8-2020

A Case Study of Civil War Environmental and Medical History Through the Disease Seasoning of the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment in East Tennessee

Ashlie Richard
East Tennessee State University

A Case Study of Civil War Environmental and Medical History through the Disease Seasoning of the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment in East Tennessee

---

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of History

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in History

---

by

Ashlie Richard

August 2020

Dr. Steven Nash, Chair

Dr. Tom Lee

Dr. John Rankin

Keywords: 58th North Carolina, disease environment, disease seasoning, folk medicine, desertions, Civil War medicine, East Tennessee, southern Appalachian Mountains, soldier loyalty

ABSTRACT

A Case Study of Civil War Environmental and Medical History Through the Disease Seasoning of the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment in East Tennessee

by

Ashlie Richard

This thesis is a case study aimed at a key argument in the emerging field of Civil War medical and environmental history. While historians have long acknowledged disease as a major killer during the Civil War, only recently have environmental and medical historians turned their collective attentions to unpacking the complex interconnections of disease, environmental conditions, and culture. By examining the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment from the mountains of western North Carolina, this thesis asserts that the combined role of the disease environment and conditions in military camps created the massive outbreaks of disease that characterized the seasoning process of the regiment. Furthermore, the soldiers were practical in their response to conditions, weighing family, nation, and other factors in the face of death. When the threat of disease combined with personal and other factors, many soldiers deserted or took other actions of self-preservation over loyalty to the Confederacy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Steven Nash. His invaluable guidance and mentorship that began during my years as an undergraduate student has helped me become the writer and historian that I am today. Through his steady guidance, endless patience, and willingness to read an infinite amount of rough drafts, this thesis transformed from an abstract idea into reality. Without his assistance, this thesis might never have been completed. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Tom Lee and Dr. John Rankin, for offering valuable suggestions in the continued improvement of this paper and creating a very welcoming and fun environment for my oral defense. Also, a special thanks to Dr. Scott Kirkby for attending my defense as the outside observer.

I would also like to thank the numerous organizations who provided the funding for the research trips necessary for completing this thesis: The Graduate Student Research Grant provided by ETSU, the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies provided by Virginia Tech, The North Carolina Society Archi K. Davis Fellowship, and the Barbara Jaffe Silvers Fund from the history department at ETSU. This funding allowed me to visit the archives at the University of North Carolina at Chapel, Virginia Tech, Appalachian State University, and the National Archives at D.C. A special thanks to all these archives for allowing me to spend countless hours among their collections.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their continued support and encouragement throughout this long journey. They have listened to many of my historical tangents, stories, and random facts over the years. During the evolution of my master's thesis, they offered an ear and helping hand whenever I needed it and shared in my overwhelming joy when it was finally completed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 6
Historiography 9
Method and Argument 17
CHAPTER 2. A CASE STUDY OF THE 58th NORTH CAROLINA 20
Home Sweet Home: The Mountains of Western North Carolina 22
A Rural Way of Life: People and Medicine 27
Called to Service 30
The Seasoning Process in East Tennessee: August 1862 to August 1863 32
The Cumberland Gap- Fall 1862, August to October 37
Winter Quarters-November 1862 to March 1863 47
Spring and Summer- April through August 1863 56
CHAPTER 3. EPILOGUE 60
The Journey Home 60
BIBLIOGRAPHY 70
VITA 76

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In January of 1866, a battle-weary Confederate captain replaced his rifled musket and Minié balls with a pen and paper as he proudly recalled his three years of service in the American Civil War. The paper wrinkled under his hand much like his body buckled under the strain of disease, forcing him into an extended sick furlough during the winter of 1862-1863. The ink staining the paper resembled his blood-soaked uniform from a leg injury received at the Battle of Resaca, Georgia, on May 15, 1864. As his words depleted the inkwell, he recalled the many nights he suffered with an empty stomach because the exhausted land and his beleaguered government could provide only a "cold crust of cornbread." As captain of Company H of the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, George Washington Finley Harper did not suffer alone; he was acutely aware of the misery of the men under his command. His initial responsibility was the men in his company, but his star rose steadily and he ended the war as major and regimental commander.[1] Despite all the physical and emotional burdens of his service, Harper professed that he endured it all with the heart of a "proud soldier fighting for the right of self-government."[2] With that declaration, Harper closed his war diary, symbolically closing that chapter of his life, and quietly returned to managing his store in Lenoir, North Carolina, and raising his newborn son alongside his wife, Ella.

Harper's war experience mirrored the experiences of many other men in his regiment: camp routine interrupted by diseases, battles, and injuries as they marched across the diverse

[1] For his service records, please see Weymouth T. Jordan Jr., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*. Vol. XIV, Infantry 57-58th, 60th-61st Regiments (Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1998), 374. This compiled work contains enlistment papers, pay vouchers, letters of resignations and discharges, and abstracts of medical and prisoner of war returns, along with individual company muster rolls dated January-June 1863; September-October 1863; and January-August 1864.

[2] January 1866, Retrospect of the year, AC.168: G. W. F. Harper Family Diary Transcriptions, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., USA.

southern landscape. Hailing from the mountainous counties of Ashe, Caldwell, McDowell, Mitchell, Watauga, and Yancey in western North Carolina, the men of the 58th developed their understandings of health, medicine, and the environment based in their small, rural mountain communities. The regiment, consisting of approximately 2,021 soldiers, came from primarily agricultural backgrounds. When listing their occupations on their enlistment papers, most of the men classified themselves as farmers and farm laborers.[3] Working and improving their land everyday allowed them to develop a close relationship with their natural environment. Like all nineteenth century Americans, the 58th understood the intricate connection of their bodily health with that of their environment, which included factors such as geography, climate, natural resources, fauna, and microbiology.[4] When the Civil War took them from their beloved highland homes, the men brought their understandings of environment and health with them into their new military encampments of East Tennessee, northern Georgia, and the Carolina coastline. Their first year in service, however, challenged their understandings of bodily health and the environment as they underwent the process of disease seasoning. Between the months of August 1862 to August 1863, the 58th reported 265 cases of disease that resulted in 117 deaths. The nine official battle engagements the regiment participated in resulted in 220 wounded soldiers and sixty-four deaths. Death by combat carried a 29 percent fatality rate, while death from disease during a single year overwhelmed the regiment at 44 percent.[5] More soldiers of the 58th died at the hands of disease during their initial seasoning period than by their blue-coated enemies over

[3] Michael Hardy, *The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops: Tar Heels in the Army of Tennessee* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 188; Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

[4] Brian Allen Drake, *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War* (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 3.

[5] The 58th participated in the Battles of Chickamauga, Buzzard's Roost, Kolb's Farm, Atlanta, and Jonesborough in Georgia, the Battle of Missionary Ridge in Tennessee, and the Battle of Bentonville in North Carolina. Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

multiple battle engagements. The microbial aspect of the environment that surrounded the wartime camps of the 58th significantly impacted their health, creating a deadly disease environment.

By examining the combined influences of the disease environment and camp conditions, an understanding of how and why diseases spread so extensively through the regiment takes shape. Most of the soldiers comprising the 58th came from rural communities largely unfamiliar with the "childhood" diseases common in much of the country. Without prior experience with measles, smallpox, and typhoid fever, the men lacked the crucial immunity against those diseases. Some men, however, came from areas that did have outbreaks of these childhood diseases, and they carried those same viruses and bacteria with them into military camps, exposing non-immune comrades to potentially deadly illnesses. This resulted in large-scale disease outbreaks among the newly enlisted soldiers that characterized their seasoning process. This process ended when the initial outbreak subsided, resulting in the survivors gaining partial immunity against future cases of measles, smallpox, and typhoid.[6]

Camp conditions, characterized by the clustering of large groups of soldiers, initially allowed for the introduction of diseases among a largely vulnerable group and perpetuated its spread through the close contact of people within an overcrowded camp. The natural environment surrounding the camps often exacerbated these conditions, playing a supporting role in the rapid dissemination of illness throughout the soldiers' ranks. The men understood the use of natural resources provided by the physical landscape, and they often leaned on these resources when the army failed to supply them with adequate food, medical care, and shelter. When inhospitable weather kept them confined in deteriorating camp conditions, and soldiers could not

[6] Judkin Browning and Timothy Silver, *An Environmental History of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 11.

maintain their health through supplementary foraging, diseases proliferated quickly among their numbers. Their struggle for survival against the overwhelming presence of illness coincided simultaneously with their families' struggles for survival in their absence. Familial pressure, the constant threat of Federal encounters, and dwindling governmental supplies compounded the individual sufferings of each soldier while they fought to stay healthy. Essentially, the types of diseases brought into the camps created the disease environment, while camp conditions, exacerbated by deteriorating weather and natural resources, influenced the extent that diseases impacted the soldiers.

Feeling physically ill exacts an emotional toll on an individual, diminishing their mental capacity, energy, and motivation for dealing with issues. Riddled with fevers, diarrhea, and malnourishment, soldiers read countless concerns in letters from their families that amplified the hardships of army-life. Many sick soldiers responded by deserting, seeking refuge in healthier places, the embrace of their families, or where they believed they could receive proper medical care (including Union field hospitals). Others deserted preemptively, fleeing the camp before they contracted a potentially fatal disease. Illness often meant death by an enemy more terrifying than the Federals' bullets. That fear of such a terrible death and the thought of abandoning their families to a life without them tested the soldiers' loyalties.

Historiography

Loyalty is a complex issue that has occupied Civil War historians for decades. In particular, the act of desertion has garnered significant attention. Civil War soldiers deserted for many reasons. Political sentiment, desire to care for their families, self-preservation, fading commitment to the Confederacy, an attachment to the Union, and other factors led men to leave

their units without permission.[7] Historians have paid special attention to North Carolina troops because the Tar Heel state had the highest desertion rate in the Confederacy. Richard Reid analyzed the most common causes of desertion—Unionism, cowardice, and family loyalties—in relation to North Carolina troops. He found that the high desertions in North Carolina were natural, since the Tar Heel state furnished almost one-seventh of all Confederate troops. Simply put, more soldiers meant, proportionally, more desertion.[8] Peter Bearman used desertion as a window into the structure of internal dissent and wartime resistance, positing that when soldiers' Confederate identity eroded, their original associations with their local communities strengthened and encouraged them into deserting.[9] Katherine Giuffre argued that desertion was foremost a political statement resulting from conscription. The Conscription Act of 1862 exempted white men owning twenty or more slaves from military service. Those who enlisted, willingly or involuntarily, owned few or no slaves, serving in a war that benefited people who

[7] For works on Civil War loyalty and desertion, please see Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Kenneth Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Mark Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). For additional sources on loyalty and nationalism, see Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War*: *How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy could not Stave off Defeat* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999); James McPherson, *What they fought for*, *1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1934);.

[8] Reid mentions that the popular image of a deserter as a coward is called into question when compared to the length of time the deserter spent in the service before leaving: the average North Carolina deserter served for almost two years before leaving, indicating that fear of the enemy was probably not the main motivation for deserting, since it was the seasoned soldiers who deserted and not new recruits. Richard Reid, "A Testcase of the 'Crying Evil': Desertion among North Carolina Troops During the Civil War," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 58, no. 3 (July 1981): 234, 238, 246, 253, 256, www.jstor.org/stable/23534960 (accessed May 3, 2020).

[9] Peter Bearman, "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War, "*Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (December 1991): 321, 323, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2580242 (accessed May 3, 2020).

stayed safe at home. Consequently, deserters espoused the classic complaint of a rich man's war and a poor man's fight.[10]

Many scholars have found that desertion was more common among soldiers—like those in the 58th—from western North Carolina. John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney explained that a large source of disaffection among troops from western North Carolina resulted from the Conscription Act. Few mountaineers benefited from the 20-slave clause nor could they afford to hire a substitute in their place. Wealth divided those who served and those who escaped from military service, creating internal rifts within the communities of western North Carolina that erupted in desertions and localized violence.[11] In a separate study, Gordon McKinney examined the elite of western North Carolina through the amnesty letters written in response of President Andrew Johnson's Proclamation of Amnesty on May 29, 1865, where he excluded those who held Confederate leadership positions and owned more than $20,000 worth of property from the general pardon he offered all Southerners who took part in the Civil War. The resultant amnesty petitions from these excluded elites in western North Carolina contains their motivations, explanations, and defenses for participating in the Confederate government. Through the 261 amnesty letters, McKinney reveals that the region held a considerable percentage of Confederate and Unionist sentiments, at least 15 and 20 respectively, but also a significant percentage offered no opinion on government loyalties at 25 percent. The loyalty of the elite of western North Carolina remained divided in their loyalties towards their Confederate government.[12] Scott King-

[10] Katherine Giuffre, "First in Flight: Desertion as Politics in the North Carolina Confederate Army," in *Social Science History* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 246, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1171275 (accessed May 3, 2020).

[11] John Inscoe and Gordon McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 111, 139-140.

[12] Gordon B. McKinney, "Layers of Loyalty: Confederate Nationalism and Amnesty Letters from Western North Carolina," in *Civil War History 51.1* (2005): 9-11, 14. https://muse-jhu-edu.iris.etsu.edu:3443/article/178612 (accessed 9 May 2020).

Owen examined the loyalties of the soldiers in four companies from Buncombe County in western North Carolina. King-Owen explained that the loyalty of a soldier depended upon the reciprocal support between him and his government: in exchange for his service in the army, the government provided for his family in his absence. Desertions reflected the failure of the government in upholding their end of this deal.[13]

These works explored the relationships between soldiers and their families, communities, and government. Loyalty to families and communities certainly influenced a soldier's decision to desert, but those were not the sole reasons influencing desertion. A soldier's health, heavily affected by the disease environment surrounding them, also contributed in the decisions of soldiers when they deserted. An unhealthy environment, shaped by the combination of camp conditions, diseases, and available supplies and medical care tested soldier's loyalties to their government and communities. During the Civil War, the soldiers of the 58th first tasted death, not at the hands of enemies wearing blue coats, but from invisible forces festering inside them, riddling their bodies with disease. An unhealthy environment and body created scenarios where death loudly knocked at the soldier's doors. If soldiers wanted to escape death, they needed to remove themselves from what they perceived as the impeding cause of their demise: the disease environment. In this case, the disease environment included the microbial agents that caused diseases and the types of illnesses that the soldier's experienced.

As a category of analysis, the environment is a relatively new lens through which to understand the American Civil War. Environmental history, as a distinct field, developed in the 1970s when historians, influenced by the modern environmental movement, examined the

[13] Scott King-Owen, "Conditional Confederates: Absenteeism Among North Carolina Soldiers, 1861-1865," in *Civil War History* 57, no. 4 (December 2011): 360, 362, https://muse-jhu-edu.iris.etsu.edu:3443/article/465918/pdf (accessed May 3, 2020).

interactions between humans and nature across time.[14] A fundamental tenet of environmental history revolves around nature as an active agent in history and not as a determinant of events.[15] The environment is one of many factors influencing events throughout history, but its role is still crucial to understanding these historical events. Geography, climate, weather, natural resources, flora, fauna, and microbiology all interacted with human populations in important ways historically. Ignoring these complex interactions neglects a large portion of human experience.[16]

With the rise of environmental and medical history, however, historians have expanded our understanding of Civil War soldier's experiences with disease.[17] Two of these historians, Margaret Humphreys and Andrew Bell, focus on diseases endemic to specific environments. Humphreys studied the acute terror that yellow fever played within the antebellum coastal cities of the South and how it influenced the movements of the affected populations. Nineteenth century Americans believed that yellow fever originated from the Caribbean islands, and they associated the disease with coastal southern towns plagued by excessive heat, filth, and moisture.[18] Andrew Bell expands upon the idea of a "sickly season," the time of year when certain diseases are most prevalent, and applied it to military actions during the Civil War. He explained that Confederate military commanders recognized the hesitance of Union armies in

---

[14] Brian Allen Drake, *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War* (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 2.

[15] Ibid, 63.

[16] Ibid, 3.

[17]Civil War medical scholarship originally focused on a top-down approach highlighting the perspective of medical personnel rather than the soldiers themselves. For early works on Civil War medicine, please see Joseph Barnes, United States Surgeon General's Office, *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of Rebellion, 1861-65* (Washington: Government Printing Press, 1870); Stewart Brooks, *Civil War Medicine* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1966); H.H. Cunningham, *Doctors in Gray: The Confederate Medical Service* (Massachusetts: Louisiana State University, 1970); Robert Denney, *Civil War Medicine: Care and Comfort for the Wounded* (New York: Sterling Publishers, 1944); Judith Leavitt and Ronald Numbers, Eds., *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, 3rd Ed. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1997).

[18] Margaret Humphreys, *Yellow Fever and the South* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 3-5, 19.

launching major offensives in certain parts of the Confederacy during the South's sickly season. They planned their campaigns around this understanding of disease and the environment. So important were these endemic diseases, transmitted and spread through mosquito vectors across the southern environment, that Bell referred to the insects as "mosquito soldiers," acting as a third army fighting both the Union and the Confederacy.[19]

The environment laid the foundation for diseases to take root and spread, which affected whether the environment remained healthy or not. Bell drew heavily on the cultural views presented in the foundational work of Conevery Bolton Valencius. She studied how nineteenth-century Americans understood their health in relation to their environment. Americans settling into the western frontier needed to manage both their body and their land. Potentially deadly vapors known as miasma influenced the healthiness of the environment and of those living in the area. Combating miasma, therefore, dictated the cleaning and purification of the air, a role in which every individual participated. Crucially, the relationship between the health of the land and the health of individuals remained linked. When nineteenth century Americans improved the conditions of the lands they lived upon, they believed that they improved their health as well.[20]

Civil War soldiers understood that the environment directly influenced their well-being as much as their actions directly affected the physical landscape. Recent works on Civil War soldiers have examined how their understandings of the environment shaped their overall wartime experiences. Lisa Brady studied the Union military strategies and the northern soldiers' experiences while fighting in the southern landscape. She explained that nineteenth century

---

[19] Andrew Bell, *Mosquito Soldiers: Malaria, Yellow Fever, and the Course of the American Civil War* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 2010), 2-4.

[20] Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood themselves and their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 3-5, 114-115, 119-121.

Americans did not change their understandings of nature and their relationship with it, but instead expanded upon their current ideas to include their wartime experiences.[21] While Brady closely studied how the military impacted the physical landscape and how the American population later dealt with the consequences, Kathryn Meier studied the reciprocal relationship between soldiers and their wartime environment. Leaning heavily on the work of Valencius, Meier focused on soldier health through a case study of the Union soldiers in the Shenandoah Valley and Peninsula Campaigns of 1862. She introduced the idea of "self-care" techniques such as looking for fresh water for bathing, constructing their own basic shelters for protection against exposure from the elements, boiling tainted water, and foraging for fruits and vegetables to supplement their meager army rations. Soldiers used these methods for improving their physical and mental well-being. Crucially, her argument relied on "straggling," the official unexcused absence of a soldier from camp or roll call. Many of these self-care techniques required soldiers to leave their camps temporarily. They "straggled" not because they lacked devotion to the Confederacy, but because they believed by improving their physical health, they also improved their morale. As a result, they became better soldiers and more efficient in fulfilling their duties.[22]

Self-care techniques can explain some soldiers' absences, and no doubt, many believed that by increasing their welfare they also increased their effectiveness as soldiers. However, Meier did not distinguish the environments of the Shenandoah Valley and Peninsula nor explain the specific attributes of the environment that set it apart from other areas. She established a

---

[21] Lisa Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes During the American Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 2, 5. For another work on environmental history of the Civil War, please see Brian Allen Drake, Ed., *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

[22] Kathryn Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 1-4, 101, 106, 111-112, 126-127.

background of an unhealthy environment in broad, general strokes. Some environments are inherently sicklier than others and affect certain groups of people in greater numbers. There remains an incomplete picture of the relationship between the Civil War environment and soldiers. A further study including the missing factors such as weather, natural resources, and endemic diseases will help build a stronger and more complete account of this relationship.

Judkin Browning and Timothy Silver's recent work, *An Environmental History of the Civil War* (2020) made great strides in filling in many of these missing pieces through a broad look at the Civil War from an environmental perspective. By studying the war as an "ecological event," they describe how the war impacted people and their natural environment, altering the existing relationships between humans, organisms, and the physical environment. With the increase of human populations among the military camps, the prevalence of microorganisms also increased. This impacted the health of soldiers and the civilian populations as well. The complexity of local weather of the war affected both military strategies and the ability of the agriculturally dependent southern population in feeding themselves, adding additional strain on wartime machinations. The Civil War was not merely a single event consisting of military actions, but multiple biological events with far reaching consequences, reshaping the relationship between people and their natural environment long after the war officially ended.[23] Meier laid the foundation of straggling as a self-care technique in response to unhealthy environments, while Browning and Silver investigated what made these environments unhealthy. Drawing on information and ideas presented in both works, the story of the 58th takes on greater clarity.

The 58th practiced multiple self-care techniques during their service in the war, often leaving their regiment as "stragglers" during periods of increased diseases in their camps. While

[23] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History of the Civil War*, 9-12, 41-45, 53, 81-85, 91.

some never returned, many appeared back in their ranks once the threat of diseases subsided. An unhealthy environment coincided with increased absences, while a healthy environment saw the presence of more men. An unhealthy environment alone does not account for the all the desertions. The men of the 58th experienced their fair share of diseases in their Appalachian homes. However, the physical environment, conditions of military camps, available medical care, and the types of diseases in their wartime posts created an unfamiliar and deadly environment for the soldiers. Understanding exactly what the new environments entailed, and how the soldiers perceived this, begins explaining the motivations of the soldiers as they found ways to protect themselves, including desertion.

Method and Argument

So why use the 58th North Carolina Infantry for the study of environmental health and desertions? First, the sample size of the 58th, containing eleven companies instead of the standard ten, allows for a larger study of soldiers' movements.[24] Michael Hardy, the author of the sole book on the 58th to date, claimed that 2,036 men enlisted in this regiment.[25] He also provides the second reason for using this regiment. Hardy reported that the 821 deserters placed the 58th in the top three of Confederate regiments—all from North Carolina—in terms of desertion. The 25th North Carolina experienced 255 desertions out of 1,670 men and the 60th had 351 desertions out of 1,504 men. While the 58th experienced a 34 percent desertion rate, the 60th's desertion rate was slightly lower at 33 percent.[26]

[24] Jordan, *A Roster*, 212.

[25] He gathered his statistics by examining Jordan Weymouth Jr., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*. Michael Hardy, *The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops: Tar Heels in the Army of Tennessee* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 185-186.

[26] He gathered his statistics by examining Jordan Weymouth Jr., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*. Michael Hardy, *The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops: Tar Heels in the Army of Tennessee* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 185-186.

Coincidentally, both the 58th and 60th hailed from North Carolina's western counties, located in the southern Appalachian Mountains. Living in the same region, the men of both regiments shared similar understandings of environmental health, medicine, and their relationship with the environment. When they entered the war, they brought with them their shared experiences and knowledge. While serving under General Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee, both regiments also shared similar wartime experiences. They both bivouacked in Tennessee during the winter of 1862-1863; the 58th spent their winter around Big Creek Gap in the Cumberland Mountains of the eastern regions of state while the 60th camped near Murfreesboro in Middle Tennessee. When the Army of Tennessee underwent reorganization, they served as sister regiments under the command of Brigadier General Alexander Reynolds. The soldiers of the 58th and 60th also served together under two separate consolidations of their respective regiments, one from November 1863-April 1864 and the other lasting from April 9, 1865 until the end of the war.[27] The soldiers of the 58th and 60th shared the same home environments of western North Carolina, experienced similar hardships of soldiering, and shared equally high desertion rates. Because of these similarities, the 60th provides a good source of comparative information for the 58th. Through their shared experiences, the story of the 58th North Carolina Regiment appears in greater focus and detail. With a high desertion rate and large sample size of soldiers, a deeper study of soldiers' motivations for deserting is possible.

Loyalty and desertions have garnered the attention of Civil War historians for decades. Soldiers deserted for multiple reasons, including political statements, desire to care for their families, self-preservation against impeding battles, a fading commitment to the Confederacy, and a stronger attachment to the Union. All of these are valid explanations for desertion;

[27] The 60th spent the winter located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, while the 58th camped around Big Creek Gap. Jordan, *A Roster*, 216, 270, 421, 427, 453.

however, there is a correlation between high diseases and desertions among the soldiers of the 58th. Of the 821 desertions, at least 336 of them occurred during their post in East Tennessee from August 1862 to August 1863. Almost half of the regiment's total desertions occurred during a time that diseases also claimed a 44 percent mortality rate.[28] While other factors motivated the men of the 58th into abandoning their regiment and loyalty to the Confederate government, the relationship between their health and that of their environment also played a role. When deteriorating camp conditions exacerbated the disease environment around them, the soldiers of the 58th found themselves overwhelmed by an onslaught of invisible and terrifying enemies. For some, the only means of surviving meant removing themselves from the camp conditions and disease environment that was causing the devastating surge of illnesses.

[28] Ibid, 272-422.

CHAPTER 2. A CASE STUDY OF THE 58th NORTH CAROLINA

In 1994, Perl Ellis Kirkpatrick sat down and compiled the narrative of her ancestor, Samuel Cassen Gouge. In tones heavily resembling those of the era of romanticism, she described with flourished strokes the life of a farmer transformed into a Confederate soldier during the American Civil War. Situating her tale in the "foothills of Western North Carolina," she portrayed her ancestors as "a strong people who chose to live close to nature and to make their bread by the sweat of their brow; to heal their bodies by the herbs from the fields; and to protect their bodies from the severity of the weather by cloth from the loom." Kirkpatrick depicts the Mitchell County family as living in concert with nature. The people were an extension of the place they called home. When their country divided, Cassen Gouge and his younger brother decided to "go help save the South from the North." Even though their father did not see "how I can carry on the many farm chores by myself," he urged his sons into going, claiming, "our country needs men like you."[1] The tides of war swept up many rural farmers from western North Carolina, pulling the men from their home environments into areas that were more hostile. When they left, they carried bits of home with them.

Among these trappings of home was their understanding of their health, their bodies, and their environment. Coming from a blended background of folk remedies and orthodox medicine, termed "country orthodoxy," the men understood the role the environment played in sustaining their health. Through "self-care" techniques, they improved their physical health by using the natural resources around them. They used water for cleaning and bathing, foraged for fruits and vegetables that supplemented their army rations, and constructed shelters for protection against

[1] Perl Ellis Kirkpatrick, *Cassen: A Man of Courage*, xi, 2 (Private copy in the possession of author).

the elements. These methods of living off the land they learned in their mountain homes, merely extending these techniques into their camps and lives as soldiers during the Civil War. Their understandings of health and body in connection with the environment did not change when they transformed into soldiers; rather, they adapted these understandings based on the overall camp conditions they encountered over the course of the war. The location of camp determined the availability of foraging resources and fresh water supplies, influencing the extent that they provided for themselves and health. More than that, the high density of soldiers located within the camps influenced the spread of diseases among their ranks, creating a potentially deadly disease environment. While the physical environment influenced how the soldiers acted in terms of maintaining their health, camp conditions and the disease environment determined the overall healthiness of the regiment.[2]

By examining the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment from the mountains of western North Carolina, the combined role of the disease environment and conditions of military camp on soldiers' health becomes clearer. From their rural counties these men entered camps more populated than their local county seat, which subjected them to large population clusters and exposed them to new diseases. While stationed in East Tennessee, the 58th underwent not only a massive challenge of surviving in the face of overwhelming illness, but also struggled with keeping men in their ranks as desertions occurred with increasing frequency. By using desertion as a measure of loyalty, the 58th's high desertion rates while stationed in East Tennessee highlighted the extent that diseases impacted soldiers. Alarmed by the unimaginable horrors

[2] Lisa Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes During the American Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Judkin Browning and Timothy Silver, *An Environmental History of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Kathryn Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood themselves and their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

inflicted by these diseases, soldiers' desertions demonstrated that survival instincts trumped loyalty to the Confederacy. The label of traitor caused far less fear among these soldiers than the threat of death by disease.

Home Sweet Home: The Mountains of Western North Carolina

The Appalachian Mountains are the eroded remains of what many geologists consider North America's oldest mountain range, formed in the early Pre-Cambrian period before living creatures even appeared in the fossil record.[3] Not only the age, but also the size of the mountains is impressive. Beginning in southern Canada, the Appalachian Mountains run some 3,000 miles south along the eastern United States, traversing through eighteen states.[4] The entire mountain chain includes three regional sections: New England, Central, and Southern Appalachia. The Southern section contains North and South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the northernmost regions of Georgia and Alabama. Each subsection contains smaller mountain chains named after their regional location. Virginians refer to the mountains as the Blue Ridge, but as the chain crosses into Tennessee and North Carolina, it splits in geography and in name into two prongs. The first prong into East Tennessee becomes the Unaka Mountains, marking the western-most boundary of the Appalachians.[5] A second prong in western North Carolina continues as the Blue Ridge Mountains, marking the eastern-most boundary.[6]

---

[3] Ora Blackmun, *Western North Carolina: Its Mountains and its People to 1880* (Boone: Appalachian State University, 1977), 7. The discovery of a layer of Appalachian rock, the Ocoee series, estimated as being over 600 million years old, supports this assessment. No traces of fossils are found within this layer, truly exemplifying the ancient age of the Appalachians. Thomas Connelly, *Discovering the Appalachians: What to Look for from the Past and in the Present along American's Eastern Frontier* (Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1968), 28.

[4]Connelly, *Discovering the Appalachians*, 26, 71-76.

[5] In Cherokee, "Unaka" means white, named after the smoky white haze of the region. One section of the Unaka Mountains is the Great Smoky Mountains. Connelly, *Discovering the Appalachians*, 71-72.

[6]A large plateau centered upon Asheville, North Carolina, containing a massive network of deep coves and valleys, connects the two mountain ranges. Resembling a ladder, The Unaka Mountains of Tennessee are the western leg, the Blue Ridge of western North Carolina is the eastern, and the plateau, with the networks of coves and valleys, are the rungs. Blackmun*, Western North Carolina*, 7.

Hailing from the primarily rural counties of Ashe, Caldwell, McDowell, Mitchell, Watauga, and Yancey in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the men of the 58th shared an agricultural background with the majority of North Carolinians.[7] In the 1840 census, around 217,000 people out of 236,000 listed North Carolinians performed some form of agricultural labor.[8] On the eve of the Civil War in 1860, more than half of North Carolina's farms contained less than 100 acres and roughly half of that number contained less than fifty, revealing that the average North Carolinian worked on small-scale farms.[9] In contrast, large-scale commercial farmers and plantation owners constituted a minority of the state's agricultural population. The planter class usually owned anywhere between two and three hundred acres of land and at least twenty enslaved people. In 1860, a mere 12 percent of slaveholders in North Carolina qualified as planters.[10] This number appeared even lower in western North Carolina. Out of a total population of 134,859 citizens, those owning slaves constituted a mere 10 percent of the population. Out of the 1,877 listed slaveholders, 2 percent owned more than twenty slaves and qualified as part of the planter class.[11] At 72 percent, most white mountaineers owned no slaves.[12]

[7] Jordan, A Roster, 212-213.

[8] Guion Johnson, *Ante-bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 53.

[9] Paul Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 12. For the 58th, upon enlisting many gave their occupation, and the vast majority listed "farmer" as their former occupation. Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

[10] Johnson, *Ante-bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 59, 63.

[11] John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 9; Steven E. Nash, *Reconstruction's Ragged Edge: The Politics of Postwar Life in the Southern Mountains* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 14; John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 18; Paul Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 17.

[12] Johnson, *Ante-bellum*, 67.

If slave ownership indicated wealth, then these largely non-slaveholding western counties were considerably poor. African Americans, both free and enslaved, made up around 13 percent of western North Carolina's total population, a number unevenly distributed among the counties.[13] The westernmost counties located in the higher elevations along the North Carolina and Tennessee border contained the smallest African American population, while the counties at lower elevations contained more. Three of these higher elevation counties—Yancey, Watauga, and Ashe—that furnished companies for the 58th each had an African American population of less than 7 percent, with the majority of those enslaved. Two other counties, McDowell Caldwell, contributed soldiers to the 58th; those counties contained an African American population of 22 and 16 percent, respectively.[14]

The lack of large-scale slaveholding in western North Carolina allowed for the development of a popular misconception that Southern Appalachians knew nothing of slavery and therefore held no stake in the sectional crisis leading into the Civil War. On the contrary, many mountain communities remained intricately connected with the markets of South Carolina and Georgia by trading their agricultural produce and livestock. While selling their goods within the Deep South market, the prices they charged depended upon the cotton economy. Geography initially posed a barrier in the mountaineers' participation in the southern economy, but North Carolina legislators, realizing the value of their state-produced goods, prioritized the creation of more accessible routes from the mountains into the southern markets. The Buncombe Turnpike, completed in 1828, connected the western counties of North Carolina with two separate points in Tennessee and South Carolina. Multiple other roads branching off the turnpike quickly appeared,

[13] There were 15,194 enslaved African Americans and 1,807 free people of color in the counties. Nash, *Reconstruction's Ragged Edge*, 13-14.

[14] Nash, *Reconstruction's Ragged Edge*, 13-14.

strengthening the link between western North Carolina with South Carolina and Georgia in the south, and Tennessee and Kentucky in the northwest. While most highlanders did not directly enslave people, their livelihoods depended on the success of a market driven by slave labor.[15]

Through the Buncombe Turnpike and its network of branching roads, western North Carolinians sent their mountain goods into the southern markets, while also importing goods and people. Towns quickly sprang up as commercial centers within the mountain counties, providing those rural districts in harder-to-reach sections of the mountains the same opportunities of selling their goods and participating in the southern economy. Captain G.W.F. Harper, who served in company H of the 58th, worked as a merchant in Lenoir, the county seat and commercial hub of Caldwell County. Merchants like Harper facilitated the distribution of goods—his store sold silk, muslin, quilts, window shutters, cooking stoves, hoes, and bench planes—between the mountain counties and markets of their southern neighbors, integrating the otherwise rural, and sometimes isolated, mountain areas into the larger southern economy.[16]

As noted earlier, the African American population of Caldwell County was considerably higher than the other western counties that contributed to the regiment. Despite this larger African American population, around 85 percent of families in Caldwell County did not own slaves. This suggests that the vast majority of county residents participated in small-scale farming and slaveholders represented a small pocket of wealth. In reality, Caldwell County resembled the other rural and poor counties that the majority of the 58th came from. The defining difference that separated Caldwell was its pockets of wealth.[17] Lenoir, the county seat of

---

[15] Inscoe, *Mountain Masters,* 42, 52, 156-157; Inscoe and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 25.

[16] Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 37; Jordan, *A Roster*, 374; August 1860, AC.168: G. W. F. Harper Family Diary Transcriptions, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., USA.

[17] Paul Escott, *"Many Excellent People:" Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 13, 16.

Caldwell, certainly represented one of these wealthy pockets, as its 300 residents constituted less than 1 percent of Caldwell's total population. While one-third of soldiers that enlisted in the summer of 1861 came from Lenoir itself, the rest came from the outlying rural districts.[18] The majority of soldiers in the companies raised in Caldwell, therefore, shared more in common with their rural counterparts, while a minority came from a relatively wealthier community.

Most men in the 58th shared a common rural background, but not necessarily a shared spirit of nationalism. Mitchell County, which furnished almost three companies of the 58th, poses something of a conundrum because it did not exist until 1861. Its creation represented the internal divisions of the mountain counties. In a referendum and election on a proposed state secession convention in February of 1861, the western counties divided. The counties of Ashe, Caldwell, McDowell, and Watauga each voted over 50 percent against holding a secession convention, while Yancey voters largely favored it.[19] This internal rift caused the physical split of the northern section of Yancey that held the pro-Union sentiments. This section, along with portions of other western counties, formed a new county, Mitchell, as a way of mitigating local conflict over the secession crisis in 1861.[20]

The overall picture of western North Carolina was one of a rural, poor background divided in loyalties. Some counties, like Yancey, Watauga, and Ashe were considerably more rural and poorer. Others, like Caldwell, had pockets of wealth in an otherwise rural landscape that resembled the counties of higher elevations. Pro-Unionism and secession sentiments divided

[18] Browning, "In Search of All that was Near and Dear to Me: Desertion as a Window into Community Divisions in Caldwell County during the Civil War" in *Southern Communities: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the American South*, Eds. Steven Nash, Bruce Stewart, et al (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 114-116.

[19] Inscoe and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 54.

[20] Sections of Watauga, Burke, Caldwell, McDowell were also included in Mitchell County. David Corbitt, *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties*, 1663-1943 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950), 149; Horton Cooper, *A History of Avery County*, North Carolina (Asheville: Baltimore Press, 1964), 30; Inscoe and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 80, 300.

the counties, resulting in the creation of Mitchell County. Despite these differences, the mountain residents of western North Carolina largely shared one thing: their ideas of healing, health, and medicine.

A Rural Way of Life: People and Medicine

In his memoir, Abraham Jobe wrote of his experience as a physician in southern Appalachia during the pre-Civil War years. In 1843, he established his first medical practice in the "little obscure village" of Burnsville in Yancey County. In this "hilly, mountainous, and rough" region, he encountered "few, very intelligent, well-to-do families." For the most part, however, his practice consisted of residents with "no experience with sickness" and "never had the occasion to employ doctors." Jobe's recollections indicated that mountain residents had access to physicians, but they rarely required their services. He later understood why. After extending his practice to include other western North Carolina counties, including Mitchell and Watauga in 1847, he remarked that "the general outlook all over the region" was "with ordinary care and attention to sanitary regulations," there could be "no cause for sickness, outside what will occur in any country from sudden changes in temperature." The numerous "mountainous and undulating" counties where he practiced lacked the presence of severe diseases, noticing specifically they were "free from malaria." Despite the absence of malaria, Jobe recounted that they still encountered some severe epidemics.[21]

While practicing in Yancey County in 1844, Jobe encountered an outbreak of typhoid fever in the family of George Young, a local slaveholder. The disease swept through the family at a rapid rate, forcing multiple visits by Jobe until he saved all but one of his eight patients.

[21] Abraham Jobe, *A Mountaineer in Motion: The Memoir of Dr. Abraham Jobe, 1817-1906*, ed. David Hsiung (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009) 45, 47, 53.

During his years of practice, he also encountered some "severe epidemics" in these regions.[22] The Piedmont and western region of North Carolina even held one of the worst epidemics in the antebellum period, occurring in 1836 when smallpox devastated the region. Ashe County alone contained around seventy cases.[23] While mountaineers lacked a persistent presence of severe diseases like measles, smallpox, typhoid and yellow fever, some regions still experienced isolated cases or even sporadic epidemics.

For the most part, southern Appalachians treated minor fevers or illnesses, all of which they approached through a mode of healing called folk medicine. A system of medical beliefs, knowledge, and practices associated with a specific culture or ethnic group, families transmitted the traditions of folk medicine through oral teachings.[24] Far from the classrooms and books associated with Jobe's university training, folk medicine practitioners learned the lessons of folk healing at home and in their local community.[25] Women retained the primary role of folk healers. Conventional antebellum wisdom held that those responsible for the maintenance and care of the house and home also carried the responsibility of the family's health.[26] Therefore, grandmothers, mothers, and aunts taught their daughters and nieces the medicinal properties of plants and teas. With their largely shared European ancestry, mountaineers relied on the

[22] Ibid, 45, 47, 53-55.

[23] Johnson, *Antebellum North Carolina*, 737.

[24] Anthony Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 31.

[25] Anthony Cavender, *A Folk Medical Lexicon of South Central Appalachia* (Johnson City: History of Medicine Society of Appalachia, James H. Quillen College of Medicine, East Tennessee State University and Nashville, Tennessee: Tennessee Humanities Council, 1990), 2.

[26] Cavender, *Appalachian Folk Medicine*, 147. To see more on the role of women healers, please see Judith Leavitt, "A Worrying Profession: The Domestic Environment of Medical Practice in mid-nineteenth century America," in *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, eds. Judith Leavitt and Ronald Numbers, 3rd edition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 146.

principles of humoral medicine.[27] External signs of illness reflected the internal imbalance of the humors, so treatment of illnesses revolved around restoring the body's internal humoral balance.[28] In restoring this balance, many southern Appalachians employed plant-based teas, known as decoctions, derived from the region's fauna. Specific ailments had a corresponding plant used for treatment. Boneset and Mullein, for example, appeared as the primary plant used for treating a chest cold, while red oak bark or goldenseal roots treated sore throats. The wide variety of plants used in treating cold-like symptoms, most notably fevers, suggested that any hot infusion into the body served the primary purpose of altering the cold state of the body.[29]

If possible, a family's female healers treated the ailment at home. Sometimes the severity of the illness fell outside the range of expertise of the women, requiring the experience of trained orthodox physicians like Jobe.[30] Orthodox physicians generally approached medicine from an academic perspective and deployed treatments using harsh mineral-based drugs.[31] Jobe's understanding of medical treatments differed from that of his patients preferred healing methods.

---

[27] Their ancestry included German, English, and Scots-Irish roots. Cavender, *Appalachian Folk Medicine,* 31.

[28]The four humors corresponded with the four elements of Greek philosophy: fire, water, earth, and air. Light, *Southern Folk Medicine*, 70, 141.

[29] Cavender, *Appalachian Folk Medicine*, 65, 83, 87.

[30] The only requirements for an individual to become an orthodox physician was for them to be a white, literate male who could afford the necessary fees for attending lectures at a medical college. If they met those requirements, they could easily and quickly obtain a medical degree. For more information on the training of nineteenth century orthodox physicians, please see Glenna Schroeder-Lein, *Confederate Hospitals on the Move: Samuel H. Stout and the Army of Tennessee* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 28-30; Stewart Brooks, *Civil War Medicine* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1966), 22; Ronald Numbers, "The Fall and Rise of the American Medical Profession," in *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, eds. Judith Leavitt and Ronald Numbers, 3rd edition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 225-226.

[31] Calomel, a preparation of mercurous chloride, and tartar emetic, a powdered mixture of antimony and potassium, were two widely used drugs. Both produced the desired effects of diarrhea and vomiting, which doctors believed would expunge toxins from the body. Calomel caused poisons to accumulate in the body, destroying gum tissue and teeth, while tartar emetic could cause heart activity to plummet. Ira Rutkow, *Bleeding Blue and Gray: Civil War Surgery and the Evolution of American Medicine* (Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2005) 33-34. Orthodox medicine is defined in Abraham Jobe, *A Mountaineer in Motion: The Memoir of Dr. Abraham Jobe, 1817-1906*, ed. David Hsiung (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 43.

As an orthodox physician, he employed mineral-based drugs and injections, while his patients employed "simple home remedies." However, their understandings of disease largely remained the same. His identification of the "occult substances" in the air that were "invisible, impalpable, and intangible" was the same factors that caused his patients' internal humoral imbalances.[32] When treating rural patients, Jobe and other orthodox physicians blended their medical understandings of health and disease with that of their patients, creating a vein of medical treatment termed "country orthodoxy."[33]

Called to Service

On November 6, 1860, Republican Abraham Lincoln secured election as president; shortly thereafter, South Carolina seceded on December 20. The counties in western North Carolina held numerous public meetings, deciding on whether they sided with the Union or joined their sister states in secession. From these meetings a distinctive conditional Unionism appeared. Through the "wait and see" stance, many North Carolinians desired peace and reconciliation before secession. The attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861 prompted President Lincoln into calling for 75,000 troops, including two troops from North Carolina, to put down the southern rebellion.[34] In response, North Carolina Governor John Ellis declared that the Union would get "no troops from North Carolina."[35] The action of the president into coercing the seceded southern states back into the Union ended North Carolina's conditional unionism. On May 20, the Tar Heel state officially seceded from the Union and joined the Confederacy.[36]

---

[32] Jobe, *A Mountaineer in Motion*, 43, 45-46, 53-54.

[33] Steven Stowe, *Doctoring the South: Southern Physicians and Everyday Medicine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 3.

[34] Inscoe and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 42-50.

[35] Browning, "In Search of All That Was Near and Dear to Me," 115.

[36] Inscoe and McKinney*, Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 56.

The origins of the 58th North Carolina began in December of 1861 at the behest of John Boynton Palmer. A merchant originally from New York, Palmer moved first to Detroit, Michigan where he plied his trade and engaged extensively in community affairs. While in Detroit, he married Frances "Fannie" Marvin Kirby, the daughter of Colonel Edmund Kirby and Martha Brown, thereby marrying into a very wealthy and influential family.[37] In the late 1850s, he moved his family into Watauga County (which later became part of Mitchell County). Listed as a farmer in the 1860 census, he was not a slave-owner or a merchant, but through active community participation and significant wealth, he retained considerable social standing in his community.[38] After North Carolina seceded, Palmer organized the "Mitchell Rangers" on December 31, creating a part-time organization comprised of sixty-three farmers from the Toe Valley region who provided protection for the homes and families of soldiers already serving in the Confederate armies. Although he focused his recruitment in the Toe River Valley, which held a considerable portion of the region's slaveholding population, his social standing likely aided him in recruiting from the non-slaveholding majority of the valley region.[39]

Around this time, Palmer started raising a legion, a military organization of infantry, cavalry, and artillery components. After learning that his superior, Major General Edmund Kirby Smith, disapproved of legionary formations, Palmer reorganized his legion into infantry and cavalry units on May 13, 1862. The infantry units organized into the 58th North Carolina Infantry

[37] He helped charter the Detroit Savings Bank in 1849, was the director of the Detroit Board of Trade in 1856 and served as the president of the Detroit Literary Society in 1857. Hardy, *The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops*, 6

[38] John B. Palmer, an influential community leader, served as associate justice for the Pleas and Quarters court and treasurer of public buildings for Mitchell County. Hardy, *The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops*, 6-8. Cooper, A *History of Avery County*, 35.

[39] Hardy, *The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops,* 7-9. Kevin Young, "The Ties that Bind: Slaveholding Kinship Networks in the Toe Valley" in *Southern Communities: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the American South*, Eds. Steven Nash, Bruce Stewart, et al. (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2019) 39, 40.

Regiment, with Palmer's original "Mitchell Rangers" designated as company A, while the cavalry units reorganized as the 5th Battalion North Carolina Partisan Rangers. The remaining companies of the 58th came from the surrounding counties of Ashe, Caldwell, McDowell, Watauga, and Yancey.[40] On July 29, 1862, the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment officially mustered into Confederate service, with freshly minted Lieutenant Colonel Palmer in command. The 58th officially started their military service after they received their marching orders that sent them into East Tennessee at the beginning of August 1862.[41]

The Seasoning Process in East Tennessee: August 1862 to August 1863

"Tell Miss Henson," Levi Silver wrote his grandparents, "I am coming over some Saturday night after the war ends and joke some with her if I get well of the measles."[42] Although he recovered from the measles he contracted while in East Tennessee in August of 1862, he never got his date. The fair Miss Henson married another while he was in the service. Silver lost his sweetheart, but he was fortunate enough that his restored health gave him the opportunity of pursuing love after the war.[43] Many men from his regiment lacked the same good fortune. Silver served in the same company as two of his uncles, Garrett and William Gouge, Jr. Since both of his uncles were illiterate, Silver wrote their wartime letters home, often writing his own regards to family as a postscript on his uncle's letters. Affectionately called "Little Billy,"

---

[40] The following counties furnished soldiers for the corresponding companies: Mitchell- A, B, K; Yancey- C, G; Watauga- D, I, part of M; Caldwell- E, H; McDowell- F; Ashe- L, part of M. Jordan, *A Roster*, 212-213.

[41] The following counties furnished these companies: Mitchell-A, B, K; Yancey- C, G; Watauga- D, I, part of M; Caldwell- E, H; McDowell-F; Ashe- L, part of M.
Jordan, A Roster, 212-213.

[42] Letter from Levi Silver to William and Martha Gouge, August 24, 1862, in *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment, 1861-1865: Civil War Men of Mitchell and Yancey Counties, North Carolina. How they Lived, Fought, and Died*, eds. Rex Redmon and John Silver Harris (Greenville, South Carolina, Rex Redmon; Greenville, South Carolina: Postal Instant Press, 2012), 42. Silver served in company K of the 58th for the majority of the war, transferring into company F sometime after May 1864. Jordan, *A Roster*, 397.

[43] *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 43.

William Gouge, Jr. unfortunately became one of the victims of disease. As if foreshadowing his own death, he wrote his family that he was "well and hearty," but a "great many sick" in their camp suffered from measles. He fully expected to contract the disease because there was "no chance to keep from them in camps."[44] In this letter, Gouge expressed the highly contagious nature of measles, and revealed his understanding that he, along with many others, would inevitably suffer from it. While not explicitly stated, both Silver and Gouge were in the seasoning process that conditioned new soldiers to the endemic diseases in camp.

The process of transforming a civilian into a soldier occurred over time, consisting of multiple layers. While many historians usually mark a man's first combat experience as the moment of maturation from green recruit to tested veteran, most Civil War soldiers' first defining struggle occurred in camp. For most soldiers, surviving the wave of communicable diseases that ravaged their initial wartime camps marked the beginning of their seasoning process.[45] In particular, measles plagued both the Union and Confederate armies at the start of the war and contributed in this conditioning of the soldiers. Rubeola, the virus causing measles, survives in human mucus and spreads via close contact with an infected individual. Fatalities usually result not from the disease itself, but from a secondary infection caused by a weakened immune system. After developing measles, however, the sufferer gains partial immunity against contracting the disease again. Measles affected children at a higher rate than adults in areas

[44] Letter from William Gouge Jr. to William, Martha, and Rosanna Gouge, August 24, 1862, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 40. Like his nephew Levi Silver, William served in company K of the 58th. Jordan, *A Roster*, 400.

[45] Kathryn Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2013), 7; Paul Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865* (Springfield, Illinois: C.C. Thomas, 1968), 12-13.

where the disease was prevalent, but children usually experienced far milder forms of the virus. As a result, experts categorized measles as a childhood disease.[46]

"I had thought, as a matter of course," a correspondent of the *Weekly Standard* wrote in August of 1861, "every grown man had had the measles when a boy, but this I have made a great mistake." An epidemic of measles appeared throughout camp, and the writer urged mothers to "attend [to] this matter," making sure that they exposed their children to the disease early so it could confer its benefits onto them.[47] Confederate John B. Gordon wrote in his postwar reminiscences about how amazed he was "to see the large number of country boys who had never had the measles." Not only that, but their complaints ran through the "whole catalogue" of diseases that "boyhood and even babyhood are subjected."[48] Indeed, disparate rural communities, unlike urban areas, limited the spread of contagious diseases in the antebellum period. Army officers and medical personnel, recognizing the vulnerability of a large portion of their new recruits, and understanding that once exposed to these diseases the soldiers gained a form of immunity, quickly established "seasoning camps." These training camps allowed for the controlled exposure of communicable diseases in large groups of soldiers. Once the initial rise of diseases abated, the "seasoned" soldiers entered active military service.[49]

When Silver and Gouge wrote home, informing their families of the presence of measles within their camps, they revealed the beginning of their seasoning process. Between the months

---

[46] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 10-11.

[47] Raleigh Correspondent in Camp Jones, near Manassas, August 24, 1861, in *The Weekly Standard*, Raleigh, North Carolina, September 4, 1861, https://www.newspapers.com/image/168594033 (accessed 17 December 2019).

[48] Gordon was a distinguished officer, serving first as private in the 6th Alabama Infantry Regiment. After obtaining a series of promotions, he ended the war as commander of one-half of the Army of Northern Virginia. John Brown Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), xiii-xiv, 49.

[49] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History*, 11.

of August 1862 to August 1863, the 58th reported 265 cases of sickness, with 117 reported fatalities.[50] The conditioning of the 58th soldiers against illnesses spanned an entire year. The environmental case study of the 58th, therefore, focuses on diseases as a specific aspect of the environment. While largely free of the endemic illnesses of the rest of the country, the rural mountain counties of western North Carolina still encountered instances of highly contagious diseases. Some soldiers came from areas that experienced epidemics, like Ashe County with smallpox, or even isolated cases like in the outbreak of typhoid in George Young's family in Yancey County. The soldiers themselves initially introduced diseases into their camps and exposed their non-immune comrades. Once established, diseases ran unchecked through the ranks, easily passing through each soldier in the crowded camp conditions. This disease environment, which included the introduction and spread of highly contagious illnesses among a largely vulnerable group, characterized the seasoning process of the 58th soldiers.

The physical environment played a supporting role in the spread of sickness in camps. When the soldiers of the 58th left for East Tennessee, they passed through the Blue Ridge mountains into the Great Valley of East Tennessee, characterized by rolling hills and fertile soils, and into the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains. The mountain counties themselves resembled the same counties the 58th left in North Carolina. Rugged with sharp ridges, the Cumberland Mountains limited large-scale agricultural production, with settlements centering on some of the most isolated and undeveloped counties in East Tennessee.[51] The proximity to the warm air masses produced by the Gulf of Mexico also created higher annual rainfall in the Cumberland region compared to areas further north in the Appalachians, although not quite

[50] Jordan Weymouth Jr., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*. Vol. XIV, Infantry 57-58th, 60th-61st Regiments (Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1998), 272-422.

[51] Noel Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), 16-17.

reaching the annual precipitation of the Blue Ridge mountains in western North Carolina. This created a climate resembling western North Carolina, humid summers from the proximity of the Gulf of Mexico, and cold winters resulting from the higher elevations.[52] The rural nature of the Cumberland region, characterized by sparsely settled areas, might have also freed the area from the endemic diseases of the South that targeted heavily urbanized towns and cities.

At first glance, the Cumberland Mountains in East Tennessee presented a familiar physical environment for the men of the 58th. The problem of disease, however, lies not in the land itself, but the depletion of the land by the hands of man. Before the 58th marched towards Cumberland Gap, the area had been in the control of two separate armies for over a year, depleting the natural resources and soiling the land, water, and air from crowded camp conditions.[53] When soldiers could not lean on the environment in improving their health, like the lack of available foraging resources, clean water, or inhospitable weather that kept them in the closed quarters of their camps, diseases reached epidemic proportions and resulted in high fatalities. Appalachian physician Jobe believed the "first cases are always the worst cases" in all "epidemic diseases," and as the season passes the "virulence of the disease gradually subsides."[54] This mirrored the seasoning process of the 58th. Once the initial epidemic of illnesses subsided, future cases of those diseases appeared in milder forms with lower overall fatality rates. If soldiers survived this initial conditioning process, they increased their chances of surviving future cases of those diseases. For the soldiers of the 58th, surviving their seasoning in their first

[52] Karl B. Raitz, Richard Ulack, and Thomas R. Leinbach, *Appalachia: A Regional Geography: Land, People, and Development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 53.

[53] The Confederacy held Cumberland Gap from August 1861 until June 1862. The Union held the area from June until September 1862. Lucas Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare in Southern Appalachia" (2014), 27, 38, 63, 71. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 2375. https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2375.

[54] Jobe, *A Mountaineer in Motion*, 55-56.

posts of the war in East Tennessee proved an uphill battle, and many lost their lives at the hands of disease.

The Cumberland Gap- Fall 1862, August to October

From the start of the war, East Tennessee was a hotly contested region between the Confederate and Union governments because it contained the vital Tennessee-Virginia Railroad. This crucial railroad, beginning in Knoxville, traveled through northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia en route to Richmond, Virginia. From Richmond, the Confederacy transported supplies and troops through the Appalachian Mountains towards southern camps and battlefields, drastically cutting down on travel times and cost.[55] The Cumberland River, flowing out of eastern Kentucky southwest towards Nashville, also provided easy access through the interior of the Confederacy.[56] Whoever controlled East Tennessee greatly shaped the Confederacy's ability for supplying their troops and sustaining their war effort. East Tennessee's location, however, posed problems for both governments. While Tennessee seceded from the Union and joined the Confederacy, East Tennesseans remained staunchly pro-Union. This presented a problem for the Confederacy beyond internal dissent. Many Confederate strategists worried that the bordering Union state of Kentucky could further influence the Tennessee citizenry, lure Federal recruits across the border into Camp Dick Robinson, and offer avenues of advance for United States forces.[57]

[55] Earl Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 1. This railroad was also the main line running the width of the Appalachian Mountains, and through the fertile valley region of the Appalachian valley. Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare, 8.

[56] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History*, 46.

[57] Brian McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 29, 32.

To command East Tennessee meant controlling the numerous mountain passes of the Appalachian Mountains. When Confederate Brigadier General Felix Zollicoffer took over the Department of East Tennessee, he noted three major geographical gaps of the mountain range: Cumberland, Big Creek, and Elk.[58] Guarding these mountain passes protected East Tennessee from the Union threat from Kentucky and ensured the protection of Knoxville and the railroad.[59] For a year, Zollicoffer and later Confederate General James Edward Raines, guarded the invaluable mountain pass. During the summer of 1862, coordinated efforts made by the Army of the Ohio overwhelmed the forces commanded by Raines, forcing their retreat from Cumberland Gap on June 15, 1862.[60] On June 22, Morgan informed his superior that he held the Cumberland Gap "without a single loss of life."[61] Confederate Major Edmund Kirby Smith, now in command of the Department of East Tennessee, informed his wife "the enemy had invaded the mountains" during his absence in Chattanooga. Despite the growing Federal presence, he declared that he had "no idea of giving up East Tennessee without a struggle."[62] In late August, the Confederate Kentucky Campaign, a joint operation between Braxton Bragg's Army of Mississippi and Kirby Smith's Army of Kentucky designed for the purpose of retaking control of East Tennessee and

[58] Letter from Brigadier-General Felix Zolicoffer to Adjutant General S. Cooper, 6 August 1861, in *The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Print. Off., 1880), 382, http://collections.library.cornell.edu/moa_new/waro.html (accessed April 29, 2020).

[59] Karl B. Raitz, Richard Ulack, and Thomas R. Leinbach, *Appalachia: A Regional Geography: Land, People, and Development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 46-49; John B. Reider, *Appalachian Folkways* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 40.

[60] Union General Don Carlos Buell led the bulk of the army against Confederate General Braxton Bragg at Chattanooga while Brigadier General George Washington Morgan lead the Ohio Army's Seventh Division against Raines at the Gap. Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare," 45, 53-54; McKnight, *Contested Borderland*, 75.

[61] George W. Morgan to Colonel Jas B. Fry, 22 June 1862, *Official Records* 10, Vol. 22, 61, https://ehistory.osu.edu/books/official-records/010/0061 (accessed May 7, 2020).

[62]Edmund Kirby Smith to wife Cassie Seldon Kirby Smith, 20 June 1862, Box 2, Folder 30, in the Edmund Kirby Smith Papers, #404, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as EKSP)

the Cumberland Gap, commenced.[63] The 58th North Carolina, now assigned to Brigadier General Carter Stevenson's Division of the Army of Kentucky, moved into East Tennessee in order to reclaim the gap from Morgan's Union forces.[64]

In late August, Colonel Palmer directed the 58th North Carolina Regiment towards Tazewell, Tennessee, where the men went into camp and drilled while awaiting further orders. Harper observed the exceptionally dry and dusty conditions of the area, noting "everything green [is] almost burnt up by [the] dry weather" and the lack of rainfall for the past two months. In addition to the dry land, the hot temperature brought on from clear skies and lack of shade from the dying trees "by reason of drought" plagued them considerably.[65] Chances of a soldier experiencing a heat-related illness, or even death, increased as they marched under heavy packs and wore woolen clothing. A typical solution for cooling off one's body when experiencing the first signs of heat exhaustion entails resting underneath shade or drinking cold water.[66] Without proper shade or adequate times for rest, heat exhaustion, the body's inability to dissipate heat as a way of avoiding dehydration and electrolyte abnormalities, can evolve into heat stroke, where the body loses its ability for regulating its temperature. Externally, the symptoms appeared as the cessation of sweat and rising temperature. Internally, organs start overheating and shutting down. If the affected individual does not promptly cool their body and replenish lost liquids, death inevitably follows.[67]

[63]Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare," 68.

[64] Jordan, *A Roster*, 214.

[65] 8, 11, 15 September 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, AC.168: G. W. F. Harper Family Diary Transcriptions, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., USA (hereafter cited as HD)

[66] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History*, 12-13.

[67] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History*, 12-13.

For a soldier, this posed numerous problems. Drilling, picketing, and other camp duties required strenuous activity for long periods with little chance for rest. "We have to drill seven hours a day and stand guard every other night," William Gouge, Jr. informed his family from his camp in East Tennessee, explaining that they would "fare well if we did not have to stand guard so much."[68] Captain Harper's wife, Ella, wrote him in July of 1862, before they left for East Tennessee, that she remained "somewhat anxious" after she heard his "first drill was such a long one."[69] She worried his "long drills in the hot sun" would "bring on fever."[70] If heat caused their failing health, then soldiers encountered plenty of opportunities of falling ill. Even when not standing guard, drilling, or picketing, the soldiers of the 58th found little relief from the heat. Harper recorded that the regiment carried "no tents" among them. At night, he shared a single shawl with three others "in the open air," and others of his regiment likely did the same.[71]

Reliable water supplies also posed a problem. Horton Lorenzo of company C contracted a fatal case of typhoid fever on August 25.[72] Caused by the Salmonella enterica bacteria, the symptoms of this debilitating disease included severe diarrhea, intestinal bleeding, high fevers, kidney failure, and death. Situating itself in the gastro-intestinal tract of their human hosts, the Salmonella bacteria re-entered the environment through stool deposits, traveling through streams and groundwater, which contaminated fresh water supplies and infected more victims. An infected individual might remain sick upwards of four weeks, sometimes longer depending on the re-exposure rate. Unwashed hands, contaminated water and cooking supplies, and even flies

[68]William Gouge, Jr. to William, Martha, and Rosanna Gouge, 24 August 1862, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment,* 40-41.

[69] Ella Harper to George Harper, 11 July 1862, Box 1, Folder 2, G. W. F. Harper Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Manuscripts Department, Chapel Hill, N.C. (hereafter cited as HP).

[70] Ella to George Harper, 15 July 1862, Box 1, Folder 2, HP.

[71] 27 August 1862 and 29 September 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

[72] Jordan, *A Roster*, 305.

perpetuated the cycle of illness.[73] Classified as one of the "infantile diseases" of the South, the Salmonella bacteria already existed in the environment.[74] When Jobe opened a medical practice in Elizabethton in 1846, he believed that the "prevailing fever" of the area, bilious remittent fever, was actually typhoid fever that doctors "overlooked and treated" as bilious remittent fever. Starting in May of 1849, he recorded an epidemic of typhoid that lasted well into December of that year. For the following three years, typhoid continually appeared until it became milder and eventually disappeared altogether.[75]

Jobe established typhoid as a prominent endemic disease in East Tennessee, while mentioning an isolated case while practicing in Yancey County of North Carolina. Since both East Tennessee and western North Carolina shared similar rural characteristics, the likelihood that typhoid fever was also erroneously labeled and treated, as another form of fever in the mountain communities cannot be discounted. This possibility helps explain the prevalence of unidentified illnesses within the camp. Since many illnesses share the same symptoms—fevers, body aches, and diarrhea—typhoid often fell under the umbrella diagnosis of "fever." For the soldiers of the 58th, this meant that many more of their numbers likely already carried the Salmonella bacteria in their bodies when they entered their shared camping arrangements. Once introduced, camp conditions allowed for the rapid proliferation of typhoid among the non-immune. Close contact between the infected and healthy soldiers via unwashed hands, cooking utensils, and shared sleeping quarters and water supplies allowed for the initial introduction and continued presence of the Salmonella bacteria.

[73] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History*, 17.

[74] Bell, *Mosquito Soldiers*, 25.

[75] A year later, his practice extended to include the counties of Carter, Washington, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Johnson. Jobe, *A Mountaineer in Motion*, 53-56.

Interestingly, the regimental rolls for the 58th recorded six instances of disease during the month of August 1862, despite the reported fatality from typhoid and the presence of measles reported in the letters of Levi Silver and William Gouge, Jr. The highly contagious and pervasive nature of both measles and typhoid likely infected more than six soldiers. For example, Silver claimed that he contracted measles, but his name remained absent on the list of sick soldiers.[76] While the information regarding sick soldiers contained in Jordan's *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster* remain a valuable source of information regarding the disease prevalence in the ranks of the 58th, the figures likely do not represent the full extent of the regiment, and will be taken as a base measurement while considering other influencing factors.

While no direct evidence links the effects of heat exhaustion with the illnesses in the 58th while stationed in East Tennessee, letters exchanged between Kirby Smith and his wife revealed interesting connections between hot weather, crowded urban environments, and disease. On June 19, 1862, he informed his wife that while he was "not well," he was "still not sick," and the attending doctor "keeps his eye" on his condition.[77] A month later on July 4 he declared that he had "one of those low, slow, and debilitating attacks which without making me really sick, has made me weak as a baby." He attributed part of his ailment on his environment, writing that with "the heat of Knoxville I do not grow strong." His doctor believed that his recovery required a stay "for a few days somewhere in the mountains," a place where he could "cool" and regain his strength.[78] A few days later, he happily informed his wife of his arrival with his two traveling

[76] To see the names of the soldiers, please consult Jordan, *A Roster*, 302, 305, 308, 371, 379 383; Levi Silver to Martha and William Gouge, 24 August 1862; William Gouge Jr to William, Martha, and Rosanna Gouge, 24 August 1862, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina Infantry Regiment*, 40, 42.

[77] Edmund Kirby Smith to Cassie, 19 June 1862, Box 2, Folder 30, EKSP.

[78] Edmund Kirby Smith to Cassie, 9 July 1862, Box 3, Folder 31, EKSP. While he never mentioned exactly what was ailing him, in a previous letter he mentioned that a close companion, Alick Cunningham, contracted a mild case of typhoid fever. Edmund Kirby Smith to Cassie, 2 July 1862, Box 3, Folder 31, EKSP.

companions in "a quiet, pretty place" at the foothills of the Chilhowie Mountains, away from the "heat and [sickness of] hospitals of Knoxville." One of his companions, the same doctor who oversaw his care in Knoxville, was also pleased to "get away from Knoxville with the heat and [typhoid] case," believing that a few days in the mountains would "invigorate and strengthen" Kirby Smith.[79]

"The nights are cool and the mountain breezes bracing," Kirby Smith regaled his wife, describing in detail the environment around him. The Great Smoky Mountains' "wildness and grandeur," "the Switzerland of America" as he called it, replaced the heat and disease of Knoxville. The "sharp peaks and jagged outlines" of the mountains, Smith waxed poetically, where "nature, undisturbed, in the unconquerable majesty of her flowers" contrasted with the "markings of man." His stay in the mountains, surrounded by nature with little bits of the "markings of man" seemed to have the desired effect.[80] "It is fortunate that I went to the mountains," he wrote after a week of convalescing, for his "health is restored." Not only did he recover his strength, but also the speed of his recovery left him "looking better than I have been for months." Invigorated and strengthened by his mountain trip, he declared himself "ready for active service."[81]

After learning of her husband's return to Knoxville, Cassie voiced her fears that Edmund would not be "able to stand the July heat."[82] After all, both his wife and doctor recognized the connection between the heat and his failing health, a belief strengthened after Kirby Smith recovered his health in a cooler environment away from Knoxville. Crucially, however, the

[79] Edmund Kirby Smith to Cassie, 11 July 1862, Box 3, Folder 31, EKSP. Due to the ineligibility of some of the writing, the bracketed words are an educated guess.

[80] Edmund Kirby Smith to Cassie, 15 July 1862, Box 3, Folder 31, EKSP.

[81] Edmund Kirby Smith to Cassie, 22 July 1862, Box 3, Folder 31, EKSP.

[82] Cassie to Edmund Kirby Smith, 24 July 1862, Box 3, Folder 3, EKSP.

mountain environment he convalesced in lacked the same urbanized and crowded conditions of Knoxville that contained large numbers of sick soldiers. While he and his doctor contributed the cooler environment as the key in his recovery, there might be another reason for his renewed health. The physical removal of Kirby Smith from the disease environment of Knoxville, which included cases of typhoid, along with the crowded camp conditions caused by the clustering of soldiers, might have also aided in his recovery. Removed from an area conducive in the rapid dissemination of highly contagious diseases allowed him the time and space for adequate recovery. This pattern of removing an individual from an unhealthy area and into a healthier one repeated throughout the war. For the 58th, this pattern might have begun as early as August 1862, when eleven men deserted from their ranks.[83]

Once Kirby Smith resumed the responsibilities of his command, the Kentucky Campaign started. Confederate President Jefferson Davis believed that the combined forces of Bragg and Kirby Smith would "crush [Union General Don Carlos] Buell's column and advance the recovery of East Tennessee and the occupation of Kentucky."[84] The plan originally called for the combined forces of Bragg, Kirby Smith, and Stevenson to attack Morgan's garrison situated at Cumberland Gap before moving into Middle Tennessee and confronting Buell's army. However, Kirby Smith bypassed the gap entirely, instead sending his forces to confront the Federal force at Richmond, Kentucky. Bragg mirrored his movements by following him into Kentucky. Stevenson's Division, including the 58th, stayed at Cumberland Gap and laid siege against Morgan's forces without the promised reinforcements.[85] Stevenson placed his forces on a

[83] To see their names, please consult Jordan, *A Roster*, 294, 299, 320, 332, 355, 398, 404, 408.

[84] Jefferson Davis to Edmund Kirby Smith, 26 July 1862, Box 3, Folder 31, EKSP.

[85] Kirby Smith defeated a Federal force at Richmond, Kentucky on August 3, then Frankfort on September 3. Bragg captured Munfordville on September 17 before moving onto Louisville. Jordan, *A Roster*, 214-215.

sloping ridge three miles south of the gap, where Harper recorded his first sight of "The Gap" on September 3.[86] The presence of Stevenson's forces added pressure on the already strained Seventh Ohio Division.

The land, utterly exhausted, could not sustain Morgan's 10,000-man garrison. Orders rooting him near Cumberland Gap severely restricted his ability of sending out foraging parties, causing the rapid exhaustion of their supplies with no possibility of replenishment.[87] Kirby Smith's march through the mountains into Kentucky, using the same passes that Morgan used when first approaching Cumberland Gap, highlighted the depressing condition of the land. In a somber letter home, Kirby Smith wrote of the unparalleled march of 110 miles through a "mountainous region" of "almost impossible roads," observing that the county was "destitute of supplies of all kinds." Even water appeared scarce, as his men, "exhausted for a want of water," suffered horribly. He remarked that he "never seen such suffering" as he witnessed on this march.[88] Morgan's forces, facing starvation and the looming threat of Stevenson's Division beneath them, retreated on the night of September 17.[89]

In response, Harper recorded that Stevenson's Division "broke up camp and took line of march for Cumberland Gap" on the nineteenth, before moving "to top of Gap." A "great destruction of Yankee property" greeted them.[90] To deprive the Confederates of their abandoned stores, Morgan ordered the destruction of equipment and supplies that his troops could not carry with them during their evacuation. The Federal soldier's broke cookware, shredded tents, cut the

[86] 3 September 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5 HD; Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare," 68.

[87] Morgan lacked a large enough cavalry force that could extend their foraging range, and the infantry kept close to Gap in fear of being cut off by the Confederates. Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare," 64, 71.

[88] Edmund Kirby Smith to Cassie, 29 August 1862, EKSP.

[89] Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare," 71-74; McKnight, *Contested Borderlands*, 88.

[90] 19 and 20 September 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

wheels on wagons, and destroyed anything that might benefit the Confederates. Even the roads themselves proved deadly, mined with explosives as a deterrent by Morgan against pursuit.[91] Some things, fortunately, survived the Yankee destruction. Harper "camped in Yankee tents" while Levi Silver found hidden stashes of supplies. In exchange for some of the food, Federal prisoners approached the men of the 58th with the locations of some hidden supplies. Silver discovered "meat, flour, salt, rice and guns" buried in the ground with "rocks at the head and foot of the dirt." The prisoners informed him they buried the contents so that the Confederates "would think it was graves and would not dig."[92]

At the same time that Harper and Levi discovered their treasures, most of Stevenson's Division left Cumberland Gap on September 19, joining Kirby Smith's forces in Kentucky. The 58th remained behind, Colonel Palmer assuming command over Cumberland Gap. They spent their time "selling off captured goods," "paroling Federal prisoners," and patrolling the gap.[93] During this time, the heat of the previous summer and fall faded as the cool beginnings of winter approached. "Days hot and night cold at the Gap camp," Captain Harper recollected in his diary shortly after they recaptured Cumberland Gap, but by early October a cold rain "completely lay the dust" for the first time in months.[94] The encroaching cold weather coincided with the start of their misfortunes. In September, eight official cases of disease appeared in the camp. Five cases of fever and a single case of measles all resulted in fatalities.[95]

---

[91] Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare," 73; McKnight, *Contested Borderlands*, 88.

[92] Levi Silver to Alfred Silver, 21 September 1862, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment,* 48-49.

[93] 29 September 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

[94] 29 September 1862, 10 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

[95] The other three cases of distance were soldiers given sick furloughs. Jordan, *A Roster*, 303, 306, 310, 325, 331, 349, 389. Again, the single case of measles indicated it was in the camp, and likely affected more.

On top of deteriorating weather and health, Confederate military activity turned for the worse. While Stevenson's Division fulfilled the goal of recovering the Cumberland Gap from Federal forces, the Confederate mission to "redeem" Kentucky failed, forcing the retreat of Bragg and Kirby Smith back through the gap the 58th guarded.[96] Captain Harper watched the "constant stream of men, horses, mules, and wagons" pass through the area during Bragg's and Kirby Smith's retreat on October 17. Accompanying "army trains" continued their passage for the next several days.[97] During this time, the 58th also saw at least fourteen men desert.[98] Daniel and Gordon Morrow along with "G." Matheson deserted from company H on the night of October 16.[99] Daniel Morrow's records do not list him as a deserter, and the "G." Matheson that Harper listed in his diary might have been Wesley Green Matheson, also not listed as a deserter.[100] However, Ella Harper revealed the presence of Daniel and Gordon, along with two others from Captain Harper's company, at their respective Caldwell County homes in November 1862. "To be deserters, are they?" she asked her husband, voicing her disapproval over the presence of soldiers who belonged in the field.[101] No doubt, her disapproval increased over the coming months, as desertions plagued the regiment alongside disease.

Winter Quarters-November 1862 to March 1863

At the end of October, after the last of the defeated forces of Bragg and Kirby Smith passed through Cumberland Gap, the 58th moved about thirty-five miles southwest towards Big

[96] Jordan, A Roster, 215; Wilder, "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare," 82.
[97] 17-22 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.
[98] Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.
[99] 16 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5 HD.
[100] Daniel Morrow returned in March 1864, was court-martialed, sentenced to be shot, but pardoned the day before his execution, later returning to duty in May 1864 and surviving the war.
Jordan, *A Roster*, 382, 383.
[101] Ella to George Harper, 1 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, HP.

Creek Gap.[102] A day after leaving Cumberland Gap, the soldiers of the 58th awoke and "found the ground covered with snow." Through "snow and mud" the men continued their march, making camp that night in snow "two to four inches deep."[103] Their march lasted three days before they reach Big Creek Gap and settled in for their winter quarters. Before, staying cool preserved their health during the summer and fall heat. With the arrival of winter, staying warm became their priority. While located in Murfreesboro, the experiences of the 60th North Carolina soldiers in combating the effects of winter in middle Tennessee reflected the same struggles the 58th encountered while stationed in the eastern regions of the state. Being cold, hungry, and sick were universal experiences that connected both regiments across two regions of Tennessee. For example, the hands of Thomas Patton of the 60th and John Coffey of the 58th felt the same biting chill of winter. "It is so cold that my fingers are numb," Patton reported in a letter home, while Coffey, a native of Caldwell County and private of company E, stated in a postwar Tennessee pension application that his hands were "frozen" while at Cumberland Gap.[104]

The effects of the cold weather on soldiers stationed in Virginia provide additional context. In letters home written by George Phifer Erwin, who served in both the 7th and 11th North Carolina at Frankfurt, Virginia, revealed the plight of soldiers in keeping their feet protected. His shoes contained several holes in them, letting him "fare well if in a tent," but "take a few steps outside" and immediately water soaked his shoes. He declared it "won't be long until I'm barefooted," and joined the miserable ranks of the fifteen soldiers in his company already

[102] Jordan, *A Roster*, 215.

[103] 26 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

[104] Thomas Patton to mother, 1 December 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, in the James W. Patton Papers #01739, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as JPP); John Coffey likely injured his hands during the march through the snowstorm into Big Creek Gap, Jordan, A Roster, 328.

tying shoes "all round with strings to keep the top and bottom half together." He admitted this technique kept their feet off the ground, but provided little protection against the "cold, mud, snow, and water."[105] Indeed, he and many others might have suffered less if allowed to stay inside the comfortable quarters the soldiers constructed for themselves. Patton described the makeshift "chimneys" they constructed in their tents, providing their sole warmth as the tents "are hardly any protection."[106] Harper had the good fortune of lodging in an actual building during this winter, no doubt a privilege reserved for an officer. Ella expressed her relief at hearing her husband stayed "in such comfortable quarters" and had things "clean about" him.[107] On a bitterly cold night during the "coldest weather" the 58th had experienced thus far, Harper enjoyed the "big fires indoors," a comfort granted by his living arrangements.[108]

The 58th also acquired tents at Cumberland Gap after Morgan's forces left them behind in their retreat. They also likely constructed chimneys in their tents, much in the way Patton described the soldiers of the 60th as doing. As such, they avoided some of the worst elements of winter while at Big Creek Gap. Unfortunately, the duty of a soldier often called him out of the warmth and protection of a tent into the bitter winter weather. Erwin described the unpleasantness of picket duty, a role all soldiers performed. Every nine days, his company performed this task. Taken in three shifts, a soldier stood guard for four hours, and then rested for eight after being relieved. "Because of the cold," Erwin wrote his sister, picketing was "becoming disagreeable." For four hours, forced to stand in the same spot, and "not allowed a

[105] George Erwin to mother, 8 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 23, George Phifer Erwin Papers (#246), Southern Historical Collection, Manuscripts Department, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as GEP).

[106] Thomas Patton to mother, 7 December 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, JPP.

[107] Ella to George Harper, 15 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, HP.

[108] 7 December 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

fire," picketing exposed the soldiers to the harsh winter elements.[109] Harper confirmed the rough experience of the 58th in picketing in his postwar memoir. Given the task of picketing various gaps within the Cumberland Mountains, the "details for guard duty…were excessive," and his regiment "suffered greatly from privation and exposure."[110] If the weather was cold enough to freeze the hands of private Coffey, the extent of suffering undoubtedly reached deep into the 58th's ranks as they stood for hours picketing the gap area. For those born into attentive and wealthy families, care packages often supplemented what the army lacked in providing them and alleviated at least some of their suffering.

Harper, a merchant by trade in the wealthier community of Lenoir, reaped the benefits of these packages sent by his wife. As early as October, Ella wrote of the "nice, thick fur blanket" in her possession that her husband "must have" for the winter. She chided her husband's refusal for initially accepting it, stating he "must not write" her with complaints of thin blankets if he refused her offerings of additional ones. Driving home her point, she told him "I will feel unhappy every night if I think you are cold."[111] On October 28, Harper noted the arrival of a box for him. While he never specified the contents, no doubt a blanket found its way into the package.[112] William Gouge, Jr. and Levi Silver, soldiers from more modest means, also benefited from care packages. In a thank you letter home, Gouge expressed his appreciation for the supplies his parents sent him and his nephew, especially for the bottle of brandy. Jovially, he expressed "you don't know how glad we was to get it for it cut the cobwebs out of our throats."

---

[109] George Erwin to sister, 8 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 23, GEP.

[110] George Harper, *Sketch of the Fifty-Eighth Regiment (Infantry) North Carolina Troops* (Lenoir, North Carolina: 1901), 7. The 58th spent time near Big Creek Gap from October 1862 until March 1863. 12 January 1863, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD; Jordan, *A Roster*, 272.

[111] Ella to George Harper, 26 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, HP.

[112] 28 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

Gouge likely referred to the dried and parched throats they suffered from the difficulty of procuring water during their winter encampment.[113]

Packages containing food also supplemented the starving soldiers' meager army rations. Patton described the flour as "the most miserable I ever saw, so bad that I can't eat it at all." Instead, he chose "to use cornbread entirely," but the "meal is so course that it is almost like grit."[114] Erwin confirmed that his unit also suffered from limited rations in a letter home, stating he was "faring badly on rations," with them drawing "flour and beef one day, and cornmeal and rice the next."[115] Ella revealed that the 58th did not escape the suffering of poor rations when she mentioned a conversation with a neighbor whose husband wrote her requesting she send him "everything." Apparently, even after spending all his money, the poor soldier "was still hungry."[116]

Poor rations, dwindling supplies, bitter cold weather, and camp duties all compounded the soldiers' struggle of staying healthy. Neither were their quarters safe. In fact, their tents posed the greatest risk towards the soldier's health. Huddled together around their chimneys and breathing the same air allowed for the rapid spread of highly contagious diseases among the soldiers in their tents.[117] All of these combined factors created the fatal disease environment that cost so many soldiers their lives. "The loss by death from disease was appalling," Harper recalled of his experience during the winter of 1862-1863. He blamed "camp fever" and an "epidemic of measles" as the chief cause of illnesses, and attributed much of the deaths as the

[113] Along with the brandy, they also received socks and apples. William Gouge Jr to William and Martha Gouge, 28 November 1982, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 56.

[114] Thomas Patton to mother, 4 December 1862 and 1 December 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, JPP.

[115] George Erwin to sister, 8 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 22, GEP.

[116] Ella to George Harper, 19 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, HP.

[117] Erwin wrote how the narrow tents scarcely left any standing room. George Erwin to sister, 8 October 1862, Box 1, Folder 22, GEP.

"natural result of inexperience and a deplorable lack of hospital accommodations and facilities."[118] At the start of the war, the United States Medical Department splintered along sectional lines. Southern physicians left and established their own medical department from scratch, an enormous feat which took years.[119] The winter of 1862-1863 still saw the medical department in its infancy, and soldiers suffered from this lack of medical availability and efficiency. Harper likely tempered his words when describing this situation, for "appalling" did not capture the extent of the horror the soldiers experienced. Between the months of November 1862 and March 1863, there were at least eighty-seven cases of illnesses with a 75.86 percent fatality rate.[120] Bartlett Wilson, a sergeant in company K and the brother-in-law of William Gouge, Jr., appeared "very low" during late December, and William, after waiting on him "all the time," noticed that his health kept deteriorating. "I don't think he will ever get well," he somberly informed his father.[121] Muster rolls indicate that Wilson died "on an unspecified date" with unknown causes.[122] Based on Gouge's letter, his death likely resulted from the unknown illness he contracted.

Harper also found himself "housed up" and "not well" on November 13. Two days later, he clarified his illness as an "attack of Camp Fever."[123] When Ella received word that he "was quite sick" she went home and "prepared the coffee" for his benefit, advising the careful use of it "unless some of the men are sick." She also mentioned a mutual friend's desire to prepare a tea

---

[118] Harper, *Sketch of the 58th*, 7.

[119] H.H. Cunningham, *Doctors in Gray: The Confederate Medical Service* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 20.

[120] During this same time, there were an additional thirteen hospitalizations and twenty- five deaths of unknown causes. Most likely, these were disease-related, as the 58th were not involved in active battles during this time. Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

[121] William Gouge Jr to Alfred Gouge, 24 December 1862, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 61-62.

[122] Jordan, *A Roster*, 404.

[123] 13 and 15 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

for him.[124] Both drinks served the purpose of combating diseases and fevers, reinforcing Ella's desire to aid in his recovery. Treating a fever by the hot infusion of coffee and tea were the folk healing remedies of their native mountain homes. While many of the soldiers of the 58th understood and recognized the orthodox healing methods of their regimental surgeons, they had far more experience in treating illnesses with herbs and teas. Deprived of their herbal remedies while in camp, the soldiers found themselves primarily reliant on the more uncomfortable healing methods of their orthodox physicians. The physicians, poorly supplied in equipment and medicines, were often unable to care for the large numbers of sick soldiers, as Harper somberly explained years after the war.

Luckily for Harper, he obtained a sick furlough on December 9.[125] After five days of travel, he "improved in health by the trip."[126] From his arrival home on December 15 up until January 6, 1863, he grew continually stronger and healthier. Being free of the conditions of camp, full of privations, exposure, and disease, greatly increased his rate of recovery. Combined with a chance for rest and familiar medical treatments administered by his devoted wife, Captain Harper survived his ordeal while many others did not. James Fletcher, a private in company H and the same friend that helped treat Harper before he left on furlough, died in hospital on January 22, 1863.[127] While Harper removed himself from the unhealthy camp environment, Fletcher remained, dying from the diseases that his friend escaped. These same diseases awaited Harper when rejoined his regiment. Only four days passed after returning before his health deteriorated once more. Not only was he "not well," but he also suffered from a new symptom,

[124] Ella to George Harper, 22 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, 1862.
[125] 9 December 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.2, HD.
[126] 14 December 1862, Box 1, Folder 1.2, HD.
[127] Jordan, *A Roster*, 379; 15 November 1862, 22 January 1863, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

diarrhea. The unhealthiness of the camp undid the progress of Harper's month-long recovery within a matter of days.[128]

During this period of privation, exposure, and disease soldiers deserted in increasing numbers. Between November 1862 and February 1863, 137 men from the 58th left their companies without authorization.[129] Desertions increases at alarming numbers. In December, private Langston Estes of the 58th believed that "if we stay here two months longer I don't think Col Palmer will have a hundredd men left."[130] Kirby Smith's rejuvenation after leaving the unhealthy environment of Knoxville, along with Harper's improved health on his sick furlough at home, both reinforced that soldiers understood the connection between their health and the environment. These soldiers, watching their friends, family, and military comrades die horribly slow and agonizing deaths might have influenced many of them into leaving the unhealthy camps and disease environment for somewhere safer and healthier. Other factors also motivated soldiers into deserting. The heavily agrarian communities of western North Carolina found themselves in a crisis caused by the extreme loss of able-bodied men for the war effort. North Carolina Governor Zebulon Vance, in a proclamation designed to encourage wayward soldiers into rejoining their regiments, promised that their families would "share the last bushel of meal and pound of meat in the State."[131] Despite Vance's promises, the conditions of the state, along with the rest of the Confederacy, deteriorated due to a long-lasting drought, referred to as the "Civil War Drought."[132]

---

[128] 12, 19, 20 January 1863, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

[129] Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

[130] Jordan, *A Roster*, 217.

[131] Proclamation by Zebulon Vance, 26 January 1863, *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance* Vol. 2 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1963), 27.

[132] Between the years 1856-1865, the weather pattern of La Nina, part of oscillating weather patterns known as the El Nino Southern Oscillation, which shift the temperatures and atmospheric pressure of the Pacific

The food situation became so dire that desperate women initiated riots, using violence to feed their starving families in the early months of 1863.[133] Gordon Morrow, one of the very first deserters from company H in October 1862, reportedly left on behalf of his wife.[134] Ella Harper warned her husband that the soldiers "will not stay away when their wives write to them." She emphasized that families in her community of Caldwell County were "suffering from the necessary's of life," and unless something was done to aid them, soldiers would continue deserting for the sake of their loved ones.[135] Disease also posed a risk to the soldiers' families, as anytime a sick soldier obtained a furlough home there was a chance they brought death with them into their communities. In November of 1862, Ella acknowledged the cases of smallpox in Watauga County, expressing the general belief the source came from a soldier.[136]

Soldiers deserted to care for their starving families and work their farms. But another motivating force behind desertions was the physical and emotional deterioration of soldiers' condition. Exposed in the bitter cold without proper clothing, dwindling rations causing malnutrition, and cramped quarters that allowed the spread of disease all contributed in soldiers feeling extremely sick and exhausted. Compounded with their physical health was the emotional strain they endured as they learned about crises in their families. Yes, they deserted for their families, but they might also have deserted for themselves. An individual's physical strength affects their ability to endure emotional pain. Everything seems worse to a person when they feel

---

Ocean, brought in warm and dry conditions into the Western and Southern regions of the country. The unusually long La Nina phase diminished rainfall in these areas considerably, creating extensive droughts. Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History*, 41-42.

[133] For more information on the food riots and conditions leading to them, please see Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History,* 83-87.

[134] Browning, "In Search of All That Was Near and Dear to Me," 122.

[135] Ella to George Harper, 8 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, HP.

[136] Ella Harper represented the essence of country orthodoxy. While she pushed for treating her husband's fever with coffees and teas, she also mentioned wanting a vaccination against the smallpox in the neighboring county. Ella to George Harper, 1 November 1862, Box 1, Folder 4, HP.

sick. The impact of diseases represents another layer of many motivating factors behind soldiers' desertions. It is certainly not the sole reason, or perhaps even the most pressing, but for the 58th North Carolina, there was a correlation between high disease rates and high desertions. When diseases decreased, desertions decreased, and soldiers returned. This occurred during the spring months, when the weather warmed, and the environment appeared more inviting.

Spring and Summer-April through August 1863

April 21 presented itself as a "fine spring day," according to Harper who noticed the woods around them "beginning to look green."[137] The fine weather even allowed him the opportunity of enjoying "boat riding, fishing, and bathing" a few weeks later at the beginning of May.[138] Between March and April, the 58th welcomed seventy-three men back into their ranks.[139] Perhaps the pleasant weather coaxed them into returning. Or perhaps the looming threat of severe punishment of deserters compelled their return.[140] What they found upon returning certainly appeared more hospitable than their previous winter quarters. Stationed in Clinton, William Gouge, Jr. enjoyed the "very pretty country," hoping for continued "pretty weather."[141] His hope for a brighter future, unfortunately, was quickly dashed. While twenty-two men of the 58th reported feeling ill or were hospitalized in April, the fatality rate remained high at 63.6 percent.[142] When Garrett Gouge, William's older brother, reported for duty in company K of the

[137] 21 April 1863, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

[138] 1 May 1863, Box 1, Folder 1.5, HD.

[139] Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

[140] In his proclamation of January 1863, Vance gave soldiers a deadline of February 10 to return to their regiments, after which the "full powers of the State authorities" would hunt down deserters, court-martial them, and, if found guilty, execute them. Proclamation by Zebulon Vance, 26 January 1863, *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance* 2, 27.

[141] William Gouge Jr to family, 5 April 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment,* 93.

[142] The number of illnesses and deaths decreased from the previous months, but illnesses still held a death grip on the regiment. Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

58th on April 15, he found "Brother William…complaining with the headache and neck."[143] A few days later, Garrett expressed his frustration at his brother's condition. "I cannot tell what is the matter with him," he wrote his wife, only that "he is in his tent yet."[144] The only clue indicating the condition of William comes when Garrett reported him "sick with the fever."[145] In a letter on May 22, Rosanna expressed her condolences upon hearing of the passing of William, stating that Levi Silver, home on leave, "fetched the word." Taken aback by the unexpected news, she urged Garrett to "write all about it."[146] Here the story of William Gouge, Jr. ended. His muster rolls simply state that his name was "canceled" between March and April of 1863.[147] Although April appeared prettier and warmer, diseases still lurked within their ranks. Their conditioning continued.

The winter bivouac of the 58th officially ended in May when, in response to the movements of Federal cavalry along the Tennessee-Kentucky border, the 58th entered active campaigning.[148] No longer cramped in closed quarters and free from the cold, the regiment endured much lower incidents of sickness and death. During May, twenty-one soldiers reported as sick with disease and nearly half of them died. Perhaps the combination of fatal diseases and active marching and campaigning for the first time sparked a new wave of desertions as thirty-one soldiers left in May.[149] Near constant marching occupied the men of the 58th during the rest

---

[143] Garrett Gouge to wife, Rosanna Gouge, 14 April 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 96.

[144] Garret Gouge to Rosanna, 20 April 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 100.

[145] Garrett Gouge to Rosanna, 25 April 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 104.

[146] Rosanna to Garrett Gouge, 22 May 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 117-118.

[147] Jordan, *A Roster*, 400.

[148] Jordan, *A Roster*, 217. For the places the campaigns and skirmishes they were involved in, along with the places they were marching to, please see Jordan, *A Roster*, 217-220.

[149] Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

of their time in East Tennessee. While diseases and deaths appeared lower than previously, desertion remained a constant issue, even if not on the same scale as over the winter months. In June, seven men fell ill and an additional twenty-three deserted. Far fewer cases of diseases occurred during July, when six men fell ill, but unfortunately five of them died.[150] The weather and disease environment improved, so illnesses abated. Despite the improvements, men continued deserting. Garrett's letter home revealed possible motivations. During this time, they engaged in "hard marching."[151] During the winter of 1862-1863, with the exception of their rotations on picket duty, the men remained inactive in camp. Weakened physically by disease, lack of exercise, and malnourished, the sudden thrust into daily marches of several miles, no doubt overwhelmed many of them. They were not physically prepared or able for the challenges of active campaigning.

East Tennessee accustomed them to diseases, weakening their bodies and testing their loyalties between themselves, their families, and their country in the process. Soldiers were also fathers, husbands, and sons. They had a duty to their families, and when many of their loved ones were sick, starving, or dying, many did not hesitate prioritizing their families over their duty to their country. As soldiers, however, the tie of honor bound within their regiments. Executions awaited those who broke these ties. Soldiers faced multiple, competing forces pulling them in various directions, all linked by honor and responsibility. As the war raged on, their bodies slowly deteriorating by the wear and tear of soldiering, their families suffering more as their government failed, some bonds strengthened at the expense of weakening others. The disease environment and camp conditions were not the only factors affecting these bonds, but they acted

[150] Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

[151] Garrett to Rosanna Gouge, 21 May 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*
114.

in concert with multiple others, resulting in desertions. The disease seasoning of the 58th was intense, prolonged, and deadly. Largely rural and from areas with less experience with the "childhood diseases" of the rest of the country resulted in the vulnerable soldiers contracting potentially fatal illnesses. Inhospitable weather that kept the soldiers crowded inside allowed the introduction and rapid spread of disease among their groups. Poor quality of rations, worn out clothing, and the physical exertion of soldierly duties contributed in developing the ideal camp conditions for epidemic outbreaks within the regiment.

CHAPTER 3. EPILOGUE

The Journey Home

An entire year passed after the soldiers of the 58th North Carolina left their mountain homes in North Carolina and entered military camps in East Tennessee, where they experienced the first phase of their seasoning process. After they conditioned their bodies against disease, they entered the next phase of their service, which included a new type of conditioning: the hardening process of soldiers from combat. On September 19 and 20, the 58th and 60th North Carolina participated in the Battle of Chickamauga, fought between Confederate General Bragg's Army of Tennessee and Union General Rosecrans Army of the Cumberland.[1] This was the 58th's first true taste of large-scale battle, and they suffered horribly from it. Harper exclaimed that the "loss in killed and wounded was over one-half of those carried into action."[2] During the Battle of Chickamauga, the 58th lost more men killed and wounded than any other battle engagement they participated in during the war. Colonel Palmer reported that the casualties in the 58th included every field and staff officer, with one-half of the balance of the regiment killed or wounded.[3] Specifically, fifty-seven men died or suffered mortal wounds while an additional 117 received wounds. The overall losses from Kelly's Brigade, which included the 58th, was reported as sixty-two killed, 238 wounded, and 29 missing out of a total of 876 men carried into the battle. Almost all of those killed in the brigade, along with one-third of wounded,

[1] For battle details, please see Jordan, *A Roster*, 221-224.

[2] George Washington Finley Harper, *Sketch of the Fifty-Eighth Regiment (Infantry) North Carolina Troops* (Lenoir, North Carolina: G.W.F. Harper, 1901), 8.

[3] Confederate casualties were listed as: 2,312 dead, 14,674 wounded, and 1,468 missing. Union casualties included: 1,657 killed, 9,756 wounded, and 4,757 missing. Jordan, *A Roster*,224.

came exclusively from the companies of the 58th.[4] The 58th paid a high price for the Confederate victory at Chickamauga.

The soldiers of the 58th, after their first large-scale military engagement, likely suffered extreme mental fatigue and weariness. For the last several months, Garrett Gouge consistently advised his wife on how to run their farm in his absence. "You must write and let me know how your wheat looks," Garrett inquired in one letter home, while also asking how she was "getting along" with her work.[5] He requested the assistance of his Uncle Robin, promising him "you shall have your price" in exchange for helping "Rosanna all you can."[6] A month before Chickamauga, he even recommended if "anybody comes around with the thrasher" that she should "get them to thrash your wheat."[7] Immediately after the battle, however, an unusual laxness replaced Garrett's previous micro-managing. When Rosanna asked for advice on her cow, Garrett replied "do just as you please and what you think best."[8] Considering the month previous he directed her in the thrashing of their wheat, his new hands-off advisement likely resulted from severe fatigue caused by combat as opposed to him trusting her more in her decision-making capabilities.

Following Chickamauga and a brief stay in Chattanooga, the 58th North Carolina regiment underwent reorganization in November 1863. After Colonel Kelly, their brigade commander, received a promotion of Brigadier General and a reassignment on November 1, Colonel Palmer assumed temporary command of the brigade. On the twelfth, the 58th and 60th

---

[4] Harper, *Sketch of the Fifty-Eighth,* 8-9.

[5] Garrett Gouge to Rosanna, 21 May 1863; 14 May 1863 *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 110-111, 114-116

[6] Garrett Gouge to Rosanna, 6 June 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 131-132; Uncle Robin was the youngest brother of William Gouge Sr, 132.

[7] Garrett to Rosanna Gouge, 15 August 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 169.

[8] Garrett Gouge to Rosanna, 29 September 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 178-180.

joined Reynolds Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Alexander Welch Reynolds. Colonel Palmers temporary leadership of the brigade ended on the eighteenth, when he received a new assignment as commander of the District of North Carolina. With no present field officers within the 58th, the regiment underwent consolidation with the 60th North Carolina under Colonel Washington Hardy, which lasted until around April 1864.[9]

Both regiments, along with the rest of Reynolds Brigade, then participated in the defense of Missionary Ridge in Chattanooga, Tennessee.[10] After suffering defeat at Chattanooga, the 58th settled into winter quarters at Dalton, Georgia. Between December 1863 and March 1864, there were ninety-nine instances of disease reported in the regiment. While bivouacked in East Tennessee from November 1862 to March 1863, eighty-seven soldiers fell ill. Winter quarters in Dalton, compared to winter quarters in Tennessee, resulted in a far sicklier regiment. However, the disease environment of Georgia contained a much lower fatality rate at 15 percent.[11] While the soldiers of the 58th experienced more sickness while in Georgia, this disease environment proved less deadly. What caused this difference? Part of the answer lies in the types of diseases they encountered. The endemic diseases of Georgia relied on warm weather, allowing for the breeding of the diseases carried by mosquito vectors. The mosquitos cannot survive in the cooler temperatures, so they became much less of a problem during the winter. The two main diseases of the area, malaria and yellow fever, therefore, lost their immediate grip on the soldiers. The female Anopheles Mosquito, the carrier of the parasite causing malaria, preferred stagnant, sunlight pools of fresh water and warm weather for breeding. The symptoms of malaria ranged

[9] Jordan, *A Roster*, 224; Hardy, The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops, 84-85.

[10] For battle information on their participation at Missionary Ridge, please see Jordan, A Roster, 226-230. The 58th reported two fatalities, fourteen wounded, and fifty captured.

[11] Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

from chills, nausea, headaches, and the universal symptom of the sporadically spiking fevers.[12] Like measles, malaria victims usually died from a secondary infection resulting from a weakened immune system.[13] Referred as the "Scourge of the South" by nineteenth century Americans, yellow fever epidemics killed between 15 and 50 percent of those affected. Bleeding from the nose and mouth, excruciating headaches, and fevers indicated the patient suffered from yellow fever. In later stages of the disease in more acute cases, the sufferer vomited substances resembling black coffee grounds, the result of internal hemorrhaging.[14]

The 58th experienced firsthand the heavy grip of this sickly season when they entered Georgia in September of 1863. A newspaper article observed the residents of Columbus, Georgia, amid the dry weather of the area, enjoyed a "fine time for chills and fever."[15] In the same letter where Garrett stepped back from giving advice, he revealed he suffered from "diarrhea all time," making him "very weak." He attributed his failing health with the "water" not agreeing with him "in this country."[16] Indeed, at the height of the mosquito-breeding season, water posed a significant risk for the soldiers. Seventy-three soldiers of the 58th also suffered terribly during this month, which coincided with 103 unauthorized absences of men.[17] A combination of an atrocious disease environment along with a devastating battle influenced men into abandoning their colors.

---

[12] Physicians often characterized malaria based on these fever spikes, as Quotidian, Tertian, and Quartan, that occurred every 24, 48, and 72 hours respectfully. Malaria caused by the parasite Plasmodium Vivax was classified as intermittent fever, ague, or chill fever, and Plasmodium Falciparum was congestive or malignant fever because of the higher fatality rates. Bell, *Mosquito Soldiers*, 11-12.

[13] Browning and Silver, *An Environmental History*, 27.

[14] Southern cities like Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, experienced yearly outbreaks of the disease, sometimes killing tens of thousands during severe epidemics. Bell, *Mosquito Soldiers*, 15.

[15] "Local Intelligence," 1 September 1863, in *The Daily Sun*, vol IX, no 19.

[16] Garrett Gouge to Rosanna, 29 September 1863, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 178.

[17] Two suffered from diarrhea while five suffered from the effects of "debility." Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

What differentiated this disease experience from their initial conditionings was the significant survival rate of those who fell ill. After contracting illnesses in East Tennessee, their seasoned bodies withstood the ravages of the diseases of Georgia. When smallpox again appeared within the regiment, doctors quickly quarantined all those "supposed to have been exposed to it." Captain Harper of company H hoped "it will not spread."[18] Ella, upon hearing of this, felt "somewhat anxious" that her husband was "in such close proximity to the smallpox." However, if he "should be exposed to it," she was confident he would not suffer from it very much.[19] Ten soldiers died between December 1863 and January 1864 from disease, so if the smallpox did spread, soldiers overcame and survived the ordeal. Garrett, who contracted the "mumps" in June of 1864, assured his family he suffered from a "mild case."[20] Disease still existed in the ranks of the 58th, but now far more survived than previously. Along with lower fatalities, the soldiers enjoyed fine weather. Harper described these days as "delightful" and "charming."[21] Maybe not all that surprisingly, a mere fifty-seven men deserted between December and March in Georgia compared to the 137 who deserted from their winter quarters in East Tennessee.[22]

Conditioned against diseases, the soldiers stayed in the field, participating in active campaigning. No longer threatened by invisible enemies, they focused on the ones in front of them. The 58th participated in the battle of Rocky Face Ridge in February, where they lost three

[18] George Washington Finley Harper to Ella, 19 December 1863, Box 1, Folder 6, G. W. F. Harper Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Manuscripts Department, Chapel Hill, N.C.

[19] Ella to George Harper, 26 December 1863, Box 1, Folder 6, HP.

[20] Garrett Gouge to Patty and Hector McNeil, 29 June 1864, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 236.

[21] 29 and 30 December 1863, Box 1, Folder 1.7, AC.168: G. W. F. Harper Family Diary Transcriptions, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., USA.

[22] Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

men killed and eleven wounded. Their next engagement occurred in May, after which they participated in battles in quick succession. On May 9, they fought in the Buzzard Roost skirmish, and a few days later on the 14th they fought at Resaca. The rest of May continued with additional skirmishes, marches, and countermarches, creating a month of uninterrupted combat leading into the battle of Kolb's Farm on June 22.[23] "Times are hard here," Garrett wrote of the summer.[24] The 58th remained constantly engaged in the enemy and constantly marching. The next month, they marched and skirmished constantly. Their next engagement involved the siege of Atlanta, stretching from the end of June into August, where they endured a "lively skirmish" and "cannonading" every day. A war-weary and fatigued Garrett Gouge expressed his hope that the "campaign will soon end" after the "hard time" they experienced over the summer.[25] After the battle of Jonesborough at the end of August, the soldiers received a brief respite.[26] The "few days rest" was "joyfully appreciated," according to Garrett, as "the roaring of cannons" halted to allow civilians to evacuate Atlanta.[27] The combined casualties of all six engagements for the 58th included: sixty-four wounded, two mortally wounded, and six killed.[28]

The soldiers of the 58th suffered from increasing hardships during the last months of the war. Harper reported the soldiers passed the "severe winter of 1864-1865" in horrid conditions

[23] To see details of the battles, please see Jordan, *A Roster*. For Rocky Face Ridge, consult pages 234-235; Buzzard Roost, 237-239; Resaca, 239-244; Kolb's Farm, 245-249. 242-243

[24] Garrett Gouge to Patty and Hector McNeil, 29 June 1864, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 236.

[25] Garrett Gouge to Rosanna, 25 August 1864, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 248-249.

[26] To see details of the battles, please see Jordan, *A Roster*. For Atlanta, 252-255; Jonesborough, 257-259.

[27]Garrett Gouge to Rosanna, 12 September 1864, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 253-254. Between September 12 and 21, Union General William T. Sherman, who had been assaulting the fortifications at Atlanta, and Confederate General John Bell Hood, agreed on a temporary truce for the evacuation of the civilians still in the city. Jordan, *A Roster*, 258.

[28] The highest casualty count occurred at Kolb's Farm, which wounded thirty-six and killed five. Jordan, *A Roster*, 272-422.

while in "active field service." Clothes worn down with no hopes of acquiring new ones while in the field, he noticed all the "thinly clad" soldiers, whose sole protection from the elements involved the "single blanket" they each carried. Harper himself wore "ill footed boots" that caused the development of a "fearful crop of blisters."[29] Letters from soldiers drastically decreased this time, obscuring the voices of those soldiers listed in this narrative. As Garrett explained, "there will be no chance to write nor mail" letters, for he found it "too ill convenient for anything of this kind" while marching and actively campaigning.[30] The company's regimental musters, a key source for this study, ended in August of 1864, and so do not allow for further intimate glimpses into the health and movement of the regimental soldiers. The broader actions of their movements, however, find them following General Hood into southwest Tennessee at the beginning of November 1864, planning a surprise attack against Union General John Schofield's forces at Columbia.[31] After defeating the federal forces there, the 58th received orders for guard duty, narrowly escaping the disastrous slaughter of Hood's forces at the Battle of Franklin. With prisoners in tow, the 58th then moved south towards Corinth, Mississippi.[32] President Jefferson Davis ordered the now severely weakened Army of Tennessee towards Georgia, where William T. Sherman's soldiers burned and devastated the landscape between the cities of Atlanta and Savannah during their March to the Sea.[33]

---

[29] George Washington Finley Harper, *Reminiscences of Caldwell County, North Carolina: In the Great War of 1861-1865 (Hickory, North Carolina: Clay Printing Co., 1910)*, 55-56.

[30] Garrett Gouge to family, 24 September 1864, *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment*, 256.

[31] Jordan, *A Roster*, 260.

[32] To see more details on the battle that occurred at Columbia and Battle of Franklin, please see Jordan, *A Roster*, 261-261.

[33] Jordan, A Roster, 263.

On March 18, 1865, the soldiers of the 58th North Carolina fought in their last battle. The disastrous defeat of Johnston by Sherman at Bentonville, North Carolina, resulted in high casualties and low morale. Thirty-one soldiers of Stevenson's Division died during this battle, leaving another 195 wounded. Harper, currently in charge of the 58th, recorded their casualties as three killed and twenty-five wounded.[34] Harper wrote of the consequent demoralization of the army and how the ranks began "melting away" as rumors reached them of General Lee's surrender in April.[35] On April 17, Johnston opened surrender negotiations, and he and Sherman reached their final terms on April 26. The paroling of soldiers continued until May 1.[36] Harper began his journey home after his brigade received their paroles on May 1, and ended on May 5, when his "connection with the army closed" upon returning home into the loving embrace of his devoted Ella.[37] He was no longer Captain Harper of Company H of the 58th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, but George Harper, merchant, husband, and father in Lenoir, North Carolina. The Silver-Gouge family's experience of the war was marked with both happiness and grief. Levi Silver and Garrett Gouge both survived and returned home, but their beloved "Little Billy" and Bartlett Wilson both perished from disease.[38]

Diseases, and the corresponding seasoning process, played a crucial role in determining who returned home after the war. While stationed in East Tennessee, the 58th experienced 256 cases of illness, including the most common camp diseases of measles, smallpox, and typhoid

---

[34] For battle details, please see Jordan, *A Roster*, 265-270. 18 and 19 September 1865, Box 1, Folder 1.7, HD.

[35] 15, 23, 24 April 1865, Box 1, Folder 1.7, HD. Contrary to his diary entry, Harper wrote after the war that the men were not "demoralized in the least" during this time. The true interpretation probably lies in his personal diary entry and not the retrospective work he wrote later for others to read. Harper, *Reminiscences*, 35.

[36] Jordan, *A Roster*, 271.

[37] 5 May 1865, Box 1, Folder 1.7, HD.

[38] Jordan, A Roster, 344, 400, 404; Rex Redmon and John Silver Harris, eds., *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment, 1861-1865: Civil War Men of Mitchell and Yancey Counties, North Carolina. How they Lived, Fought, and Died* (Greenville: South Carolina, 2012) vii-xxii.

fever. Between the months of November 1862 and March 1863, eighty-seven soldiers fell ill, resulting in a 75.86 percent fatality. This period of intense sickness represented the regiments seasoning process, where infected individuals gained partial immunity against diseases. Around 117 members of the 58th died during this process, a horrendous number, especially when compared with the sixty-four deaths they experienced from nine separate official battle engagements. More soldiers of the 58th died during their seasoning process than were killed by federal bullets. One single, positive thing emerged from the wreckage of their camps once the dust settled and diseases abated: those who survived their ordeal gained partial immunity. Their now conditioned bodies gained an advantage against contracting future cases of those diseases, resulting in milder cases of illnesses and a decrease in fatalities. The results of their seasoning bore fruit during their next wartime post. Between the months of December 1863 and March 1864, while bivouacked in northern Georgia, the ninety-nine cases of illness carried a 15 percent fatality rate. Even though Georgia appeared unhealthier, far more soldiers survived their illnesses than before, significantly decreasing the risk of dying horribly by disease.

Camp conditions and the disease environment contributed in the seasoning process of the soldiers, negatively impacting their health while also strengthening them against future cases of sickness. This also affected other aspects of the soldier's lives, including their loyalty to the Confederacy. Loyalty and desertions have garnered the attention of Civil War historians for decades. Soldiers deserted for multiple reasons, including political statements, desire to care for their families, self-preservation against impeding battles, a fading commitment to the Confederacy, and a stronger attachment to the Union. All of these are very valid reasons explaining the motivations behind those soldiers who deserted; however, camp conditions, environmental health and diseases, and available medical care also influenced the motivations

and loyalties of soldiers. When the 58th experienced a 75.86 percent, fatality rate of diseases while camped in East Tennessee during the winter of 1862-1863, 137 of their comrades deserted. The correlation between diseases and desertions also followed the 58th into northern Georgia in 1863, when the month of September carried both the highest cases of disease and incidences of desertions at 73 and 103 respectively. While many soldiers fell ill during their stay in Georgia, the 15 percent mortality rate coincided with fifty-seven desertions. There is a correlation between high diseases and fatalities with that of desertions among the soldiers. While the members of the 58th also encountered other reasons that influenced them into abandoning their colors and their loyalty to the Confederacy, the relationship between their health and that of their environment also played a role. When overwhelmed with diseases and death, soldiers of the 58th practiced methods of self-preservation, which included removing themselves from the unhealthy environment. Not only does the study of the 58th provide an environmental lens through which to view the Civil War, but it also adds another layer into the motivations and loyalties of soldiers. This interdisciplinary study of environmental health and disease, Civil War medicine, and soldier's loyalties contributes in providing another facet towards understanding the impact of the Civil War and the experiences of the soldiers that served.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

AC.168: G. W. F. Harper Family Diary Transcriptions, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., USA.

Barnes, Joseph. United States Surgeon General's Office. *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of Rebellion, 1861-65* (Washington: Government Printing Press, 1870.

Edmund Kirby-Smith Papers, #404, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

George Phifer Erwin Papers (#246), Southern Historical Collection, Manuscripts Department, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Gordon, John Brown. *Reminiscences of the Civil War.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904.

G. W. F. Harper Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Manuscripts Department, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Harper, George Washington Finley. *Sketch of the Fifty-Eighth Regiment (Infantry) North Carolina Troops*. Lenoir, North Carolina: 1901.

Reminiscences of Caldwell County, North Carolina: In the Great War of 1861-1865. Hickory, North Carolina: Clay Printing Co., 1910.

James W. Patton Papers #01739, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Jobe, Abraham. *A Mountaineer in Motion: The Memoir of Dr. Abraham Jobe, 1817-1906*, ed. David Hsiung. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009.

Kirkpatrick, Perl Ellis. *Cassen: A Man of Courage.*

Redmon, Rex and John Silver Harris, Eds. *Letters and Battles of the North Carolina 58th Infantry Regiment, 1861-1865: Civil War Men of Mitchell and Yancey Counties, North Carolina. How they Lived, Fought, and Died.* Greenville, South Carolina: Rex Redmon; Greenville, South Carolina: Postal Instant Press, 2012.

Vance, Zebulon Baird. *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance* 2. Raleigh: State Department of

Archives and History, 1963. Accessed 29 April 2020. http://collections.library.cornell.edu/moa_new/waro.html

The Weekly Standard, Raleigh, North Carolina, September 4, 1861. Accessed 17 December 2019. Newspapers.com.

The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington, D.C.: Print. Off., 1880. Accessed 7 May 2020. https://ehistory.osu.edu/books/official-records/010/0061

Secondary Sources:

Bearman, Peter. "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War." *Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (December 1991). JSTOR.

Bell, Andrew. *Mosquito Soldiers: Malaria, Yellow Fever, and the Course of the American Civil War.* Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 2010.

Blackmun, Ora. *Western North Carolina: Its Mountains and its People to 1880*. Boone: Appalachian State University, 1977.

Brady, Lisa. *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes During the American Civil War*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012.

Brooks, Stewart. *Civil War Medicine*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1966.

Browning, Judkin and Timothy Silver. *An Environmental History of the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

Browning, Judkin. "In Search of All that was Near and Dear to Me: Desertion as a Window into Community Divisions in Caldwell County during the Civil War." In *Southern Communities: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the American South*, Eds. Steven Nash, Bruce Stewart, et al. Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2019.

Cavender, Anthony. *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

---*A Folk Medical Lexicon of South Central Appalachia*. Johnson City: History of Medicine Society of Appalachia, James H. Quillen College of Medicine, East Tennessee State University; Nashville, Tennessee: Tennessee Humanities Council, 1990.

Connelly, Thomas. *Discovering the Appalachians: What to Look for from the Past and in the Present along American's Eastern Frontier*. Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1968.

Cooper, Horton. *A History of Avery County*, North Carolina. Asheville: Baltimore Press, 1964.

Corbitt, David. *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties*, 1663-1943. Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950.

Crawford, Martin. *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.

Cunningham, H.H. *Doctors in Gray: The Confederate Medical Service*. Massachusetts: Louisiana State University, 1970.

Drake, Brian Allen. *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War.* Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2015.

Denney, Robert. *Civil War Medicine: Care and Comfort for the Wounded*. New York: Sterling Publishers, 1944.

Escott, Paul. "*Many Excellent People:" Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Fisher, Noel. *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997.

Gallagher, Gary. *The Confederate War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Giuffre, Katherine. "First in Flight: Desertion as Politics in the North Carolina Confederate Army." *Social Science History* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1997). JSTOR.

Hardy, Michael. *The Fifty-Eighth North Carolina Troops: Tar Heels in the Army of Tennessee*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010.

Hess, Earl. *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012.

Humphreys, Margaret. *Yellow Fever and the South*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Inscoe, John. *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989.

Inscoe, John and Gordon McKinney. *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Johnson, Guion. *Ante-bellum North Carolina: A Social History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937.

Jordan, Weymouth Jr. *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*. Vol. XIV, Infantry 57-58th, 60th-61st Regiments. Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1998.

King-Owen, Scott. "Conditional Confederates: Absenteeism Among North Carolina Soldiers, 1861-1865." *Civil War History* 57, no. 4 (December 2011). MUSE.

Kirby, Jack Temple. "The American Civil War: An Environmental View." National Humanities Center, *Nature Transformed: The Environment in American History* (July 2001). nationalhumanitiescenter.org

Leavitt, Judith and Ronald Numbers, Eds. *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, 3rd Ed. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1997.

Leavitt, Judith. "A Worrying Profession: The Domestic Environment of Medical Practice in mid-nineteenth century America." *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, eds. Judith Leavitt and Ronald Numbers, 3rd edition. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Light, Phyllis. *Southern Folk Medicine: Healing Traditions from the Appalachian Fields and Forests.* Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2018

Lonn, Ella. *Desertion During the Civil War*. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

McKinney, Gordon B. "Layers of Loyalty: Confederate Nationalism and Amnesty Letters from Western North Carolina." *Civil War History 51.1* (2005). MUSE.

McKnight, Brian. *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia*.

Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012

McPherson, James. *What they fought for*, *1861-1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994

Meier, Kathryn. *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Nash, Steven. *Reconstruction's Ragged Edge: The Politics of Postwar Life in the Southern Mountains*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Noe, Kenneth. *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Numbers, Ronald. "The Fall and Rise of the American Medical Profession." *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, eds. Judith Leavitt and Ronald Numbers, 3rd edition. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Raitz, Karl, Richard Ulack, and Thomas R. Leinbach. *Appalachia: A Regional Geography: Land, People, and Development*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984.

Reid, Richard. "A Testcase of the 'Crying Evil:' Desertion among North Carolina Troops During the Civil War." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 58, no. 3 (July 1981). JSTOR.

Reider, John B. *Appalachian Folkways*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Rutkow, Ira. *Bleeding Blue and Gray: Civil War Surgery and the Evolution of American Medicine*. Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2005.

Schroeder-Lein, Glenna. *Confederate Hospitals on the Move: Samuel H. Stout and the Army of Tennessee*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.

Steiner, Paul. *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865*. Springfield, Illinois: C.C. Thomas, 1968.

Stowe, Steven. *Doctoring the South: Southern Physicians and Everyday Medicine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Tatum, Georgia Lee. *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1934.

Valencius, Conevery Bolton. *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood*

themselves and their Land. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Weitz, Mark. *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

Wilder, Lucas. "The Evolution of Mountain Warfare in Southern Appalachia" (2014). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 2375

Young, Kevin. “The Ties that Bind: Slaveholding Kinship Networks in the Toe Valley.” In *Southern Communities: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the American South*, Eds. Steven Nash, Bruce Stewart, et al. Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2019.

VITA

ASHLIE RICHARD

Education:	M.A. History, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, 2020
	B.S. History, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2015
Professional Experience:	Teaching Assistant, East Tennessee State University, College of Arts and Sciences, Fall 2016 and Spring 2017
	Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, College of Arts and Sciences, Fall 2017 and Spring 2018
Awards and Grants:	Graduate Student Research Grant, East Tennessee State University, Spring 2018
	Virginia Center for Civil War Studies Research Grants, Virginia Tech, Spring 2018
	North Carolina Society Archi K. Davis Fellowship, Spring 2018
	Barbara Jaffe Silvers Fund, East Tennessee State University, History Department, Spring 2017 and Spring 2018