's drinking as well as gambling. The letters from the Captains and Surgeons criticizing other officers for drinking, swearing, and gambling showed their disassociation from immoral behaviors. However their letters did prove that there were officers taking part in the immoral activities.

¹²¹ Penniman to wife, June 6, 1863

¹²² John Gardner Perry, March 20, 1864, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/getobject.pl?c.5225:1.cwld.715.720.726.732.742.748.752> (accessed March 10, 2014)

¹²³ Welch to Cordelia Strother Welch, January 3, 1864

Criticism of officers did not only come from officers. A Union private also commented about his concerns for the drunkenness of his officers. Lucus P. Mox wrote, "...indeed I am afraid some of us will get nearly crazy if our officers dont sober up a little and send us home if they dont be careful we will 'reub some of them out' it wont do for them to be verry stubborn after teaching us how to fight. But I must quit talking about my superiors or I may get into trouble."¹²⁴ The criticism from both the other officers and the privates prove that generals were big participators in the immoral entertainments in camp. But the officer's denial of their participation in the letters and dairy entries has significant implications for personality of an officer.

While they did not admit to participating themselves, the officers were quick to criticize the privates for their immoral entertainments. There were many letters and diary entries that demonstrated the officer's disapproval of their privates' participation in immoral amusements. One outspoken surgeon described his relationship with the soldiers with vivid disgust and detail:

I have never mingled, you know, with the lower dregs of society, and, every day, the associations are painful. It is dreadful and disgusting. Profanity is universal -- often, and generally common oaths -- sometimes dreadfully severe and heaven-daring in its tone. Such use of the name of the great and ever blessed God, and of the precious Saviour, causes me to feel shocked through and through...To pass away time, to play cards, to drink, to eat, to run round, to do any thing that will hinder the serious thoughts of eternity, this is all; and of the two persons in our regiment, reputed to be religious, one is not agreeable, and the other I tried in vain to draw into some very

¹²⁴ Lucus P. Mox to Jennie, April 30, 1865, *The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/F0109> (accessed March 10, 2014)

general religious talk, the other day, while we were both at leisure up the front: it was no use.¹²⁵

Penniman's disgust at the soldiers' lack of respect for religion was apparent in his abhorrence of their conduct. By calling them the 'lower dregs of society' he demonstrated his aversion at the mere association with them. Even when Penniman sought out someone purported to be religious, he found the interaction dissatisfying. Reflecting on the soldiers' irreligious behavior, he decided: "...a man had better form his character and principles before he gets into the army."¹²⁶

Although less critical of soldiers than Penniman, Union First Lieutenant Josia Favill commented unfavorably on soldiers' money management, in particular their participation in gambling on payday:

The regiment was mustered for pay during the morning, after which the men signed the rolls. Pay day is always an event in the army, almost every man being dead broke long before the paymaster comes around. The men, generally speaking, are improvident, and some of them great gamblers, soon getting rid of their cash; many send home a large proportion of their pay to their families, and the express companies do a big business in money packages every pay day; we are all paid in paper money, and sometimes with coupon, interest-bearing notes; my pay amounts to about one hundred and sixty dollars per month, a third of which I send home for safekeeping, the balance I spend. There are a good many professional gamblers in the army, who, many think, enlisted for the sole purpose of despoiling their comrades; at any rate, there are certain men in our brigade who regularly gather in the bulk of the money.¹²⁷

Although he wasn't nearly as disgusted with the men as Penniman, there was definite disapproval in Favill's tone towards those who gamble away their income.

¹²⁵ Penniman to wife, June 6th, 1863

¹²⁶ Penniman to wife, June 6th, 1863

¹²⁷ Josiah Marshal Favill, "Diary of Josiah Marshal Favill," August 1862, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, <http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/getobject.pl?c.5609:1:0:-1:0.cwld.1248> (accessed October 28, 2013).

His description of what he does with his own money distinguished him from the improper ways the lower ranks treated their pay.

Another Union officer, Captain John William De Forest, similarly wrote his wife about the madness on payday. In his particular regiment, the 12th Connecticut Volunteers out of New Haven, CT, the immorality of choice on payday was drinking:

I saw at once what was the matter: payday had worked its usual mischief: one third of them were as drunk as pipers. In my rage at their condition I forgot all about the enemy. I pushed and flung them into their places, and called them sots, and used other bad language...¹²⁸

His fury was an important characteristic of his letter. It is obvious that he was very frustrated with the men's inebriation, due in part, perhaps because their drunken state was "usual mischief" rather than its first occurrence. However, he was more understanding at the end of the letter, describing their horrible situations and no ways of coping:

To comprehend this drunkenness you must understand that many of my men are city toughs, in part Irish; also that they are desperate with malaria, with the monotony of their life, and with incessant discomforts; finally, that intoxication in itself is not a military offence and not punishable.¹²⁹

He also associated the drinking soldiers with their ethnicity by calling them Irish toughs, generalizing the drinking soldiers with the Irish ones.

Agreeing with Captain De Forest, Brevet Major General Alan Voris described his own abhorrence with the drinking of his inferiors while in command of the 67th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment in a letter to his wife: "What a task it is to command men liable to gross intoxication, especially so when they have been

¹²⁸ John William De Forest, *A Volunteer's Adventures: A Union Captain's Record of the Civil War*, Ed. James H. Croushore (Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 40

¹²⁹ De Forest, *A Volunteer's Adventures*, 40

deprived of this beverage for months. My Red was not as bad as many others, but it was bad enough in all conscience.”¹³⁰ By ‘red’ he meant his anger. He was not as forgiving as Captain De Forest, which suggested that officers take drinking and other infractions more seriously than others.

According to these letters, there was different leniency towards different rules depending on who was in charge and issuing the punishments. The action or disregard of an officer affected the relationship between the ranks. On one hand, First Lieutenant Favill described the reaction to gambling during his command of the 57th Infantry, New York. He wrote, “Gambling is forbidden to officers, as well as private soldiers by the regulations, but it is a complete dead letter.”¹³¹ According to him, as a First Lieutenant, the rules against gambling were not enforced. But, as the rank increases in other letters, so does the punishment and intolerance of immoral camp activities. For example, Private Jenkin Lloyd Jones described how gambling was treated in his camp during his time with the 6th Light Artillery, Wisconsin under the command of Major General Peter Joseph Osterhaus:

A chuckluck doing big business was surprised by a guard in Osterhaus's camp this afternoon and the boys taken to the headquarters of the Division under guard. The idleness and monotony of camp is fearfully demoralizing to many, and inevitably leads to the gaming table if indulged in.¹³²

Chuck-a-luck was a betting game similar to roulette but with dice instead of a wheel and ball. In this letter, it is clear that Osterhaus had put a policy into place to deal with unwelcome activities and has enforced the rules through his guards. While this

¹³⁰ Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 70

¹³¹ Favill, August 1862

¹³² Jones, December 1863

letter was not directly from Osterhaus himself, the private's mention of his order shows that it was under his authority that the men were arrested and the punishments enforced.

Likewise, Major General Alvin C. Voris described how he handled the uncontrollable drinking in his camp:

The cars had stopped at different points to give the men an opportunity to get whiskey. By daylight in the morning the suckers had their canteens filled and ready for a joyful day. To keep them in camp was impossible. About 4p.m. I commenced moving my men to the oats, & some so drunk and ugly that I had to bind them hand & foot, gag their filthy mouths & by force load to get them quietly to places of embarkation.¹³³

Although Voris's letter stressed his inability to maintain order with his drinking men, he did demonstrate his disapproval of immoral behavior. He also described the punishments he inflicted in attempt to discourage privates from drinking. Though he struggled to maintain order, his disapproval and use of severe punishments like gagging and binding were measures only taken by officers of higher rank. A

Brigadier General Stephen Minot Weld's described his own intense disdain towards and punishments of drinking and insubordination in the 56th Infantry, Massachusetts:

One of the worst cases in the regiment, named Casey, I had tied up by the thumbs, and gagged. He then kicked an officer there, and I said to him, "Casey, I will shoot you if you do that again." Another officer came by and he kicked him, and I drew that pistol Uncle Oliver gave me and fired at him twice. The first shot went through his arm, in the biceps, without touching the bone. The second hit the bayonet in his mouth by which he was gagged, and dropped into his stocking. The bayonet saved his life, for the shot would have gone through his head otherwise. I meant to kill him, and was very sorry I did not succeed.¹³⁴

¹³³ Alvan C. Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War: The Letters of Brevet Major General Alvin C Voris*, Ed. Jerome Mushkat (Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 70.

¹³⁴ Weld, March 25, 1864

Weld's high rank gave him the authority to punish the private unlike the lieutenant rank of Favill. While his reaction seemed extreme, his no nonsense behavior reflected the type of respect he demanded at his superior position. While higher ranks do have the authority to hand out harsher disciplines, it appears that the higher-ranking officers took infractions more seriously than the lower ranking officers. Weld commented on the effectiveness of his punishment by saying, "The shots had a wonderful effect in quieting the men, and I had very little trouble with them after that."¹³⁵ While his punishment was more extreme, the result was certainly more successful than Voris's.

The letters and diary entries of the soldiers also exposed the appropriate relationship between the privates and higher ranked officers through the descriptions of camp entertainments. There were clearly some forms of amusement that were considered acceptable behavior officers. Besides the drinking, gambling and swearing that were criticized, the officers were also condemned for being too familiar with their privates. Union Surgeon Perry described, "They amuse themselves by card playing, toadying their privates, rough talk; and I expect a row with them every moment."¹³⁶ Perry's letter shows his dislike for the officer's interactions with lower ranked soldiers by describing their interactions on the same level as card playing, rough talk and fighting. He is very bitter as he accuses the officers of the same sort of follies the privates participate in. Perry further

¹³⁵ Weld, March 25, 1864

¹³⁶ Perry, March 20, 1864

demonstrated his disapproval of any sort of unofficial relationship between officers and privates when he criticized an officer for allowing a private into his tent:

They allow their favorites among the privates to eat and drink with them, but I told the commanding officer yesterday that I did not allow a private to come into my quarters in camp, and should not here, and if he wished to talk to one, it must be outside, and not while I was in the hut. The officer looked at me pretty sharply, as if he meant to be insulting, and I was prepared for it; but he merely said, "You officers of the Twentieth Mass. treat your privates different from what we do, but if you don't like this man here I'll send him out," which he did. If he had not complied with my demand, I should have brought charges against him, and this he well knew.¹³⁷

While Perry states that there were army regulations to prevent the fraternization between the ranks, it is the resentment in his tone that reflects how socialization between the ranks was considered inappropriate behavior.

On the other hand, there were others who described the amicable relationships between officers and privates as a positive. For example, Union Private Taylor Peirce wrote his wife, "There is the most brotherly feelings amongst the men and between them and the officers of any set of soldiers that I have yet become acquainted with and there will be many a tie of friendship formed that will only be served by death."¹³⁸ When Private Zenas T Haines wrote about the parties his company threw around New Years, he noted, "We had many visitors, including Colonel Lee and staff, all of whom evinced their intense satisfaction with what they heard and saw."¹³⁹ He also described the appearance of officers at a Masquerade ball a few weeks later:

Nearly all our officers were present, including the field and staff, together with several officers and privates from our excellent neighbor, the gallant

¹³⁷ Perry, March 20, 1864

¹³⁸ Taylor To Catharine, 335

¹³⁹ Haines, January 23, 1863

Connecticut 10th, endeared to us alike by their signal bravery in the field of battle, and their cordial friendship toward us as a regiment.¹⁴⁰

His mention of the officers twice signified that it was not a one-time occurrence of officers acknowledging the activities of the privates. However, their presence, according to Haines anyway, did not include the officers' full participation. The letter suggests that the officers watched but did not fully engage in the amusements of the soldiers. The disapproval of the more intimate relationship between officers and privates as well as Haines's discussion of the distant participation of the officers in the holidays celebrations suggest that a detached relationship between officers and privates was more acceptable than an informal, familiar relationship.

Analyzing how officers and lower ranks talked about each other and the interactions during the downtime in camp is important to understanding their relationship during wartime. According James M. McPherson, the time spent together during camp downtime affected their relationship on the battlefield.

Although combat leadership by example was probably the foremost single attribute of a good officer in the Civil War, the soldiers' first official contacts with their officers and men that developed or failed to develop in their time together before combat had a great deal to do with how well the unit performed in battle.¹⁴¹

While officers of different ranks and the common soldier may have had unique relationships from regiment to regiment, according to data collected, certain overall conclusions can be made. First, officers hardly ever talked about their own participation in camp downtime activities. This implies their sense of importance

¹⁴⁰ Haines, January 27, 1863

¹⁴¹ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54

and responsibility. Second, the officers' leniency and discipline seemed to be dependent on rank. Higher-ranking officers took infractions more seriously used harsher punishments to impede future infractions. Finally, for better or worse, most officers tried to maintain a distant relationship with their subordinates while also demonstrating their reserved involvement. In the end, the letters and diaries showed that there were certain activities the officers participated in or acknowledged from a distance that encouraged respect between the ranks, and others that destroyed it. The appropriate distant relationship was determined by the officer's tolerance and discipline for certain entertainments. Historian Bonner wrote, "...there were well-defined barriers between men of higher rank and those from whom unquestioning obedience was required."¹⁴² Through examining how the officers and privates described the camp downtime entertainments, it is apparent these barriers were dependent on a balancing act between being an honorable leader, a disciplinarian, and an amicable acquaintance.

¹⁴² Bonner, *A Soldiers Pen*, 69

Conclusion:

This study commenced in order to determine if and when Civil War soldiers' attitudes and behaviors changed during the many hours of camp downtime over the course of the war. The camp time of a soldier is important to the history of the Civil War because, as Steven E. Woodworth explains, "By far the greatest portion of his time in the army would be occupied in the relatively mundane activities of the camp and the march... In this war as in others, the soldier's life consisted of long periods of intense boredom punctuated by brief periods of stark terror."¹⁴³ With these long periods of downtime such a large portion of a soldiers' service, how they describe their amusements and entertainments or those of the soldiers around them reflected morale and attitude. There was certainly no lack of documented activities. Bell Irvin Wiley wrote, "The urge to have fun in one form or another was irrepressible. And despite the lack of organized efforts to promote recreation, wearers of the blue, like the men in gray, were able to make tolerable a life, which to most was thoroughly unattractive."¹⁴⁴ By sifting through letters and diaries in which soldiers discussed camp activities, some very interesting and definitive conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions are significant to the history of the Civil War because the changing overall morale of armies could have potentially affected both the success of battle and how the war was remembered in subsequent decades.

¹⁴³ Steven E. Woodworth, *The Loyal True, and Brave: America's Civil War Soldiers*, (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 2002), 137.

¹⁴⁴ Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 191

In the letters and diaries collected, the information provided by both sides was relatively equal in content. Both sides discussed the same sorts of activities including gambling, drinking, smoking, swearing, dancing, discussing politics, writing, snowball fighting, singing, drilling, baseball playing, reading, writing, and religion. Similarly, both sides also had the same reactions to the different activities: criticism, disassociation, indifference, or participation. Both also recognized soldiers' tendency to sin in camp. Union soldier Wilber Fisk wrote, "As I said, we had little to do, but idleness is by no means the parent of contentment. If one's mind is unoccupied it will prey upon itself, or seek gratification in whatever sin comes its way, no matter how unworthy; hence the tendency to evil in camp."¹⁴⁵ As the research revealed that both sides had similar reactions and activities over the course of the four years of war, their records were grouped together and conclusions were made to reflect what the average soldier, North or South, experienced during the war.

After determining the lack of distinct difference in Northern and Southern soldiers' descriptions of camp entertainments and attitude, the next step was to analyze the soldiers' change in attitude over the course of the war. In doing so, the data showed how a soldier changed as the war progressed. Ordering the letters and diaries in date order on the data spreadsheet revealed three definitive periods of changing tone and opinion towards the camp activities. The beginning of the war's overwhelming criticism of and disassociation from camp activities could be attributed to the soldiers' early disappointment with war's lack of honor and glory.

¹⁴⁵ Fisk, *Hard Marching Every Day*, 32

The middle years' indifference towards the typically immoral activities and even participation in the camp events might reflect of the soldiers' surmounting need for distraction and comfort. It could also express the soldiers' altering view of sociably acceptable behavior. Nevertheless, the last section of data demonstrated a full revolution, returning back to the criticism and disassociation. By 1865, the soldiers began to prepare themselves to rejoin society and thus looked down upon the camp activities through a religious lens. Looking at the letters and diaries in date order, the three distinct periods of different overall tone and attitude showed the changing morale of the Civil War soldiers throughout the war.

An additional distinct period appeared repeatedly in soldiers' comments about camp life, indicating at what point of the year the most immoral, unique and prevalent activities were occurred. The data revealed the effects of permanent winter camps on morale. It was very obvious that once the men reached winter quarters, sometime between November and March, and set up a more permanent camp home, participation in both the typical and creative activities occurred more frequently. The new activities included snowball fighting, baseball, celebrating holidays, dancing, and practical joking. It is also important to note that there was no discussion of religion from either the Confederate or Union soldiers' letter written during the winter camp months that were collected for this data sample. The increased participation in the new and continued camp entertainments was used to deemphasize the seriousness of their duties and combat the deficiencies of their surroundings.

Because the attitude and morale of the soldiers' depended so heavily on the relationship of the people around them, the next direction to look for patterns was between the men themselves. When the higher-ranking officers were separated from infantrymen, there were interesting distinctions between how they discussed camp life. For one, no officers admitted to participating in any of the immoral camp entertainments, even though the criticism of other officers and criticism from lower ranked soldiers suggested otherwise. Many officers condemned the lower ranked soldiers and described their attempts to control the immoral behavior among them. The officers' eagerness to blame others and avoidance of their own participation in immoral camp entertainments demonstrates their sense of responsibility and importance to the army. There were apparent activities that supported the respect and relationship between the ranks, and other activities that destroyed it. Wiley wrote, "Soldiers liked, too, the ability of officers to blend severity with leniency, seriousness with humor, and willingness to close their eyes on occasion when circumstances required the setting aside of usual regulations."¹⁴⁶ Their relationship to the soldiers was a balancing act of discipline and rapport that teetered on their own behavior and how they interacted with and punished their men. How an officer reacted to how the men behaved during the camp down time signaled the relationship between the officers and the privates.

Every facet of a soldier's life is important to dissect and analyze in order to fully understand the Civil War. As David Williams described, "Horrible though it was, battle was but a small part of a soldier's life. The misery of camp life and

¹⁴⁶ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 239

campaigning made up the rest.”¹⁴⁷ The reaction and tone of a soldier as they described what they experienced or witnessed in camp reflected their opinion of war as well as their relationship to their comrades and officers. The experience of war as seen through the soldiers’ description of camp activities is an interesting addition to previous work on the Civil War soldier experience. It revealed the changing attitude within camp over time, the effects of permanent winter camps on morale, and the how the relationship between the ranks was affected by behavior in camp.

¹⁴⁷ David Williams, *A People’s History of the Civil War: Struggles For the Meaning of Freedom* (New York, New York: New Press, 2005), 196.

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Appendix:

Name of Soldier	Confederate or Union	Regiment
Adam Wise Kersh	Confederate	52nd Virginia Infantry
Alvan C. Voris	Union	67th Ohio Infantry
Charles Blackford	Confederate	General Staff
Charles F. Morse	Union	2nd Infantry (MA)
Charles Write Wills	Union	103rd Infantry (Illinois)
Chauncey H. Cooke	Union	25th Infantry (Wisconsin)
David Demus	Confederate	
Elliot H. Fletcher, Jr	Confederate	18th Infantry (Arkansas)
Ephraim Shelby Dodd	Confederate	8th Cavalry (TX)
George Gordon Meade	Union	General Staff (US Volunteers)
Henry H. Penniman	Union	12th Infantry (Vermont)
Henry Warren How	Union	30th Massachusetts
James Kendall Hosmer	Union	52nd Infantry (MA)
James M. Cadwallander	Confederate	1st Virginia Cavalry
Jenkin Lloyd Jones	Union	6th Light Artillery (Wisconsin)
Jedediah Hotchkiss	Confederate	14th Virginia Cavalry
John Calvin Harzell	Union	
John Gardner Perry	Union	20th Infantry (MA)
John McCauley	Confederate	5th Virginia Regiment
John P. Lightner	Confederate	4th Virginia Infantry
John Scott	Confederate	
John William De Forest	Union	12th CT Volunteers
Josiah Marshall Favill	Union	57th Infantry (NY)
Junius Newport Bragg	Confederate	33rd Arkansas Infantry
Lucus P. Mox	Union	
Oliver Wilcox Norton	Union	83rd Infantry (Pennsylvania)
Osborn H. Oldroyd	Union	20th Infantry (OH)
Phillip H. Powers	Confederate	
Robert Gould Shaw	Union	54th Infantry (MA)
Seth James Wells	Union	17th Infantry (Illinois)
Spencer Glasgow Welch	Confederate	Medical Staff
Stephen Minot Weld	Union	56th Infantry (MA)
Taylor Peirce	Union	22 Iowa Infantry Regiment
Thomas T. Ellis	Union	
TJ Stokes	Confederate	10th Infantry (TX)
Wilbur Fisk	Union	2nd Infantry (Vermont)
William F. Brand	Confederate	5th Virginia Infantry
William Newton Prince	Union	
Zenas T. Haines	Union	44th Infantry (MA)