

## FOUR



# Debates over Liberty and Loyalty

**I**N THE SECOND and third years of the war, Republicans and Democrats renewed their political battles, reflecting the monumental issues Ohio residents faced. Public debates were increasingly volatile as people considered and reconsidered Union war aims, civilian loyalty, and issues of race. Most could agree that they were fighting the war to preserve the Union. For Ohioans the Union protected their freedoms, especially their ability to live and labor without threats from slave labor, political demagogues, or lawlessness. Supporters of both parties in Ohio questioned which, if any, of their liberties could be sacrificed in wartime. Republicans maintained that an internal enemy threatened the Union war effort. Equating dissent with disloyalty, some Republicans in Ohio organized vigilance committees and formed mobs that vented their wrath against Democratic newspaper offices and outspoken political opponents.<sup>1</sup> For their part, Democrats defended their right to free speech and countered that Republicans perverted the Constitution, were disloyal to their Revolutionary heritage, and flouted the rule of law. Democrats charged that Republicans deprived civilians of the writ of habeas corpus and subjected communities to oversight by zealous military officials. These debates were furthered by fears that their own homes were not safe. Ohioans had long conceived of themselves as people on the border, stationed at the front lines of the dominion of free labor. The proximity to Kentucky and Virginia and military movements in both areas created anxiety, especially for people in the southern half of the state. Reports in newspapers detailed Confederate military movements and raised suspicions that Confederate operatives moved undetected throughout the state, prompting local officials to request that the state secure its borders.

The public consternation over casualties at Shiloh was quieted by a series of Union victories on the western rivers. The Union advance through Kentucky into Tennessee and then northern Alabama, aided by the capture of Forts Henry and Donelson and the occupation of Nashville, was capped by the Union navy's capture of New Orleans on April 29, 1862. During the same period, a fleet of Union gunboats and steam-powered rams moved south on the Mississippi River. Memphis fell to the Union on June 6. The victories in the western theater raised morale in Ohio, distracting public attention temporarily from General George B. McClellan's

unwillingness to attack Robert E. Lee. When McClellan finally moved toward Richmond, Ohioans monitored newspapers, waiting for news of the fall of the Confederate capital. Instead, they read of the Seven Days' Battles, in which the clash between McClellan's Army of the Potomac and Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in the last week of June resulted in thirty thousand killed and wounded.<sup>2</sup> When a newspaper editor in Gallipolis learned of the battle, he was disappointed and paraphrased Horace. "A mountain has labored," he wrote, "and brought forth a mouse."<sup>3</sup>

The army's success in the west was celebrated in Ohio even as it raised troublesome issues. The Union army occupied vast expanses of Confederate territory and had to sustain itself. Soldiers, including many regiments from Ohio, struggled to secure supply lines amid opposition from Confederate loyalists and the guerrilla bands that were supported by Confederate communities. As Ohio soldiers came into contact with Southerners—Unionist and Confederate, black and white—they considered and reconsidered the Union's policy toward Confederate property. Their friends, families, and neighbors at home did likewise. Confederate civilian resistance and military resilience convinced many members of both parties in Ohio that the government needed to pursue a more aggressive war that would target Confederate resources and property—including slaves.

In his speech to Congress on March 6, 1862, Lincoln had urged Congress to support gradual, compensated emancipation for the border states. Just days later, Congress passed an article of war that prohibited officers from returning slaves to their masters. When Union general David Hunter abolished slavery in the areas occupied by his Department of the South, Lincoln revoked his order but reserved the right to emancipate slaves in occupied areas. In July, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, which allowed for the confiscation of Confederate property, deeming slaves captives of war and "forever free." In Ohio, these measures met a mixed response. Radicals thought these policies did not go far enough toward full emancipation. Moderates believed the Confiscation Act strengthened the war effort, while conservatives saw in the orders, revocation, and legislation a sign that the war was being fought to end slavery. Against this backdrop, Ohioans debated with renewed vigor "the negro question," or specifically the fear that free blacks would overrun the state. State legislators presented petitions from residents who called for the prohibition of black immigration. In Columbus, the state legislature issued a report that rejected the suggestion that blacks be removed from the state, opposed calls for a prohibition on black immigration, and denied that black laborers would compete with white laborers. Blacks were inferior, the report maintained, but suggested that if emancipation occurred, a plan for colonization could be developed.<sup>4</sup> Citizens in Ohio were not convinced by the legislative report. Fears of black immigration were accompanied by economic worries

over wartime inflation. State and local governments implemented economic re-trenchment as the burden of providing for mobilization and volunteers' families taxed municipal, county, and state budgets. Issues of race and economics collided with violent results in Cincinnati and Toledo in the summer of 1862, exemplifying for many the social upheaval that would result from emancipation and competition from black laborers.

These concerns fractured the fragile coalition that Democrats and Republicans had achieved in the early months of war. Looking toward the state elections of 1862, Republicans tried to solidify their hold on the state when the legislature gerrymandered the Congressional districts. Democrats lost few chances to remind people of Union military reverses, attacks on Democratic newspaper presses, arrests of Democratic editors, and the failure of the Republican-controlled legislature to authorize Ohio soldiers to vote in the field. Democrats also charged that both the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus and emancipation directly threatened Ohioans' freedom. Republicans countered by pledging their loyalty to the Lincoln administration and their commitment to the war effort. Democrats, Republican charged, were disloyal in their critique of the administration. Republicans also tried to downplay the movements by Lincoln and Congress toward emancipation. When Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, however, Republicans in Ohio recognized that the issue destroyed their changes in the fall elections. As Hezekiah S. Bundy, a candidate for Congress from southern Ohio, wrote, "The President's proclamation has come just in the nick of time to save the country perhaps, while from present appearances it will defeat me and every other Union candidate for Congress." When Ohioans went to the polls, Democrats were victorious in fourteen of the state's nineteen congressional districts.<sup>5</sup> Ohio joined Illinois and Indiana in endorsing the Democratic Party and the powerful bond between white supremacy and Ohioans' understanding of freedom during the war.

### MORE THAN A MATTER OF PROPERTY

*As Congress debated the Second Confiscation Act in 1862, issues of race, military strategy, and politics collided, as seen in the editorials of the Urbana Union, a Democratic paper, and the Gallipolis Journal, a Republican paper.*

Both houses of Congress are engaged in concocting Bills for confiscating the property of persons engaged in the Rebellion. There seems to be a competition in each House for the distinction of authorship. . . . The bills proposed, reported under the name of confiscation are all shaped for the emancipation of slaves—a

thing beyond the power of Congress. They have an undoubted power to fix and define the punishment of rebels and as a part of it to provide for a forfeiture of the rebels property as far as the constitution will permit. But the forfeiture itself must be declared and fixed by the sentence of a court, and the rebel's ownership can only be divested by a sale of the property. The section proposed by Mr. Bingham, declaring that the slaves of rebels shall be free, if passed will be utterly null and void. Then why do they pass it? We are loth to assume that they do not know this—and still more loth to assume that they act dishonestly and in face of knowledge.

These men have declared over and over again that Congress has no power over the laws of property and of domestic relation within the States, and they have in this present Congress declared that it is no part of their design in the present war to meddle with slaves, and yet they stultify themselves by seeking to do the very thing they had so openly disclaimed.

But as these gentleman have emancipated themselves from the bonds of the Constitution, and the Halls of Congress may never see their like again, they ought to go on and make their work as complete as it is unique. They should declare the Blacks to be citizens in all States with a right to vote and eligible to any office. It would look well on paper and would bring back from Europe, fine newspaper paragraphs from the newspapers—for the Cincinnati Gazette and other Gidding's papers to publish.

The question of power need be no hindrance, for Congress now seems to think that it has an undoubted right to do what it pleases, if they call it war power.

*Urbana Union*, April 30, 1862.



The object dearest to the heart of every honest man, is the speedy termination of this rebellion. . . . To this end, all good men are striving night and day. All parties in the North, profess an intense desire to have it brought about at once. This being the case, we confess our surprise at the vote in the House on the Confiscation and Emancipation bill. The vote stood 82 to 42. Republicans almost to a man for it. Democrats equally unanimous against it.

For one year past, the war has been carried on upon conciliatory principles, on part of the North, and by the South with the utmost degree of malice and vindictive cruelty. Every offer of conciliation has been rejected with scorn. Protection to rebels and their property, afforded by Union soldiers, has been requited by treachery of the basest sort. Every rule of civilized warfare has been carefully observed on part of the North, and as carefully disregarded by the South.

The blood of our patriotic soldiers has drenched the land of treason, and the hard earned money of peaceful, honest citizens, has been lavished in countless

millions to stay the hand of the ruthless usurpers. Yet who can say that we are any nearer the restoration of the Union, than on the 23rd of July, 1861? The danger to our own homes is even more imminent. The let-us-alone policy of the rebels has changed to an aggressive war. The free soil of the North has been polluted by the invading tread of the slave driver. Guerrillas are swarming over the land, whose special mission it is to kill, rob, and destroy whatever comes in their way. Our armies are dwindling away by hundreds sacrificed by disease, or the hands of assassins.—Thousands are wanted to fill their places. The North is to-day one universal recruiting ground. And why? Simply because this rose-water, conciliatory policy cannot crush out treason. . . . The world has looked on with astonishment, at our forbearance to strike the enemy in a vital point.—Thank God the decree has gone forth at last. It may not yet be too late.—The blood of our brethren slain by the enemy from behind works erected by slave labor, cries aloud for vengeance. The bleaching bones of our brave soldiers, who have died from fatigue or disease contracted by incessant toil and labor in trenches and fortifications, demand that hereafter their brothers shall be saved for more honorable duty.—The toiling millions of the free North, are ready to declare that their hard earnings shall not be expended in paying rebels high prices for the products of slave labor, thereby sustaining the rebellion and weakening ourselves.—Every rule of civilized warfare, justifies armies in supporting themselves from resources of the enemy. . . .

*Gallipolis Journal*, July 24, 1862.

### THE TOLEDO RIOT

*Democratic newspapers were replete with rumors that white laborers had lost their jobs to blacks. From Adams County, one editor, upon hearing such a report, wrote, "Better far for the negro that he had remained a slave, and better far for the whites of the unhappy North that every Abolitionist had been hung years ago. Truly, the signs of the times are ominous of evil."*<sup>6</sup> On July 8, 1862, when a riot broke out on the docks of Toledo between black and white laborers, Democrats blamed the violence on the increase of the city's black population. White stevedores had long cooperated to fix their wages, but the influx of black workers undercut their arrangement. The following letter was printed in the *Democratic North-West* on July 11 and reprinted in the *Defiance Democrat*.

Toledo, July 11, 1862.

To the Editor of The North-West:

You have already heard of the riot in this city on the 8th inst. through the columns of the two Negro organs, the *Blade* and *Commercial*—each paper giving

to the affair the false coloring of its own editor, and each one vying with the other in spreading abroad falsehood and untruth. The *Blade*, in its issue of the 11th, makes the bold assertion that the affair was contrived, concocted and urged on by a party of desperate politicians, whom he suspects of having unreasonable designs against the Republican Negro Despotism that is now urging on the Nation and its people to ruin. Who but the malevolent-hearted, lying editor of the *Blade* could think of such a falsehood? The truth of the matter is this: the tide and flood of Negroes poured on this city for the last six months has been objectionable and disagreeable to the people; the city has been flooded with them, and new recruits arriving every day; all of them idle, indolent, and following no regular avocation but theft and plunder; haughty and insolent in demeanor, strutting along the sidewalks like so many peacocks, and oftentimes obliging white men and women to leave the sidewalks and let Cuffee pass. The only portion of this negro population (now variously estimated to number from 1,000 to 1,500) that work and labor, are those employed on the docks and at the hotels. Those working on the docks have been employed, principally, by Abolition captains of vessels, and by warehousemen, who have been arrogant and insulting to the white laborer, expressing a preference for the black, refusing employment to the white, and insulting him with slurs and epithets when he happened to have to work by the side of the black man. Out of this state of things grew the riot of the 8th. It commenced on the Propeller at the dock, when the captain and mate took part with the blacks, and encouraged the blacks to use deadly weapons, which they did, mortally wounding one white man and seriously injuring others. This boat shoved off from the dock, and when clear, the mate or captain fired several shots into the crowd, and refused to deliver up the negro that wounded the white man, and carried the negro off in their vessel. The city officers played off a fraud that operated in favor of the guilty negro: they privately carried to jail a negro, but managed to not have the right one, while they reported they had the identical person under arrest. This quieted down the infuriated crowd, and when the mob dispersed, about 5 o'clock, the gallant Marshal, and Mayor, and Sheriff rushed to arms, called out a posse of Columbia's gallant sons, took possession of the field after the enemy had fled, and shouted aloud that "Americans were the men on guard—Americans to rule America!" Peace is now restored, and Black Republican officials, juries and witnesses, with the aid of Jack Falstaff, the Mayor, are reaping a rich harvest in fees. The Inquisition is in session; the two Abolition papers of the city are busy glossing over their acts; their black deity is insulted; the sky is overcast, and awful forebodings are wrapped up in the future. The seer of the *Blade* has bad visions of that future—dark, dreadful vision—"treasons, stratagems and spoils" undermining his throne; politicians, in great

numbers, plotting his ruin; himself and his friend Sambo in a boat alone on Lake Erie, and drifting towards the Falls of Niagara; Democrats, numerous as the leaves of the forest, springing out of the ground; the Stars and Stripes afloat again; the Reign of Terror over; the Black Republicans disbanded; peace and order again restored—what wonder poor [editor] Waggoner should feel bad over his own dreams.

*Defiance Democrat*, July 26, 1862.

### THE “CONSCIOUS IMPOTENCE” OF EMANCIPATION

*On September 22, 1862, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which gave the seceded states one hundred days to return to the Union. If they did not, the slaves in all areas of rebellion would be freed on January 1, 1863. The response to Lincoln’s measure varied according to partisan affiliation and, to some extent, region. The Democratic papers, like the Urbana Union, criticized the measure on a number of grounds.*

Mr. Lincoln has at last issued his edict of Emancipation, a thing he has long intended to do, but was waiting for the creation of opportunity. It was significantly intimated in his written talk to the Border State Congressmen, but it was concealed from the casual reader.

As an official act it is utterly null and void. As President he has no such power; as Commander-in-Chief he has no power whatever, over the details of war; and in due time we will discuss that question.

Mr. Lincoln began his career as President by saying that a State could not secede; that the acts of secession were nullities; the States were still members of the Union and in revolt. This was very true, and therefore his duty was plain to suppress the insurrection; a duty which belongs to the President and not to Congress; they can only provide men and money. The Constitution required it of him, and in the name of the Constitution he acts. He is bound by it, and must do no act against or beyond it. If he does such an act it is a lawless trespass.

He tacitly admits that he has no such power in law, and it will be claimed that there is a war power. In the first place this is not a war, and cannot be. War can only be declared by Congress, and relates to foreign powers only. Insurrection can only be declared by the President as existing, for the Constitution so says.

The means of suppression are simple—overwhelming military force—and if the means are not sufficiently ample, it is because the Congress withholds supplies; or if they cannot be sufficiently ample, then is the nation too weak, and must

recognize the rebellion as an accomplished fact. No one pretends that the nation is too weak, or that it is unwilling, and the President must resort to numbers as the Constitution has provided.

But there is in fact no such thing as a war power, that authorizes or prevents the destruction of non-combatant men, or the destruction of private property, unless it be contraband of war, or such as affords at the moment, protection against the actual assault of arms.

But if the President had any such power as he now claims by his acts, his edict is at once impotent and unwise. For more than a year the insurgents have withstood him with all the force he could bring; they have not only withstood him, but have driven back his forces from nearly all their field of conquests, and now they are threatening to make an invasion of the loyal States. The threat of such an invasion has not been thought an idle threat, for it has caused great alarm along the border, and aroused the people to correspondent action. It is such a moment as this that he takes to proclaim to the insurgents that if they do not submit and be dutifully in Congress by the 1st of July 1863, he will emancipate their Slaves. It has the air of conscious impotence. Before he can make his edict efficient, he must suppress the insurrection, and by that time his war power will be at an end, unless a new discovery not yet heard of, or known in the "bookish theorick," shall be announced.

If Mr. Lincoln shall still adhere to his first declaration that the insurgent States are members of the Union, it follows from his principles that when the insurrection ends, law resumes its sway—the laws of the Union and the laws of the States alike. Even the Chicago Platform admits the paramount authority of the States to determine the question of Slavery within their own limits. Then will come the consummation of this wicked folly: the emancipation will be pronounced a nullity by State law, and so declared by the State courts. The slaves that were thought to be emancipated will be re-enslaved, and if the docile blacks acquiesce in the restoration of their old condition, this pretended exercise of national power will prove an impotent delusion. If they shall resist and endeavor to maintain themselves as "freedmen," that will be treated as servile insurrection with all its attendant horrors.

Mr. Lincoln recently attended a town meeting at Washington, and made a town meeting speech. That meeting declared that all minor questions were to be suppressed, "and that the measures adopted should be those which will bear with the most crushing weight upon those in rebellion, whether in arms or not." We support the Government that it may suppress insurrection but we insist on the observance of law in this as in every thing else, and if Mr. Lincoln or any under him shall usurp power beyond the law, they shall be held to rigid account for it, and that this can be *no minor question*.



“A FEW DAYS MORE AND THE GAME WILL BE UP”

*The preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was an important war measure, the editor of the Republican Ironton Register argued.*

Having introduced [the proclamation] with this preamble, that this war *will be carried on as it had been*, for the purpose of restoring the Union, the President then addresses his remarks first to the loyal slave States and second to the disloyal slave States. To the slave owners of the former he promises pecuniary aid for every slave set free, and to their slaves, colonization. To the slave owners of the latter, 90 days grace to lay down their arms in, and become peaceable citizens again, or on refusal to accept his proposal, immediate freedom to their slaves.

Previous to this proclamation, we have it directly from the President, that in no case would he assume such authority, unless in his judgment, the country would be better off by so doing. The majority of the people long ago decided that so long as the war was carried on as it has been, there would be no end. That slave labor is a great benefit to the South none will deny, and so long as it is made use of on the plantation, raising food for the army or in digging trenches and doing menial service in the army, by so much will the South have the advantage on their side. Eighteen months have passed away and but little progress has been made towards ending the strife. This last will be a precursor of victory, since whatever weakens their power strengthens ours.

A few days more and the game will be up, the corner stone of the Southern institutions will be removed. And with a new system of tactics, our forces will go forth into the field untrammelled and unprejudiced. The time is short and the result will be of immense importance. Our government has awakened from its lethargy, and seems to start off under a new impulse, so that the beginning of a new year will usher in a different state of affairs from the present.

*Ironton Register, October 2, 1862.*

WILLIAM NELSON RECALLS FREEDOM IN OHIO

*In 1937, a worker from the Federal Writers' Project interviewed William Nelson, an eighty-eight-year-old former slave who lived in Wyllie Hill, near Pomeroy, Ohio. In his oral testimony, which was transcribed and edited, Nelson recalled his childhood as a slave in Missouri and the Ohio officer, "Marse Ben," who brought young Nelson back with him to Meigs County. Census and military records indicate the officer was most likely Benjamin Trussell, a native of New Hampshire. Trussell lived with his parents on a farm in Chester and enlisted in the Eighteenth Ohio Infantry in*

*August 1861. He was promoted to sergeant and participated in campaigns in Kentucky, Tennessee, and northern Alabama. On August 26, 1863, Trussell was discharged for a disability and returned to Ohio with William Nelson. According to the 1870 federal census, Trussell owned a farm in Chester, and William Nelson, then twenty-two years old, worked as a farm hand in the same neighborhood.<sup>7</sup>*

“Whar’s I bawnd? ’Way down Belmont, Missouri, jes’ cross frum C’lumbus Kentucky on de Mississippi. Oh, I ’lows ’twuz about 1848, caise I wuz fo’teen when Marse Ben dons brung me up to de North home with him in 1862.”

“My Pappy, he wuz ’Kaintuck’, John Nelson an’ my [mammy] wuz Junis Nelson. No suh, I don’t know whar dey wuz bawnd, first I member ’bout wuz my pappy buildin’ railroad in Belmont. Yes suh, I had five sistahs and bruthahs. Der names—lets see—Oh yes—der wuz, John, Jim, George, Suzan and Ida. No, I don’t member nothin’ ’bout my granparents.”

“My mammy had her own cabin for hur and us chilluns. De wuz rails stuck through de cracks in de logs fo’ beds with straw on top fo’ to sleep on.”

“What’d I do, down dar on plantashun? I hoed corn, tatahs, garden onions, and hepped take cair de hosses, mules an oxen. Say—I could hoe onions goin’ backwards. Yessuh, I cud.”

“De first money I see wuz what I got frum sum soljers fo’ sellin’ dem a bucket of turtl’ eggs. Dat wuz de day I run away to see sum Yankee steamboats filled with soljers.”

“Marse Dick, Marse Beckwith’s son used to go fishin’ with me. Wunce we ketched a fish so big it tuk three men to tote it home. Yes suh, we always had plenty to eat. What’d I like best? Cornpone, ham, bacon, chickens, ducks and possum. My mammy had hur own garden. In de summah men folks weah overalls, and de womins weah cotton and all of us went barefooted. In de winter we wore shoes made on de plantashun. I wuzn’t married ’til aftah I come up North to Ohio.”

“Der wuz Marse Beckwith, mighty mean ol’ devel; Miss Lucy, his wife, and de chilluns, Miss Manda, Miss Nan, and Marse Dick, and the other son wuz killed in der war at Belmont. Deir hous’ wuz big and had two stories and porticoes and den Marse Beckwith owned land with cabins on ’em whar de slaves lived.”

“No suh, we didn’t hab no driver, ol’ Marse dun his own drivin.’ He was a mean ol’ debel and whipped his slaves of’n and hard. He’d make ’em strip to the waist then he’s lash ’em with his long black-snake whip. Ol’ Marse he’d whip womin same as men. I member seein’ ’im whip my mammy wunce. Marse Beckwith used the big smoke hous’ for de jail. I neber see no slaves sold but I have seen ’em loaned and traded off.”

"I member one time a slave named Tom and his wife, my mammy an' me tried to run away, but we's ketched and brung back. Ol' Marse whipped Tom and my mammy and den sent Tom off on a boat."

"One day a white man tol' us der wuz a war and sum day we'd be free."

"I neber heard of no 'ligion, baptizin', nor God, nor Heaven, de Bible nor education down on de plantashun. I gues' dey didn't hab nun of 'em. When Marse Ben brung me North to Ohio with him wuz first time I knowed 'bout such things. Marse Ben and Miss Lucy mighty good to me, sent me to school and tole me 'bout God and Heaven and took me to Church. No, de white folks down dar neber hepped me to read or write."

"The slaves wuz always tiahed when dey got wurk dun in evenins' so dey usually went to bed early so dey'd be up fo' clock next mornin'. On Christmas Day dey always had big dinnah but no tree or gifts."

"How'd I cum North? Well, one day I run 'way from plantashun and hunted 'til I filled a bucket full turtl' eggs den I takes dem ovah on river what I hears der's sum Yankee soljers and de soljers buyed my eggs and hepped me on board de boat. Den Marse Ben, he wuz Yankee ofser, tol' 'em he take cair me and he did. Den Marse Ben got sick and cum home and brung me along and I staid with 'em 'til I wuz 'bout fo'ty, when I gets married and moved to Wyllis Hill. My wife, was Mary Williams, but she died long time 'go and so did our little son, since dat time I've lived alone."

"Yessuh, I'se read 'bout Booker Washington."

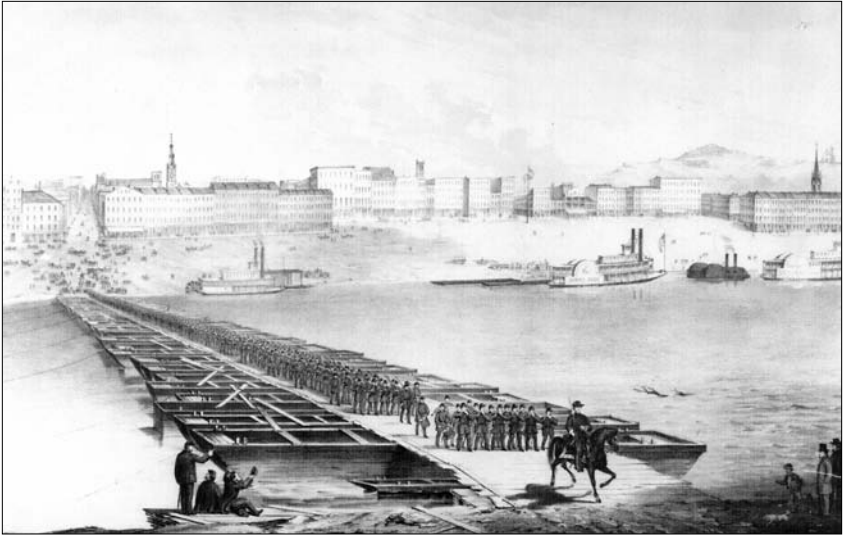
"I think Abraham Lincoln wuz a mighty fine man, he is de 'Saint of de colured race."

"Good day suh."

WPA Slave Narratives Project, Ohio Narratives, vol. 12, Federal Writers' Project, USWPA, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, available at *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, American Memory Project, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>.

### ELIZABETH GRAY REPORTS ON THE SIEGE OF CINCINNATI

*Elizabeth M. Gray lived in Cincinnati when the war began. She was active in the Episcopal Christ Church, where her husband, Richard, served as a missionary to the city's poor. In August 1862, Confederate general Braxton Bragg began what was intended as an invasion of the west. General Kirby Smith advanced swiftly through Kentucky, forcing the Union to retreat. When Confederates reached Lexington, Kentucky, Ohio rushed to defend itself. Governor Tod ordered state regiments and federal volunteers to Cincinnati, along with all men able to shoulder a gun in defense of the state. The latter, known as "Squirrel Hunters," would become immortalized*



Alfred Edward Mathews, *The 121st Reg't Ohio Volunteers, Crossing the Pontoon Bridge at Cincinnati, Friday, Sept. 19th, 1862*. Lithograph. OHS SC 401. Courtesy Ohio Historical Society

*in Ohio history. Elizabeth Gray wrote to her daughter, Julia, recounting the events in the city.*

Friday Afternoon, Sept. 12th 1862

My very dear Julia

I was very thankful to get your letter yesterday, and to find that you were once more settled at School amongst your old companions and friends. I suppose you see some newspapers and know nearly our unhappy situation just now in Cin. we are all in constant excitement nearly every man in the City was enrolled on one duty or another in their different wards. Ours is the fifteenth ward. Papa went with the rest he was out twice for twenty four hours, took his blanket and a day's rations and went 4 or 5 miles back of Covington to dig trenches and rifle pits, they set Papa to stand guard over the baggage and provisions as rather the easiest post. They all slept out in the open air and enjoyed it much as somewhat like a picnic on a grand scale, but Papa took a severe cold, from which he has suffered since, but is now much better, indeed almost well. Most of the stores are closed, except the provisions stores, and for two days last week, men were being drilled on nearly every square, and were obliged to have a pass from one ward to another. Those that refused to serve, two policemen searched the houses and occasionally led out the defaulters.

Troops are coming in all the day and night long. There were 5 thousand men fed in Fifth St Market house yesterday. The inhabitants are sending in food cooked; on Saturday we sent a boiled ham, a pillow case full of biscuits, yesterday I took a large leg of mutton and large piece of beef roasted tomorrow we shall send something more. They have built a pontoon bridge over the river 16 ft wide, equal distance between Covington & Newport ferrys. The Tamers or Squirrel Hunters as they are called, are come from all parts of the Country. . . . We are constantly hearing rumors that the enemy is very near to us, but I trust God will enable us to frustrate their plans, and drive them from Kent[uck]y. There are now entrenchments for 15 miles round to the river above and below on the other side, and a great number of heavy cannon planted on the hills so as to command the different roads and two gunboats in the river, which I hope to get to see there have been two or three slight skirmishes. Do you remember Eliza Worthington's Brother, he is very active as a Cavalry Officer and is scouting all over the country & has been quite successful in bringing a number of rebel spys [*sic*] and scouts. . . . Many families have left the City, we are undecided. Papa will certainly stay & I think I ought to stay with him, and make myself useful as possible. Sometimes we think we may have to go, but I believe God will direct us just what to do, and when. to His care we commit ourselves and all that are dear to us. . . . your affectionate Mother

E.M. Gray

Elizabeth Gray Correspondence, 1862–1863, Mss VF 1670, Cincinnati Historical Society Library, Cincinnati Museum Center.

### AN OHIO SOLDIER HUNTS REBELS IN KENTUCKY

*In the winter of 1863, following the Confederates' failed advance into Kentucky, Union forces again occupied Richmond, Kentucky. Lieutenant Orlando T. Lemen of the Forty-fifth Ohio Infantry wrote to Captain William Rhoads, who had returned to Ohio, about the challenges soldiers faced in securing the community. His letter was printed in the Urbana Union.*

Richmond Kentucky, March 9, 1863

On the 27th we left camp and came into Danville and stayed in the churches, and on the 28th I was officer of the picket guard. At 11 o'clock at night I started alone to make the rounds, and went five miles out on the Houstonville road to the picket post, where I found two darkies belonging to Colonel Grizby of the rebel army, who said that, two miles further down the road a rebel mail carrier was staying, and was going south in the morning with his mail.

I took six of the eight pickets and went to capture him. The house was full a half mile from the road and the night dark and in going from the road where I left the horses, to his house, I went a little too much to the right and surrounded the wrong house. They refused to open, so I burst the door and was told that Reed lived there and that Isaac Shelby's (where the man was) was about 250 yards off. We went there and surrounded the house but it was so very large that I knew that six men could not watch and search it so I went to the negro quarters and learned for certain that he was there. Then I mounted my horse and put for town for more men leaving the guard around the house with orders to shoot the first man that tried to leave. It was then 1 o'clock and town 7 miles off, but in less than two hours I was back with 5 men, Smith, Jim Duffey and Thackery being among them. We pounded on the door with a pistol until the old man was waked up (they knew nothing about the house being surrounded) and demanded admittance. He asked our purpose and I told him I never talked through closed doors—to open and I would tell him what we wanted. He said that he would not open and that if we tried force he would defend his house, stating that the master ought to rule in his own house and that he was an old man and had but a short time to live. I told him he would have a shorter time if he tried to defend his house than he would have otherwise and called for a rail intended to force the door but in about two seconds the door was opened. I told him I wanted a man who was staying there. He took me to his guest's room and I found the fellow in bed, told him to get up and dress, and asked both him and the old man for the letters which I knew to be there. They both positively denied having any letters in the house so I commanded a search and upon examining an old saddle which lay on the floor found the pads stuffed full of letters and small articles which were to go to Dixie. We took his horse but he had a very large sore on his back so I took one from Old Shelby, tied the fellow on my saddle and rode to town on the saddle with the mail in it and delivered it over to Col. Gilbert (44th Ohio,) Com[manding] Post getting there about daylight and was immediately ordered to go back and arrest old Shelby and his son (a young man) and search the house thoroughly for arms, &c., which we did. . . .

At dark on the 4th, Major Ross told me to take what men I wanted and go to Kirksville 12 miles distant and arrest one Shumate, a violent rebel. I took 7 men and got there about 10 o'clock, left the men in the edge of town and Smith and myself went in to find out where the man lived and whether he was at home or not. We found a store opposite his house open a kind of a lookout for the safety of Shumate, of course. We did not let the men have an idea of our errand but found where he lived and in a short time had the house surrounded with guards.

When we knocked they said (*the women*, of course,) that they would open the door as soon as they were dressed which was in a few minutes. We asked for the man of the house and were told that he was not at home, but to search and see for ourselves. When we commenced to search I noticed that they run the bed in the room where we went in at out in the middle of the floor. We looked over the house and came back into the same room and moved the bed back and push a single piece of carpet from its place and there saw a small trap door in the floor. I had been told that such a door was in the house by the man that had given me information of him. I opened the door and presented a pistol on the fellow who was setting on an old shavinghorse and warned him if he moved the gun which he held in his hand that he was a dead man. I then ordered him to lay down the gun and come out, which he did with alacrity. He had a double barrel shotgun in his hand and a revolver on his belt and having the advantage which he had could have given us a warm reception but chose to surrender peaceably.

His wife and two daughters, ladies, were in the room but they were not a bit scared when we went to open the trap-door and if he had resisted I felt confident they would have helped him. The ladies were the most violent rebels I ever saw and made no hesitation in saying so. From a remark which the fellow made after we had taken him I thought that they had arms secreted in the house, so Smith and I made thorough search of the house not leaving a place the size of a hand which we did not search, not excepting the ladies trunks, wardrobes, beds, &c.;—(What does *&c.*, mean here, Lam—*Ed. Union.*)—but all that we found was a Springfield musket and a few belts, a bridle and a few other articles.

During the search the ladies gave full vent to their wrath at the capture of the husband and father and the indignity of having to submit to our searching the house. They said several things not becoming ladies, I thought among which were the following, spoken, by the youngest daughter and the handsomest of the three:

“I would like to shoot the man that told on my Pa.” “I will do it if he ever comes in MY yard if *Ten thousand* Blue coats are standing by and I will hit him for I will put the gun against him.” “*I would like to drink his heart’s blood.*” “I would like to dance a jig over his grave.” A great many other things were said no more complimentary to us or our cause.

We brought the prisoner, his guns, pistol and horse to Colonel Gilbert. The revolver is exactly like those that we presented to Colonel Hill, and Col. Hill requested Colonel Gilbert to let me keep the pistol, which he did, and I intend to stick to it as long as possible.

The capture of Shumate is considered to be miraculous by all the citizens, of this place and everybody that knew him they all think that he could never be taken alive and everybody that spoke of him; to me on the road there said: "He will shoot you or you him, certain." He was one of the most notorious characters about here and although he did not belong to the rebel army he aided them in every manner which he possibly could. Had he offered the least resistance I would never have allowed him to come out of that hole alive, I assure you.

Your Ob't Serv't  
Lemen

*Urbana Union*, March 18, 1863.

### "THE PERSONS AND PROPERTY OF THE CITIZENS ARE SACRED"

*On the evening of March 5, 1863, while Crisis editor Samuel Medary was absent from Columbus, a mob destroyed his printing office. Estimates placed the number of participants at a hundred, including soldiers from Camp Chase. In response, Brigadier General James Cooper, stationed in Columbus, issued General Order 16.*

Having been informed and partially witnessed, that the publication office belonging to the *Crisis*, and the printing office belonging to the *Ohio Statesman*, newspapers published in this city, were last night broken into by a mob of disorderly persons, composed partly of citizens and partly of soldiers, who unlawfully and wantonly destroyed furniture, paper, books, and newspaper files of the former office, and were only prevented from the commission of similar outrages at the *Statesman* office by the fear of being detected and arrested, I desire to offer a word of advice to the citizens, and to warn the soldiers of the penalties they incur by such outrageous violations of the law.

To such citizens as can so far forget their obligations to society and the respect due to the laws, which are as much the safeguard of their own persons and property, as the persons and property of their neighbors. . . . The mob violence which they invoke to-day against their neighbors, may be, by their neighbors, to-morrow invoked against them. Retaliation is the law of the lawless.

To the soldiers who participated in last night's outrages and violence, I have to say, your conduct is strangely inconsistent with your duty, and the holy purpose for which your country put arms in your hands. Your mission is to uphold the laws, not to violate them. And it was proudly presumed that . . . the American soldiers who rushed by hundreds of thousands to the field . . . were intelligent enough to comprehend and appreciate the character of the issue—an issue involv-



ing the rights and securities of individuals, as well as the integrity of the Republic. . . . Forgetting your duties as soldiers, you have become rioters and burglars; and instead of being, as you ought to be, the protectors of the rights of citizens, you have become their assailants. . . .

Against the perpetration of such offenses in future, I now warn you. The persons and property of the citizens are sacred in the eyes both of civil and military law.

*Crisis*, March 7, 1863.

“WE HAVE NOW . . . A DIVIDED NORTH”

*Isaac Welsh, a Republican state senator from Belmont County, wrote to Senator Benjamin F. Wade detailing what he believed caused the divisions in public opinion in Ohio.*

January 31, 1863

Senate Chambers, Columbus, Ohio

Dear Sir,

I take the liberty of addressing you a few lines on the present state of the country. In doing so I will not preface my purpose with a lengthy introduction. The Country has been in a state of war for nearly two years. The Government struggling with all its authority & force to put down a wicked rebellion. With what success you are well advised. We have had our successes, and our reverses; We have made some progress upon the whole in the great work. But are our positions and prospects now better than they were 18 months since. I am forced to the conviction, that they are not. I fear they are much worse. And I will give some of my reasons for thinking so. When Fort Sumter was fired into, and war thus inaugurated by the south against the government & the Union, the whole north was aroused. There was little or no discord visible in the pulsations of the northern heart. All parties in politics, and sects in religion seemed to agree that the rebellion must be put down by the force of arms, cost what it might. Under this state of public sentiment we succeeded well in getting a learge [*sic*] army into the field. All the time it was quite visible to the close observer, that there was a party in the north that did not enter cordially into the work of crushing the rebellion; but that party for the time being had to lay low. Many of its best members, from the purest motives had committed themselves to a vigorous prosecution of the war; and they like true patriots spoke out. Under these circumstances, it was not difficult to recruit a large army. But recruiting was stopped early last spring, no doubt in the hope that the army was large enough to do the work. But this

hope, if entertained, proved fallacious, and the orders of July and August for 600,000 men succeeded. By this time the democratic party was reorganizing, and stood very much in the way of raising the recruits. But the leaders had not been able to reach and poison the masses of their party. The experiment, at that time, would have been hazardous, the transit too abrupt. Such an attempt at that time would probably have defeated their ultimate designs. The call for men was successful, but it drew heavily upon the Union ranks, and lightly upon the newly organized democratic ranks. The consequence of which has been the defeat at the polls of the Union party in nearly all the northwestern and middle States. These are some other causes which might be assigned; among which is prominent the issue, by the President of the emancipation proclamation just prior to the October elections

It is not my intention to speak of the policy of the proclamation as a war measure, but simply to refer to it in this connection as a demonstrated fact. The democratic party emboldened by its success at the polls, and the slow progress of the army, especially the army of the potomac, begins to show plainly its true colors. The leaders nearly everywhere in the north have become bold and even clamorous in their opposition to nearly every measure of the Administration employed to put down the rebellion. And they are reaching the masses, and poisoning the public mind, both in and out of the Army. These things you cannot but have painfully observed. We have now, for all practical purposes, so far as the prosecution of the war is concerned *a divided north*. . . . This, in my opinion, is a subject of alarming interest. With a divided north, can anyone entertain a well grounded hope that we will ultimately succeed in putting down the rebellion. I think not. With a united north, I have scarcely a doubt on the subject. Then what shall we do?, What can we do?, to save the Union from disruption, and ourselves from national disgrace. I come now to the suggestion which I desired to make. The democratic party, as such, claims to be loyal, and in favor of prosecuting the war to a successful termination, for sake of "the Constitution as it is and the Union as it was," however dishonest those professions are with very many of the leaders of that party. My suggestion is that we *take them at their word*. And for that purpose let the president at an early day convene the new Congress, say on the fourth day of March next. The democrats claim that they will have a majority in the next Congress. If so, and Congress be convened, they will have to take an affirmative position. And if they are honest in their professions for "The Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was", they will have their hands full, and will ultimately make a good enough war party. They of course would insist on a change of programme in some particulars in the prosecution of the war. But for sake of the Union, and for sake of our national honor, we could afford to

make some concessions, some compromise in the method of prosecuting the war. Their compromise, and sacrifice if you please, in becoming *tolerably* good union men, would be in reality verry much greater than ours.

If we could thus unite the two great antaganistic parties of the north in a common object, the salvation of the Union, it would at once revive the hopes of the nation, and probably save the Country. If we are to make a failure, as I think we must do with a divided north, I would much rather the democratic party was in a position to share leargely [*sic*] in the responsibility.

I ask you to submit this letter to the president and request on my behalf, its consideration. Will you please write me on the subject at your convenience

Verry respectfully and c,  
Isaac Welsh  
Ohio Senate